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**THE PROVISION OF NURSERY EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES**  
**TO 1967 WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NORTH - EAST ENGLAND**

**A thesis submitted by John Robert Bell in the School of Education of the  
University of Durham for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**2011**

## Abstract

'The Provision of Nursery Education in England and Wales to 1967 with special reference to North-East England' by John R. Bell

The startling title of the Nursery School Association's 'Forgotten Two Millions' (1965) stimulated a determination to trace the origins of this tragedy, and to ascertain the historical struggle involved, both nationally and in my home region of North East England.

NSA publications and records of voluntary bodies together with local and national archives helped trace the growth and activities of the nursery school movement from 1923 and, together with the Tyneside Nursery School Association, gave an unbiased account of pioneering work in the region. Material was analysed, described, and evaluated, to explore inherent strength and weaknesses.

Theory and practice of prominent educators and thinkers was examined to appraise the attention given to the 'under fives' and to concepts of childhood. The progression of the changing role of women in society, changing social and economic conditions in the 19th and 20th centuries and the pioneering work of enlightened philanthropic individuals demonstrated that early years education never existed in a vacuum. The slow 'stop'/'start' growth in provision, however, was shown to have reflected the state of local and national finance and, indeed, can still be seen today.

Seven nursery schools in contrasting areas of industrial heritage of the North East were chosen as example case-studies, spread over a period of 30 turbulent years. The first was established during WW1 clearly in the vanguard with the McMillans and before the government legislation of 1918. Two were war-time nurseries and illustrated the emergency measures set up in 1942 to provide an essential service for mothers engaged in war work. All provided source material in their chronological, educational histories. The Plowden Report offered a new hope for the future. Any subsequent developments in the care and nurture of 'under fives' would therefore depend on the Government's political will, its financial allocations and socio-economic challenges, again seen today in the current climate.

It is suggested that present day or future participants in any initiative on behalf of the 'under fives' may gain inspiration from this research or similar regional studies.

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## Abbreviations

BAECE	British Association for Early Childhood Education
Bd.of Ed.	Board of Education
B&FSS	British and Foreign School Society
BFUW	British Federation of University Women
BFWG	British Federation of Women Graduates
BJS	British Journal of Sociology
BMA	British Medical Association
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
Dar.Ed.Com.	Darlington Education Committee
Dar.Lib.	Darlington Library
DCC	Durham County Council
DCEC	Durham County Education Committee
D.City Ed.Com.	Durham City Education Committee
D.City Lib.	Durham City Library
DCSC	Durham Community Service Council
DES	Department of Education and Science
DOSA	Darlington Old Students Association
DRDC	Durham Rural District Council
DRO	Durham Records Office
DTC	Darlington Training College
EOAN	Emergency Open-air Nursery
GDNS	George Dent Nursery School
GTC	Gateshead Town Council
GRL	Gateshead Reference Library
Hist.of Ed.	History of Education
H.C.Deb.	House of Commons Debate
H.L.Deb.	House of Lords Debate
HMI	Her/His Majesty's Inspector
HMSO	Her/His Majesty's Stationery Office
HOSSA	Home Office Social Service Association
HRNS	Howdon Road Nursery School
HRO	Hertfordshire Records Office
Intro.Mem.	Introductory Memorandum
ILP	Independent Labour Party
JEAH	Journal of Educational Administration and History
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
LCC	London County Council
LSE Lib.	Library of the School of Political and Economic Science, (London School of Economics)
M&CW	Maternity and Child Welfare
Min.Ed.	Ministry of Education
Min.Hlth.	Ministry of Health
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
MP	Member of Parliament
Nat.Soc.	National Society

NBNS	New Brancepeth Nursery School
NCSS	National Council for Social Service
NCW	National Council of Women
NFF	National Froebel Foundation
NSA	Nursery School Association
NSCN	National Society of Children's Nurseries
NSNS	North Shields Nursery School
NSLSC	North Shields Local Studies Centre
NSPCC	National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NUT	National Union of Teachers
NUWT	National Union of Women Teachers
PEP	Political and Economic Planning
PRO. .	Public Records Office
Rep.Cons. Con.	Report of Consultative Committee
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SMO	School Medical Officer
SPCK	Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge
TES	Times Educational Supplement
TNSA	Tyneside Nursery School Association
TWAS	Tyne and Wear Archive Service
VCH	Victoria County History
WHO	World Health Organisation
WUSC	Women's United Services Club
WW1/WW2	World War1/World War 2



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## Introduction

The publication of the Nursery School Association's 'Forgotten Two million'<sup>1</sup> in 1965 aroused feelings of injustice which I felt should be aired in an exploration of the history of *provision* for these 'forgotten under-fives', especially in the North East of England – an area well known to me for its extreme economic deprivation. Such a study has not previously been undertaken. These 'Forgotten Children'<sup>2</sup> reinforced the lowly place and lack of concern for children in former societies. My aim therefore is to research and evaluate a chronological study of the struggle to provide nursery schools against a background of changing social and historical issues.

Five main themes which run throughout the thesis will be introduced. The influence of both British and Continental thinkers and practitioners on the preparation of the *youngest* children for later life, will be identified. Parallel roles of state and voluntary groups or individuals will be shown to operate at national and local levels. The perceived needs of the under-fives in the linked areas of health and education will be addressed against the background of rapidly changing social and economic conditions. The effect of the inter-relationship of the above factors may be seen to continue throughout the period under review.

During the 20th century the theories and practices of previous prominent educators over 2000 years have already been thoroughly analysed. Most were concerned with children of all ages, although it was not until the 20th century that

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<sup>1</sup> Nursery School Association (1965), 'Forgotten Two Million'

<sup>2</sup> Pollock L. (1983), 'Forgotten Children'

Ariès and others began to study the concept of childhood and to endorse alternative provision and practice for the *youngest* children.

My research will aim to show the evolution of ideas for educating and nurturing these *youngest* children, and the prolonged and often dispiriting journey towards fulfilling their needs. Many of the great educators had seen children as the antithesis of adults, yet dependent on them for their teaching and training, which was to be a simplified course of adult skills. However one or two more enlightened individuals such as Owen, Buchanan, and Wilderspin in England, and Froebel, Pestalozzi and Montessori on the Continent of Europe, were more observant of children's needs and will be shown to have evolved their own distinctive methods to nurture as well as educate their young charges.

Voluntary work on behalf of the overwhelming neglected ('forgotten'!) *majority* of this age group in England will be reviewed, as this followed the inspiration and example of Mather, the McMillans, Freda Hawtrey, Grace Owen and many others dedicated to the cause of the under-fives.

Women's 'dual role' will be shown to emerge with modern industrial society, and to become an accepted reality in the First World War, when the need for nursery provision for the children of women in war-work became an urgent concern. Unpublished material gives insight into the social and economic thinking of the Board of Education's officials on nursery education before and after the permissive legislation of 1918.

A survey of Nursery School Association literature will help to trace the growth of the nursery school movement from its inception in 1923 until its merger with the National Society for Children's Nurseries to form the British Association

for Early Childhood Education in 1967, the point at which this study closes.

Primary source material on the origins and growth of the voluntary nursery schools in North East England up to 1939 amply illustrates the distressing social factors of poor housing, over-crowding and under-nourishment, arising from chronic unemployment and consequent poverty.

Local philanthropic effort among educationalists and social groups stimulated by the Tyneside Nursery School Association (an associate of the NSA), is known to have induced positive financial and practical measures and a furtherance of self-help as illustrated in the selected case studies.

The effects of the national economic situation and priority demands of sections of the compulsory educational system will be seen to have caused Local Authorities to curtail or permit nursery provision according to the availability of financial resources. Classes, cheaper than schools, were favoured. By contrast, the rapid establishment of Government-sponsored wartime nurseries will demonstrate the peak provision years, 1941-1944, when prioritising the needs of working mothers. Many local authorities will be found to have failed to maintain a majority of these nurseries after the war.

In the face of the increase in school population, and shortage of buildings and qualified teachers, controls will be seen to have been imposed on nursery provision, as the 'duties' of the *generous* 1944 Act could not be implemented. Thus, following the example of inter-war providers, Plowden's policy of positive discrimination is accepted as a minimum programme of nursery provision.

Taking a long view of the history of provision for the *youngest* children will show it to be inextricably intertwined with that for *infants*, although the *under-fives* were 'neglected', as I hope to indicate.

Research material drawn from 20th century legislation in Education Acts, Bills, Hansard Reports, Local Government proposals and Education Committee meetings will give detailed information on the ebb and flow of provision for the needs of the under-fives. Lives and actions of the philanthropists have been documented or are available from letters, committee reports and school records, whilst support from women MPs - Lady Astor and Mrs. Margaret Wintringham are sourced in Hansard Reports, and newspaper articles. Grace Owen was involved mostly in the North of England and spent her retirement at Appleton-le-Moors, North Yorks where I was privileged to make her acquaintance, and inherit some of her 'nursery' material, another motivation for this work.

Reports of activities of other prominent individuals are available in the Local Authority records and pamphlets, as well as the Public Record Office, and archives of the Universities of Durham, Newcastle, Bradford, Leeds, and the LSE. I have also used primary source material in local Record Offices at Darlington, Durham, Gateshead, North Shields and Tyne and Wear which gives details of proposals for accommodation of the under fives. Much of this material has not previously been researched.

Members of the Board of Education, Directors of Education and MPs (mostly male) are known to have shown varying responses to the work of activists; but the nursery movement was also strongly linked with improvements in social conditions, women's emancipation, the Feminist Movement and its attributed 'gendered social capital'. Along with social and political factors came economic setbacks which curtailed many local initiatives, especially during the worst years of the 'Depression' when many local authorities were so cash-strapped paying benefits to the unemployed, that altruism was non-negotiable. Even the voluntary

providing bodies will be shown to have been beaten by financial demands and dwindling support. Sources for this period lie in the local records of the National Council for Social Service and the Settlement Movements, both of which figured prominently in nursery provision.

The method therefore will be to cross-reference from the general to the particular and to place local case studies, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, which constitute the major thrust of this research, into the context of wider Government planning at all stages.

In many ways WW2 will be seen in Chapter 5 to have destroyed the 'uniqueness' of local provision, although the supporting societies were to carry on in an advisory capacity. Now it was a case of 'one size fits all'- even to the design of the temporary war-time nursery buildings, staffing and teaching programmes; so that there will be seen to be a 'sameness' in records of individual schools ascertained from the few log books which have survived.

What should have been an opportunity for a vast expansion was lost because of other demands on Local Authorities and the diversion of finance to other spheres of education as will be seen in LEA records.

In the final Chapter 6 a feeling of 'melt-down' may be detected, yet this was not so. In fact it was seen to be a period of waiting - as the McMillan Legacy Group were to report <sup>3</sup>, the 'once-in-a-life-time' opportunities for many were lost, again determined by other pressures on finance.

A certain urgency lies in the fact that the focus on local nurseries may not have been fully explored, nor the features of altruism, religious persuasion and social justice which unite all philanthropic efforts. The origins for survival lie in the

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<sup>3</sup> McMillan Legacy Group (1999), 'The Children Can't Wait'

examples used in the case studies, where the available primary source material will aim to describe, interpret and evaluate the local situation in the period, and to place nursery provision in its wider national context.<sup>4</sup> Such an exercise is important in showing that, in times of financial restraint, meeting the needs of the under-fives was one of the first provisions to be side-lined.<sup>5</sup>

The contribution of enlightened groups and individuals illustrates that progress in education in the past has rested with the committed. What this research will show is that the North East - although distanced from the epicentres of educational thinking - nevertheless had its own pioneers and methods of provision. The dissemination of local situations will contribute to a wider field of knowledge and enhance the prestige of tackling local issues. Present day 'descendants' should be proud of the drive and commitment of the indefatigable, philanthropic individuals who believed in the advantages of provision for the 'forgotten' under- fives.

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<sup>4</sup> Cohen L., Manion L. & Morrison K., (2007) 6th ed. 'Research Methods in Education' p.255

<sup>5</sup> Compare with the 2010/2011 demise of the 'Sure Start' programme in the current financial climate.



## Chapter 1

### Early theory and practice concerning under fives leading to national provision

The changing perceptions of childhood over centuries brought forth its pioneers in educational ideas, not only in Britain but also on the Continent of Europe. There was much interchange of ideas which led to private philanthropy and eventually to the development of state provision. The perceived *needs* of the youngest children however led to a focus on their separate consideration during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the emergence of a variety of complex arrangements.

Today ‘...children play a central role in most households and have rights protected by the state...’<sup>1</sup> but this was not always so. Historical evidence shows that attitudes towards, and treatment of children in the past, reveal huge discrepancies in the contemporaneous concept of childhood; suggesting that in some historical periods there was no concept of childhood in the modern sense of the word, and therefore no appreciation of their needs, either by parents or the state.<sup>2</sup> The development of early childhood education provision and the key figures in that development, form the starting points for considering where early childhood education has come from and where present policies ‘fit’, or do *not* ‘fit’, with lessons of history.<sup>3</sup> This has also led to a gradual accretion of ‘social capital’<sup>4</sup> on which present day initiatives have been founded and through which they are sustained, for ‘...history is what humanity creates, and policy itself is realised by

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<sup>1</sup> Pollock L. (1983) ‘Forgotten Children’ p.1

<sup>2</sup> Fletcher A. (1999) ‘Growing up in England and the Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914’

<sup>3</sup> Nutbrown C., Clough P. & Selbie P. (2008) ‘Early Childhood Education’ p.4

<sup>4</sup> Grenfell M.J. (2007) claims that Bourdieu’s interpretation is, that in contrast to inherited economic heritage, ‘...those with large amounts of cultural capital have an interest in supporting each other... through social networks, where social solidarity is transformed into ‘social capital’.

people...'<sup>5</sup>

In the 'Republic', Plato (427 –347 B.C.) dealt with the early education of the children who were later to be governors in the *ideal* state by defending ... 'the notion that education is a training of character above all else...'<sup>6</sup>

Although no ages are given it might be assumed that training would commence as soon as the child could walk and talk. The 'Republic 377' shows that he believed that in the early years, the child '...absorbs every impression that anyone wishes to stamp upon it...'<sup>7</sup>. This education, as one would naturally infer, was '*humanistic*', when the child would be taken from its parents and placed under the care of nurses skilled in the art of rearing children, and tutors responsible for their education. In the 'Laws', Plato 'begins with earliest childhood'<sup>8</sup> in his prescribed plan for the children of artisans. They should learn to '*play*' the occupations in which they would later be engaged, because '...the most important part of education is right training in the nursery...'<sup>9</sup>. Subsequently, Christian parents were concerned with their children's salvation even in their infancy...'<sup>10</sup>

It is virtually impossible to evaluate the impact such views had on early Western society. During the Dark Ages evidence of children's education comes from such sources as the lives of Cuthbert, Bede, and Alfred. For centuries the monastic schools nurtured and educated young boys. However these usually began their education between the ages of 8 and 12. The alternative was education at home. For the wealthy this might be with private tutors and the focus

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<sup>5</sup> Nutbrown et al. (2008) p.3

<sup>6</sup> Annas J. (1981) 'An introduction to Plato's Republic', p.88 in Palmer J. (ed.) 'Fifty Major Thinkers on Education' p.11

<sup>7</sup> Hamilton E. and Cairns H.(eds.) (1961) on 'Plato : Collected Dialogues'

<sup>8</sup> Jaeger, Werner (1961) 'Paideia, The Ideals of Greek Culture' (Vol.3) p.223

<sup>9</sup> Rusk R. (1951) 'A History of Infant Education', p.6

<sup>10</sup> Cohen A.& Rutter J.B. (eds.) 'Constructs of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy' in Hesperia Supplement 41. p.116

on boys.

By the post-Reformation and Early Modern periods, the Platonic perception of the good society was promoted by the English philosopher, John Locke (1632 – 1704). Locke proposed the establishment of working schools for all children over *three* years of age whose parents received parish relief. These children were obliged to attend to learn the value of money, to learn to work and earn money, whilst their mothers could also be gainfully employed when they were at school. Locke does not suggest that a 3-year old would be able to earn his livelihood, but the children would receive food in lieu of money to take home.<sup>11</sup> One cannot help but think of the links between Locke's views and the current attempts at introducing even young children to the notion of financial capability. It should be emphasised in the idiom of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where '*...Every child matters..*', these early views, by contrast, are merely dealing with 'the few'.

The first great educator to write significantly on the *education* of *all* young children was Comenius (1592-1670) who, in the 'Great Didactic', aimed to teach 'all things to all men'. Perhaps Comenius could be regarded as the first holistic educator and in 'The School of Infancy' (published 1633), advised all parents to exercise their children in faith and piety; then in morals; and finally, in knowledge of languages and arts. Anticipating Froebel, he added, '*...Whoever has within his house youth exercising themselves in these three departments, possesses a garden in which celestial plantlets are sown, watered, bloom and flourish...*'<sup>12</sup> However, Comenius did not infer here a policy of non-intervention as far as these plants were concerned; a man needed instruction even in the everyday task of living. He approved of schools, as parents were often incompetent to instruct their

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<sup>11</sup> Quick R. H. (1927) Appendix A to John Locke 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education'

<sup>12</sup> E.N.Eller intor.to 'The School of Infancy' (1956) in Palmer J,(ed.)(2001)op.cit. P.43 ; Rusk R.R.(1961) p.11

own children, or had not the time, or could not be bothered. His plea was for 'education as every child's right' with schools affording facilities for exchanges with other children of the same age. Although he was not making specific reference to *young* children, he said :-

'...yet children of their own age are of still greater service, when one relates anything to another or when they play together, for children of about the same age and of equal progress and manners and habits sharpen each other effectually...'<sup>13</sup>

It is easy to see in this statement the links between Comenius and the work of people like Vygotsky who emphasise the social aspects of learning where '...each child is an active *creator*...along cultural guide lines suggested by adults...'.<sup>14</sup> However, although Comenius advised that children should not be removed from the mother and placed in the care of teachers before their sixth year, he presented a definite plan of guidance for the mother or nurse. His educational thought, however, appears to have had little or no influence on the education of the young of his own times. In fact, it was almost 200 years later that 'The Great Didactic' and 'The School of Infancy' were recognised as educational masterpieces.

Whilst it is clear that the lot of children has greatly improved in the last few years, it is hard to discover a time when the majority of children were not exploited in some way. Furthermore it would be wrong to extract the children from the period in which they were living, and to judge their lives by 21st century standards. However, in the 17th and 18th centuries children were in many ways of small account: it is well known that even until the 19th century at least one half of them, even of the upper social class, died before the age of five, due to bad sanitation, feeding, and the ignorance of both parents and of medical men. It is clear that

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<sup>13</sup> Rusk R.R. (1961), p.38

<sup>14</sup> Veer, Rene van der (1994) 'Vygotsky: Educational Thinking' p.16

poor living conditions and ill-health highlighted the fact that education could not stand alone without the support of social betterment.

How then did developing social conditions influence educational *thought*? The 18th century brought forth its principal reformer in Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who not only proclaimed the 'Rights of *Man*' in 'The Social Contract', but in 'Émile - or, on Education' - the 'Rights of *Children*'. As O'Hagan observes '...childhood has its ways of seeing, thinking and feeling, which are proper to it...'.<sup>15</sup> Rousseau had '...no special credentials to dispense educational advice...'.<sup>16</sup> He was, however, '...hostile to swaddling infants and to controlling toddlers with leading reins. The growing boy...[note the gender bias]... was to be introduced to the natural sciences by practical lessons, 'learning by doing', preferably in the open air...'.<sup>17</sup> Believing in '...natural education, his work marked the beginning of child study as a field of knowledge...'.<sup>18</sup> a century before the child study movement gathered impetus. Because Rousseau was such a controversial political and religious writer, his educational ideas, unlike those of Comenius, also had immediate effect, and spread throughout Europe. His philosophical ideas have percolated down through generations and greatly influenced the teachings of Pestalozzi and Froebel.

In 'Émile' he made a plea for the child to be allowed to remain a child, and not to be instructed or forced into maturity too soon. He believed in trusting human nature, and in an education which aimed at the natural development of the child's own talents. He did *not* want children to be dominated by adults, '... one should do nothing and await signs of interest rather than have a pupil who is neither disciple

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<sup>15</sup> O'Hagan T. (1999) 'Rousseau' p.57

<sup>16</sup> Lascarides V.C. & Hinitz B.F. (2000) 'History of Early Childhood Education' p.52

<sup>17</sup> O'Hagan (1999) p.56

<sup>18</sup> Lascarides & Hinitz (2000) p.63

nor scholar...<sup>19</sup> - hence his concept of 'negative education'.<sup>20</sup> 'Émile' can be regarded as the first democratic approach to education, showing that it was also the concern of all people not merely the rich and well-born.

Rousseau also approved of prescribed education, under the guidance of those who had studied child development and the ways in which children learn, so that they could effectively be guided by them. Although, like Comenius, he did not suggest organised education for the under fives, (in fact *Émile's* education is described *from* the age of five), yet his views of child development have had great significance in the subsequent development of nursery schools.

In Britain his ideas influenced the work of Thomas Day and the Edgeworths, who tried to apply the experiments and teaching of *Émile* to their wards and family. The contribution of the Edgeworths is contained in 'Essays on Practical Education' (1798), in which father and daughter put forward combined views on the training of children. Their experience was gained within their own family. Richard Edgeworth was four times married and had 19 children. Maria, his second child, decided against marriage for herself, and devoted her life to educating her numerous brothers and sisters and assisting her successive step mothers. She wrote from this experience...

'... Practical education begins very early, even in the nursery ... parents would save themselves a great deal of trouble and their children some pain, if they would pay attention to their early education...'<sup>21</sup>

However it is easy to run away with the idea that the views of those far-sighted thinkers and pioneers led inevitably to a national system of nursery education. Certainly links can be made, but as ever, change came slowly,

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<sup>19</sup> Lascarides & Hinitz (2000) p.53

<sup>20</sup> Oelkers J. (2008) 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau' p.219

<sup>21</sup> Edgeworth, Richard and Maria. Preface to 'Essays in Practical Education' (1798) as quoted by Raymont T. in 'A History of the Education of Young Children' (1937) pp.31-32

occurring in different places at different times, and often for different reasons. Maria was also concerned with 18th century attitudes to the poor, where in her writing she also high-lights that it is.. '... the primary responsibility of the wealthy to care for those less fortunate...'<sup>22</sup> and introduces the concept of philanthropy.

By the end of the 18th century there was still no organised schooling for *young* children. The early educators had stressed the need for training but had insisted that the natural and proper place was within the home; but the homes varied from hovels to palaces. For most young children, although the home must always be of prime importance, this in itself was not enough, particularly in the case of the very poor.

The focus on early childhood not only related to practical provision, which is the aim of this research, but also on what social historians regard as the 'concept of childhood' and its contingent needs. There has been some debate in this area of research which emerged in the later half of the 20th century. Phillipe Ariès was in the vanguard of this work in his studies of children in French society and deduced (mainly because of their absence in paintings and manuscripts) that childhood, in effect, did not exist in medieval society and as soon as a child could do without the care of his mother or nurse, he entered the adult world.<sup>23</sup> Social historians who identify flaws in Ariès views, suggest childhood is a 'constructed phenomenon'.<sup>24</sup>

Pre-industrial societies '...had pre-supposed a difference and a transition between the world of children and that of adults...'<sup>25</sup> yet Fletcher states that

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<sup>22</sup> Lang M., 'Maria Edgeworth, The Parents' Assistant (1796) - a document of social education' in Hist. of Educ. (1978) Vol.7 No.1 p.31

<sup>23</sup> Ariès P. (1960) 'L'Enfant et la Vie Familiale sous l'Ancien Regime' p.462

<sup>24</sup> Thomas M. (2000) 'Children, Family and the State : Decision making and child participation' p.5

<sup>25</sup> Thomas M. (2000) pp.411-12, p.463

nothing in his research led him to believe that...

‘...anything of fundamental importance changed between 1600 and 1914 in the dynamics of the relationships between English parents and their children...’<sup>26</sup>

Demos, researching life in a Puritan colony in Plymouth, Massachusetts in the 1630s, based his judgement on such physical artefacts as house-size, furniture, and type of clothing as well as formal documents such as wills, inventories and ‘official’ documents of the colony. He reached agreement with Ariès that up to this point in historical time there was no fixed concept of childhood, but that there may have been some recognition of infancy, as children under the age of seven were dressed differently from adults.<sup>27</sup> Heywood also examines the different ways in which people have thought about childhood as a stage of life, the relationships of children with their families and peers and the experiences of young people at work.<sup>28</sup>

However Sommerville supports a Puritan ‘preoccupation’ in the observation of young children in order to ‘reach them effectively’; and notes they were the first to write books exclusively for children.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Pinchbeck and Hewitt showed the development of public policy towards children from Tudor times and looked upon parental care as being influenced by social attitudes. They too emphasised the *unimportance* of children. Infancy was but a biological necessity, a prelude to the sociologically all-important business of the adult world ... ‘and that children were really ... the property of their parents...’<sup>30</sup> De Mause also denounces child-rearing in the past<sup>31</sup>, and is in company with Stone who asserts that during the 16th and 17th centuries children in England were ... ‘neglected,

<sup>26</sup> Fletcher A. (1981) ‘Growing up in England and the Experience of Childhood.1600-1914’

<sup>27</sup> Demos J. (2000) ‘A Little Commonwealth :Family Life in a Plymouth Colony’ pp.15-16

<sup>28</sup> Heywood C. (2001) ‘A History of Childhood’ p.7

<sup>29</sup> Sommerville John (1992) ‘The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England’ p.19

<sup>30</sup> Pinchbeck I. & Hewitt M. (1969) ‘Children in English Society’ p.8

<sup>31</sup> de Mause L. (1976) ‘The History of Childhood’



brutally treated, and even killed.<sup>32</sup>

A slow change in attitudes towards children was beginning to emerge in the 16th century and was shown by diarists such as Ralph Josselin, who described the care for his children and his concern for their education. In this respect he was well ahead of his contemporaries.<sup>33</sup> However diarists represented the literate, articulate, solvent minority, who could afford to provide the best of care and the best of education for their children. Interestingly, this changing attitude was accompanied by developing views on the importance of play.

Childhood and play appeared to be inseparable in the 16th and 17th centuries, but some diaries reveal parental apprehension of too much play. A diarist in the American colonies, Increase Mather (1663-1720) wrote:-

'I am not fond of proposing PLAY to them (children), as a Reward of any diligent Application to learn what is good; lest they should think DIVERSION to be a nobler Thing than Diligence'.<sup>34</sup>

Seemingly he recognised that 'play' was a component of childhood, but it was not something to be encouraged!<sup>35</sup> There is written evidence of imaginative play among young children from the Early Modern period which corresponds with the 20th century findings of Newson and Newson.<sup>36</sup>

The *education* for under-fives is less recorded, although Claver Morris (1659-1727) showed from his diary that his son William was sent to a dame school at the age of four.<sup>37</sup> A more famous, well-known diarist, John Evelyn reported with great approval his son as a child prodigy who began reading English, Latin and

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<sup>32</sup> Stone L. (1977) 'The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800' p.99

<sup>33</sup> Macfarlane A. (1970) 'The Family Life of Josselin' p.65

<sup>34</sup> Mather I. (1899) Diary 'Massachusetts Historical Proceedings' 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, Vol. 13 pp.340-411

<sup>35</sup> Pollock L. (1983) p.236

<sup>36</sup> Newson J. & Newson E. (1974) 'Four Years Old in an Urban Community' p.44

<sup>37</sup> Morris C. (1934) 'The Diary of a West Country Physician' p.79 : Dame Schools flourished in the 18th & 19th centuries see p.16 ff.

French at the age of two and a half.<sup>38</sup> Again one must emphasise the danger of using such material as evidence of a widespread practice. Yet, notwithstanding this warning, it is a very good example of the role of individuals in education - a theme which will be expanded later in this thesis. It is also not insignificant that the views of these early practitioners are still confined to the education of boys.

Inspired by the findings of the great classical educators, these sixteenth and seventeenth century parents appreciated that it was to their off-spring's advantage to be educated and to begin early. This concern continued. Many parents, particularly *educated* mothers, taught the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic to their young off-spring, hoping that they would go on eventually to school in order to become literate and numerate, which they believed important for their life's chances.

Nevertheless it took 200 years for philanthropic individuals to realise that what was good enough for wealthy children could also benefit the poor, and the focus of early provision gradually moved in that direction.

Meanwhile it was generally accepted in the 18th and 19th centuries that 'the masses' should remain *un*-educated (in case they rose above their humble station), but enlightened reformers were beginning to think more of individuals, than of social groups. The 18th century saw the growth of such philanthropic movements, as the Methodist revival under the Wesleys, the work towards the abolition of the slave trade inspired by Wilberforce, and prison reform by Elizabeth Fry. The responsibility for the care and education of the nation's youngest children was much slower and certainly less dynamic.

The education of young children in the home, as advocated by such great

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<sup>38</sup> Evelyn J. (1906) 'Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn' Vol.2 pp.96-97

thinkers as Plato and Rousseau was a practical possibility only for those who could afford it, but any sort of home education for the children of the labouring classes was quite a different matter, and O'Day points out :-

'... the increasing emphasis upon formal schooling .... had its roots in growing economic complexity and in the need for both the ruling classes and the professions to find justifications for their changing roles in society...' <sup>39</sup>

Even before the impact of the Industrial Revolution had made its mark upon the child population (and their parents), dame schools and other private establishments had existed both in towns and villages. Durham City alone had 15 such schools in the narrow streets of Neville Street, Hallgarth Street and Framwellgate.<sup>40</sup> These were often kept, as the name implies, by a dame, i.e. an elderly woman, often driven by various kinds of misfortune, who provided a caring service for financial remuneration, in her own home. Mothers who were in employment, or had other young children at home, were willing to pay a few pence for the service thus drawing early attention to the need for nursery schools, play centres, day nurseries by working mothers...

'Private schools for the working classes varied considerably ranging from the simple dame school at one end of the market to the more selective academies at the other...' <sup>41</sup>

However, the 'dame' was often *un*-educated. Her attributes may have included knowledge of the alphabet, and simple spelling, but on the whole the teaching was limited. Not all dame schools were inefficient, but most were unhygienic. Was this early grouping together of several children in unhealthy conditions significant for future developments? The following is a description of

<sup>39</sup> O'Day, R. (1982) 'Education and Society 1500-1800' p.8. For more on this see Chapter 2.

<sup>40</sup> The North of England Open Air Museum, Beamish, County Durham 'A Century of Education, 1870-1970' pp. 5&6

<sup>41</sup> Grigg G.R. (2005) 'Nurseries of ignorance?' Private adventure and dame schools for the working classes in nineteenth century Wales' in Hist. of Educ. Vol.34, p.243. Also see Leinster-Mackay D. (1984) 'The Rise of the English Prep School' pp. 2-3 & Ch.7 passim who points out that some Dame Schools were the predecessors of Preparatory Schools for the wealthier classes.

## Dame Schools in Sunderland :-

'The dame schools were really like Infants' Schools. One existed in Covent Garden and was kept by a Miss Willis. Another flourished on the Green. A great number were kept by women, but some were conducted by old men. One blind old man who kept a school of this type was constantly interrupted in his labours by his wife who required his services to turn the mangle...'

and again,

'In a garret, up three flights of stairs, was a Dame School with forty children. On a perch, forming a triangle with the corner of the room, sat a cock and two hens, with a stump bed immediately beneath, and under the bed was a dog kennel with three black terriers whose barking added to the noise of the children and cackling fowls. On the approach of a stranger the noise was almost deafening. There was only one small window at which sat the master, who obstructed three-quarters of the light it was capable of admitting...'

In the words of Her Majesty's Inspectors' Reports,

'Some of the dame Schools cannot altogether fail to attain some of the highest ends of education. But so far as formation of character is concerned - many are useless. Many of this class present a most melancholy aspect; the school room is commonly used as a living room also, and is filled with a very unwholesome atmosphere. The Mistress is apparently one whose feelings have been frozen up and who is regarded with terror by several rows of children, more than half of whom are without anything to do...'<sup>42</sup>

On the whole Dame Schools were only sporadically attended by their pupils. Registers were not kept, and the educational value of them was questionable. Apropos the latter, chroniclers are always quick to point out the more sensational aspects of dame school provision. Whilst this might very well be true, it is dangerous to assume that all dame schools were so unsuitable. Some did valuable work, including the take up of the under-fives, even as child minders.

And what of those who could not afford even the Dame School? In many large towns religious and philanthropic bodies set up 'Ragged Schools', as in this example from Sunderland.

'The winter of 1830-31 was unusually severe and some of the more affluent citizens determined to rescue these children from the streets. In consequence the first Ragged School in Sunderland was established in the kitchen of Prudence

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<sup>42</sup> Sunderland L.E.A.(1936) 'Handbook for Education Week' p.97

Binks in Sunderland Street (near the Bridge Hotel). The front room was the depot of the Religious Tract Society, and the pupils entered from Gordon Street. With the same idea in mind a night school for girls was conducted by ladies connected with the Bethel chapel in Villiers Street. Pupils were not scarce, for a basin of hot milk or porridge was an added attraction. Nor was there any lack of volunteer teachers...'<sup>43</sup>

Here the connection between education and social care is all too easy to see. Also during this period, the Charity Schools movement under the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge made some provision for the education of the children of the poor. Although they made little provision for *young* children they were representative of an early attempt at organised education for ordinary citizens. The members of the Society were appalled at the decay of religious standards, of behaviour and morals, and stressed the need of '... due care in the education of youth...'.<sup>44</sup> Yet the Society had its own ideas on the kind of education appropriate to poor children, which was similar to Locke's work-schools. After primary instruction in religion, the children were to be trained in habits of labour and industry such as spinning, sewing, knitting, gardening etc. and the teachers were to instruct them '... in the duties of servants and submission to superiors...'.<sup>45</sup> In other words, the children were to be trained with caution, and although promoters meant well, the schools were a true reflection of the society of the day, and the poor were to remain humble and grateful.

In 1811 when the National Society was founded, many of the Charity Schools which accommodated very young children, were taken over and became a strong force in elementary education in the 19th century. In the report of 1838 there appears an appreciation of all these early efforts of provision for children of the poor :-

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<sup>43</sup> Sunderland Handbook (1936) p.97

<sup>44</sup> S.P.C.K. (1699) First Report

<sup>45</sup> National Society (1834) Annual Report

'However inadequate the recent system of instruction for the humbler classes may be in many districts, it is owing, almost entirely, to the laudable and persevering efforts throughout the country of benevolent people...'.<sup>46</sup>

The notion of 'benevolent people' is a theme which runs throughout this study. One suspects that motives were quite complex : certainly there was altruism but one cannot help but think of a desire in some to keep the poor in their proper place and perhaps a fear that if nothing was done the needy might turn to direct action.

The progress from the 18th to the 19th century was accompanied by great social changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, and it is worth asking whether we could have had an Industrial Revolution with a so- called 'uneducated' proletariat. Perhaps the 18th century was in fact a hopeful time for education with Charity Schools at their peak in the 1750s, together with Sunday Schools and Industrial Schools which were bringing certainly a minimum of literacy.

Not only did the Industrial Revolution re-shape the whole face of England, but, with particular reference to this study, the North East. Previously a relatively quiet pastoral region, it now became a region of heavy industry; the population increased rapidly, and in particular, the North East became an area of industrial congestion with all its accompanying social *evils*.

Such evils of industrialisation led to renewed philanthropic efforts and in particular the Sunday Schools promoted by Robert Raikes, helped children who were bound to long hours of factory work on weekdays.

However, young children could not be ignored for long. It is tempting to suggest that it was easier to cope in a rural area with young children than in an industrial society. For in the former, young children could be simply left to play in the fields near their mothers - an entirely different situation from working in a

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<sup>46</sup> Nat. Soc. (1838) see p.22 below

factory. However one must not run away with the idea that Northeast England moved from a rural to an industrial economy overnight; some areas have remained untouched by industrialisation to the present day. For the purpose of this thesis the emphasis will be on areas where industrialisation had an enormous impact.

Yet the spirit of the age was throwing emphasis on the importance of the *early years*. In the 1770s, a young reformer, J.S.Oberlin had begun work in Northeast France (at Stendhal) which had *revolutionised* the whole canton. Oberlin placed a far wider meaning on the term *education*. Like the classical educators, he saw that what the schools were able to do for children over six, depended largely upon what had happened to them *before* that age. He saw that total neglect of the younger children often resulted in physical and moral evil beyond repair.

In his school ‘... enough of discipline was introduced to instil habits of subjection ...’ yet ‘... a degree of liberty was allowed’<sup>47</sup> which re-emerged in the 20th century in Susan Isaacs’ plea for ‘...freedom within a frame work’.<sup>48</sup>

Children were admitted from the age of two or three years and the programme was varied to include some practical instruction, interspersed with story, recitation, pictures, etc. No mention is made of the three Rs - this was left to the teachers of older children.

In Oberlin’s school is seen a more *realistic* approach to the training of young children than those in Britain, where later the scourge of ‘education on the cheap’ and ‘Payment by Results’ dominated the scene for a century and contributed to the stifling of nursery provision for the sake of education where results *could* be measured.

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<sup>47</sup> ‘Memoirs of J. F .Oberlin’ (4th ed.1833) quoted by T. Raymont (1937) in ‘A History of the Education of Young Children’, p. 47

<sup>48</sup> Isaacs S. (1933) ‘Social Development of Young Children’

With the turn of the century, in Great Britain, as well as on the wider Continent, education took on a new impetus. There was ‘... a new conception of school...’ as a ‘...universal privilege...’.<sup>49</sup> However as will be seen when tracing the history of the provision of nursery education, it was not the psychological needs of the children or even the search for individual development according to ability that was considered important. Rather, it was the pressures of the Industrial Revolution with all its accompanying evils, which led to an increase of philanthropic work of various kinds.

The chief of the effects of industrial developments was intensified in the Factory System which led to the concentration of population in large towns - too large for the dioceses and parishes to cope with the ensuing social problems. Coupled with the wretchedness of physical conditions, was the appalling ignorance of workers, and the only way of removing ignorance was the establishment of formal schooling. Of course teachers and buildings were needed as well as money to train them and build them. In the densely populated industrial areas, the charity and dame schools, handed down from the previous century were totally inadequate. The monitorial system of Lancaster and Bell solved the problem of ‘education for all’ - quickly and cheaply.

Though their work was mainly with children from six to ten years and consisted chiefly in the instruction of masses of children by one teacher through monitors, their method illustrated the attitude of most educationists of this time. Ultimately this led to the beginning of ‘...the shift from work to school as the principal occupation for young people...’.<sup>50</sup> Unlike their English contemporaries, Oberlin and Stouber (his predecessor) were educating children in North-East

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<sup>49</sup> Thompson M.M. (1951) ‘The History of Education’ p.7

<sup>50</sup> Heywood C.(2001) p.13



France for the sake of the children's good, and not through fear of the uprising of ignorant masses.

Again, in England, petty jealousies grew out of all proportion to the 'mission' of the work in hand. Disputes arose as to who invented the monitorial system, and the leading writers took sides against each other. Lancaster, a Quaker, who promoted education through un-denominational religious instruction, formed a Committee (1808) which later became the British and Foreign School Society in 1813, whilst Bell '... promoted education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church...' and with his supporters formed the National Society in 1811. These two groups, working in competition rather than harmony, were the foundation on which all elementary education in England and Wales was based. Each asserted that education could not be divorced from religion, but the National Society represented the Church of England, and the British and Foreign School Society, the Dissenters in various forms.

The National Society tended to teach the establishment, Toryism and Conservatism, whilst the British and Foreign School Society became associated with Liberalism and Radicalism. The background of all elementary education in the 19th century therefore became the battle ground of the church versus the 'sects', and was an inevitable consequence of religious and political fervours. Although the education of very young children is here eclipsed by the main upsurge in the provision of elementary education in the 19th century, it must still be remembered that in elementary schools there were many children from the age of three. The fact that separate provision for nursery education lies dormant, reflects the attitudes and social pressures of the century.

First, the race was on to get the children 'educated', i.e. instructed in the

3Rs by the age of 10, and also as cheaply as possible. Obviously it was no use starting with children of 3 or 4 years of age to get quick results - they were too young! Secondly, the younger children were more difficult to discipline and would not adapt themselves to the Madras system,<sup>51</sup> so called after Bell's foundation of a boys military orphanage in India. Thirdly, with the chronic shortage of teachers and buildings, provision had to be made with assured returns. As yet in England, the work of Rousseau and Pestalozzi was practically unknown. After the Helvetic Revolution of 1798, Pestalozzi had observed that ..

'... the whole social and political destiny of a nation depended on true education, and the realization of this education depended on wise leaders...'<sup>52</sup>

Bell visited Pestalozzi in 1816, but was not particularly interested in his philosophy: He is often condemned as being blinded by his own system. Thus children were not regarded as individuals needing individual attention, rather as rows of vessels to be filled with selected skills, morals and religious ideas. The view that this was a mechanical system for mechanical times lies outside the scope of this thesis.

One of the first people in Britain who really cared about the 'lot' of the children themselves was Robert Owen - a pioneer, not only in education, but also in factory reform, trade unionism, and socialism. His personal life had been a meteoric rise to prosperity and by marrying the daughter of a mill owner in New Lanark, he became a managing director. In Owen we find a man who believed implicitly in the importance of education. In his essays he attacked ignorance...

'...idleness, poverty, crime, punishment, are all necessary consequences of ignorance.'<sup>53</sup>

In order to carry out his philanthropic ideas, Owen improved conditions at

<sup>51</sup> Birchenough C. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1925) 'History of Elementary Education in England and Wales' p.283-7

<sup>52</sup> Trohler D. (1996) 'Pestalozzi' in Palmer J. (2001) p.66. See also p.30 below

<sup>53</sup> Owen R. 'A New View of Society', Essay 1 (1817)

New Lanark to the extent that houses were built for workers' families, and the age-old custom of engaging the labour of the 'parish' children was abolished. The practice of employing younger children in the mill was discouraged, for Owen felt that they should have time to acquire good health and education before taking up a life-time of employment.

As far as this study of the *provision* of education for young children goes, the most important part of Owen's work was *his* provision for the under fives.<sup>54</sup> Here was a man full of philanthropic enthusiasm for improving the conditions of those who worked for him, and in particular the provision he made for children in... '...what Owen called a 'playground' and what we should call a nursery school...'<sup>55</sup>

Owen regarded his youngest children as the most important part of the school. In a further essay he says,

'... it must be evident to those who have been in the practice of observing children with attention, that much of good and evil is taught to and acquired by a child at a very early period of its life, that much of the temper or disposition is correctly formed before he attains his second year; and that many durable impressions are made at the termination of the first twelve or even six months of his existence ...'<sup>56</sup>

The nursery school ...

'...occupied the playground in front of the Institute in fine weather, and on wet days the three main rooms on the ground floor. The principle on which the school was run we would call the play principle...'<sup>57</sup>

Although Owen's work was frustrated on every side by parties interested in big dividends from the factory, he sought help which, Donnachie notes, came from ...'Lancaster and his supporters...'.<sup>58</sup> The British and Foreign School Society forwarded the necessary capital for opening the 'New Institution for the Formation

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<sup>54</sup> Bradburn, Elizabeth (March, 1967) *Froebel Journal* No.7, would rank Robert Owen *the* pioneer of Nursery-Infant Education pp.22-25 The most recent endorsement comes from Davis R.& O'Hagan F. (2010) 'Robert Owen' pp. 151-153

<sup>55</sup> Cole M. (1953) 'Robert Owen of New Lanark' p.71

<sup>56</sup> Owen R. 'A New View of Society', Essay III (1817)

<sup>57</sup> Donnachie I. (2000) 'Robert Owen of New Lanark and New Harmony' p.166

<sup>58</sup> Donnachie I. (2000) p.115 -121

of Character' by which he hoped to improve not only intellectual standards, but also the moral and social character of the village. By beginning at the beginning, i.e. at a very early age, almost as soon as children could walk, Owen hoped to effect his aims before the children were subjected to other influences. His son, Robert Dale Owen noted in his memoirs that this innovative system of education at New Lanark differed essentially from that in any other part of the world.<sup>59</sup>

As teacher, Owen employed James Buchanan who loved children and taught them to sing and dance, while he played the pipe. Buchanan as the instigator of less formal learning in England and Wales, was uneducated, yet kind-hearted. Unfortunately, as time went on, much unpleasantness emerged in relations between Owen and Buchanan, probably due to personal jealousies and differing outlook. Buchanan, meanwhile, achieved great success as a teacher of young children.

Owen with business acumen, advertised this success and visitors came from far and wide to see his school. Among them were Henry Brougham<sup>60</sup> and Joseph Wilson,<sup>61</sup> who persuaded Buchanan to take up an appointment in London. Owen when asked to relinquish Buchanan said, '... most willingly for I have pupils who can take his place without injury to my school...'. Owen believed that this new venture with the very young owed nothing to any one save himself.

This first provision in the education of the under-fives which began in New Lanark in 1816, was largely driven by social and economic conditions but was terminated in 1824. The very existence of the school had depended on the

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<sup>59</sup> Davis R. & O'Hagan F. (2010) p151 from Robert Dale Owen (1824) 'An outline of the system of Education at New Lanark'

<sup>60</sup> Lord Henry Brougham - radical, Lancastrian supporter - instigator of Royal Commission on Education (1819) - leading member of 'Education and Party' - associated with the founding of University of London and 'Diffusion of Useful Knowledge among the Masses'.

<sup>61</sup> Wilson, Joseph - Lancastrian supporter - less well-known but active worker particularly for infant education.

approval of Owen's partners and in particular of William Allen, an equally enthusiastic upholder of many philanthropic causes. Yet these two held opposing views on religious training and after 1824, when a trained school master from the British and Foreign School Society's College at Borough Road was appointed, the education given, was as Allen desired. Owen, though connected with the school, no longer exercised much authority and turned his attention to political and social reforms, at home and abroad.

Although Owen had allowed children to attend his school from the age when they could walk (maybe eighteen months), he was perhaps the only one who did so. Nevertheless, it was becoming quite common for children to attend infants' school from the age of three.

Among new schools opened at this time was Buchanan's school in London, the Westminster Free Day Asylum (Vincent Square), which was a great success and was financed by Benjamin Smith.<sup>62</sup> In 1820, this was followed by another philanthropic venture at Spitalfields which was financed by Joseph Wilson and the teacher engaged at this school was Samuel Wilderspin. He owed his debut in teaching to Buchanan, yet in the years which followed he denied having received any training or encouragement from the latter, and claimed that he *himself* was the founder of infants' schools. Certainly he had the driving force, which Buchanan lacked.

Wilderspin's work attracted much public attention and he was asked to help in many parts of the country. He became a travelling agent for a short-lived society named the Infant School Society which was supported and financed by a Radical

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<sup>62</sup> A wealthy distiller, patron of Buchanan whom he paid initially to teach his own children. As a Unitarian (& later Member of Parliament) he was involved in numerous philanthropic ventures, not least with Joseph Lancaster and the un-denominational British Schools.

group including Lord Lansdowne, Henry Brougham, William Wilberforce and William Allen, but no model school was set up. Later he became head of a model school in Dublin set up by the Irish Commissioners for Education. Until his death his work was of a missionary character involving laborious journeys all over the country.<sup>63</sup> He also published books explaining his work.<sup>64</sup>

Wilderspin saw the weakness of the monitorial system of Bell and Lancaster, and was in sympathy with parents who did not like their children taught 'mechanically' by other children. He did not like to see parental responsibility undermined, and stressed the fact that his school indirectly educated the parents in their duties towards their children. Wilderspin worked on a system of infant education, which left its mark for many years on the curriculum and buildings of infant and elementary schools.<sup>65</sup>

The *traditional* Dame Schools, mentioned earlier, continued to flourish into the 19th century and were places where the majority of *poor* children between the ages of 2 and 7 received basic education. The Report of the Parliamentary Inquiry, 1819, showed that there were 3,102 dame schools with 53,624 pupils.<sup>66</sup>

More than 40 years later, the Newcastle Commission succinctly summarised:-

'At their best the dame schools discharged the function of public nurseries for very young children, and served as places of security as well as of education, since they were the most obvious means of keeping the children of poor families out of the streets in towns or out of the roads and fields in the country.'<sup>67</sup>

Yet another philanthropic worker in the field of education was David Stow of

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<sup>63</sup> This included Durham (2 schools) : DCL Durham County Advertiser 12.2.1825 & 14.1.1826

<sup>64</sup> 1823 - 'The Importance of Educating the Children of the Poor';  
 1825 - 'Infant Education', or 'Remarks on the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor'  
 1832 - 'Early Discipline Illustrated', or 'The Infant System - Progressive and Successful'  
 1840 - 'A System for the Education of the Young'

<sup>65</sup> McCann P. & Young F.A. (1982) 'Samuel Wilderspin and the Infant School Movement' The first overall positive re-assessment of Wilderspin's network of Infant Schools

<sup>66</sup> Report of Parliamentary Inquiry, (1819) (prompted by Brougham) quoted in 1933 Report, p.4

<sup>67</sup> Report of Newcastle Commission (1861) (quoted in 1933 Report, p.4)

Glasgow. After visiting Wilderspin's schools at Spitalfields, he founded the Glasgow Infants' School Society in 1827 and a model infant school at Drygate (Glasgow) in 1828. He planned a graded system of elementary education, with the children grouped in departments. His Infant School (children from 2 to 7) was described in his book, 'The Training System adopted in the Model school of the Glasgow Education Society', (1836). The department concerned with the youngest children was to be called the Initiatory Training School, and the aim was not instruction, as was the common pattern of the day, but the training in the development of aptitudes and the formation of habits.

Stow founded the Free-Church Normal College in Glasgow and trained teachers for work both north and south of the Border. Soon many more infants' schools were started in England and Scotland, and it is interesting to note here the way in which the education of the youngest children emerges primarily from the physical care – a contentious point in future bids for provision.

In its 1835 prospectus for the Model Infant School, the Glasgow Infant School Society states :-

“...that infant schools were instituted in the interest of the children of poor parents who in their struggle for existence could not afford the means of education, nor devote time necessary for the careful rearing of a family...”<sup>68</sup>

The young were to be taken away from the risks of the streets, and the strife of their homes, and placed in an environment which was both informative and pleasurable. Such infant schools were intended for children of both sexes from the age of two to six, and would probably now be called 'nursery schools'.

The training is described:-

“...The Infant School System makes the schoolroom a nursery and a playground in which virtue, intelligence and love preside, direct the movements and regulate and

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<sup>68</sup> Prospectus of the Glasgow Infant School Society, 1835 in 1933 Report

foster emotions. The scholars are instructed when they play and learn to associate pleasurable feelings with the school pursuits...'<sup>69</sup>

Thus the work of Owen, Stow and Wilderspin had shed new light on the needs of young children in England and Wales, as distinct from those taught by the monitorial systems of Lancaster and Bell. The movement towards infant education (i.e. children under six) now gathered impetus in its own right, as a phase distinct from elementary education. As the demand for child labour increased with the industrial growth, many educationists were even more convinced that the best practice was 'to catch them young', before they were swallowed up in employment. As the 1933 Report states:-

"... The need of the time was for an institution that would combine the function of school and nursery..."<sup>70</sup>

So these early infants' schools, like the Dame schools, were intended for children from 2 to 6, and had a dual function. The first was to provide a place where children would be cared for while their mothers were at work and the second was to introduce the children to the rudiments of the 3Rs, as in present day nurseries, nursery schools and Sure Start Initiatives. As suggested above, the development of provision for young children in England and Wales at this time cannot be isolated from that of the rest of Europe. Historically Britain escaped much of the extreme 19th century radicalism of continental thinkers, whilst revolutions had occurred in France, Prussia and Austria, and many other states. Philosophers, educationists and soldiers were attempting, in their respective ways, to make social and political reforms.

Continental influences were prevalent throughout the 19th century.

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<sup>69</sup> 1933 Report p.9:1 (3) from Article on Primary Schools in Vol. XXI of the Penny Encyclopaedia (1841). Regarding '...regulate and foster emotions...' one sees the intention repeated in the Government's 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) recently applied to Early Years, 2008

<sup>70</sup> 1933 Report p.11



Rousseau's ideas had spread and one of his most ardent disciples was Pestalozzi. From this great educator's work in his native Switzerland came a new approach to the education of young children throughout Europe. From Rousseau, Pestalozzi had gained great inspiration and a philanthropic fervour towards social reform. Briefly, he felt that personal freedom and a better life for the people was to be gained by redeeming them from ignorance and vice, by means of education.

His experience at Neuhof, Burgdorf and Yverdon demonstrates this philosophy. The best way to secure social improvement was to begin with children, teaching them to work and speak correctly and intelligently. Through his practical experiments, his community farms, 'schools' and writings, he made clear his views. The innovative aspects of the curriculum and teaching methods with outdoor excursions and study of natural history were experienced by children of middle-class dissenters and Liberals, including those in England.<sup>71</sup> As far as this study is concerned, the influence of Pestalozzi's teachings may be regarded as 'once removed', for he did not agree with separate training of children of nursery years. He says, '...the *home* is the basis of the education of humanity...' <sup>72</sup>

Yet what of those whose homes were unsuitable, or those who had no home at all? When the ravages of war had left several homeless children in Burgdorf, Pestalozzi was placed in charge of the children's home, and under his training emerged a method for teaching the children which was adopted all over Europe. In his book, 'How Gertrude teaches her children' (in which he sets out his principles), one can but take note of the significant sub-title - 'an attempt to help mothers to teach their own children and an account of the method'. He feels that

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<sup>71</sup> Elliot P.& Daniels S. (2005) 'The Pestalozzian Institution at Worksop, Notts.', *Hist.of Ed.*, Vol.3, No.3, p.313

<sup>72</sup> Pestalozzi J.H. 'The Evening Hour' quoted in Raymont T. (1937) p.132

the good home and the wise mother could not be surpassed.

Yverdun became a visiting place for students from all over Europe - a place where freedom, happiness, healthy discipline and learning by first-hand experience (*Anschauung*) was the accustomed method.

What a contrast with the system in England where Lancaster and Bell considered they had *solved* the problem of elementary education by the monitorial system. The infant schools however, now became interested in the Pestalozzian methods. J.P.Greaves, and Charles and Elizabeth Mayo were among his English disciples. The Mayos had started a Pestalozzian school at Cheam, which exhibited his principles and methods, and became an English model. The Mayos were also the driving force in the Home and Colonial Infant Society, which was founded in 1836 by John Stuckey Reynolds - a civil servant with high philanthropic ideals.

Both were agreed that what the infant schools needed were teachers trained in the principles of Pestalozzi, as were applied at Cheam for the children of prosperous parents, and what was ideal for *these* children was the very thing for the young children of the poor. Also the Mayos upheld the ideal of *quality* rather than *quantity* in stark contrast to the monitorial system. In 1843 Elizabeth Mayo published 'Lessons on Objects': as Thompson pointed out, although 'the influence was still formal it was an improvement on what had preceded it'.<sup>73</sup> Instead of opening more and more schools like their monitorial counterparts, they decided to concentrate on the problem of training infant teachers. One of the earliest teacher training colleges to be opened was the Home and Colonial (London). In this way Pestalozzi and the children of 2 to 6 in Great Britain, came together.

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<sup>73</sup> Thompson M.M. (1951) 'The History of Education' p.112

The effect of the training given in the Home and Colonial Society's Normal Seminary was to promote the organisation of children into ...

- a) 'babies' under the age of three
- b) 'infant children' between the ages of three and six
- c) 'juveniles' from the age of seven to ten, in schools where there were such classes.

Perhaps in this organisation we see for the first time the nursery 'age group' as a separate unit within the system of elementary education.

Raymont summarises:-

"...England of the 1830's and 1840's was by no means prepared. The governing classes were by no means yet agreed as to the blessings of education for the 'lower orders' and a long hard road had to be traversed before England became convinced, as Prussia had been convinced by Pestalozzi at a much earlier date, that an ignorant and degraded populace is a danger to the state..."<sup>74</sup>

Inspectors' reports in the 1870s, commenting on the quality of teaching, still praised the Home and Colonial trained teachers and stressed that specialised training of infants teachers was essential. The Pestalozzian influence was spreading and many training colleges under the auspices of the National Society and British and Foreign School Society, were established with attendant model schools for demonstration purposes.

During the later part of the 19th century kindergartens were established as a direct result of the teachings of Friedrich Froebel (1782 -1852). Following the traditions of the great educators, and especially Rousseau and Pestalozzi, Froebel was imbued with ideas for the training of young children in a *natural* setting. In fact Froebel '...turned commonsense upside down by arguing that the most important part of schooling was the pre-school period...' <sup>75</sup> Having found his vocation in teaching, and already an ardent disciple of Pestalozzi, he spent two years at

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<sup>74</sup> Raymont T. (1937) p.150

<sup>75</sup> Weston P. (1998) 'Friedrich Froebel. His Life, Times and Significance.'

Yverdun, studying the principles of the great Swiss reformer. He was both receptive and critical of the latter, and after further study and teaching in his own school, published 'The Education of Man' (1826) where he set out 'his general education principles, child development and school instructions'.<sup>76</sup> One of the most illuminating conclusions was that Froebel showed how grievously education suffered through the neglect of the youngest children and how essential it was for their further development that young children should be systematically trained. He wrote...

'...Play is the highest achievement of child development...it is the spontaneous expression, according to the necessity of its own nature of the child's inner being... Play at this period of life is not a trivial pursuit; it is a serious occupation and has deep significance...'<sup>77</sup>

In 1837 he worked out a series of 'gifts and occupations' : in 1840, opened his first kindergarten (children's garden) to provide '...the psychological training of little children by means of play ...'.<sup>78</sup> This precipitated learning '...through play, creative self-activity and spontaneous self- instruction...'.<sup>79</sup> and promoted a '...view of appropriate early years education (which) grew out of a wider philosophy that developed in the aftermath of the revolutionary wars that ravaged large parts of Europe in the early nineteenth century...'.<sup>80</sup> The spread of the movement was hampered by the fact that some political insinuations were wrongly attached to his teachings. One of his fellow country-women, Baroness von Marenholtz-Bulow, became interested in his work and after his death, by writings and lectures, she stimulated the Froebel Movement in England. An exhibition (1854) at the Royal Society of Arts, and the establishment of a

<sup>76</sup> Walsh D.J. in Palmer J. (2001) p.95

<sup>77</sup> Smith P.K. (2010) 'Children and Play' p.32, also citing Rusk (1967) pp.60-61

<sup>78</sup> White J. (1907) 'The Educational Ideas of Froebel' p.13

<sup>79</sup> Froebel F.W. 'Pedagogues of the Kindergarten', trans. Jarvis J. Appleton D. (1900) p.6

<sup>80</sup> Read, Jane (2003) 'Froebelian Women: net-working to promote professional status and educational change in the 19th century' in Hist.of Educ.Vol.32,p.19

kindergarten by Frau Ronge of Hamburg, brought more attention to his work and principles. The Baroness wrote a book entitled 'Woman's Educational Mission, being an Explanation of Friedrich Froebel's system of 'Infant Gardens'. It is interesting to note the title '*Woman's Educational Mission*' highlights...

'... the significance of the fact that the Froebel Movement was composed overwhelmingly of women. At least one of the participants regarded it as part of the women's movement and because it supported and enabled middle class women to gain employment, it may be considered a part of feminist history...'<sup>81</sup>

Two disappointments emerged from the first stage of the Froebelian interest. The 'gifts' and 'occupations', so cleverly devised, were often used unintelligently by teachers of low calibre, and secondly, the first kindergartens were established for children of prosperous parents. As...

'...Froebel was the first to introduce play as a medium of instruction in the school curriculum, he did not believe that play should be instructed, as it was more important to be left to chance...'<sup>82</sup>

The kindergarten represented the relationship of the 'natural world and social universe', and Froebel imagined it as a Utopian project that would 'find its most perfect realization in the New World'.<sup>83</sup> The high appraisal of Froebel's methods by Rev. M. Mitchell, H.M. Inspector in 1854, and in the writings of Charles Dickens, also aroused great interest among teachers and trainers.<sup>84</sup> In 1859, the Froebel system was introduced at the Model School of the Home and Colonial, and after 1870, improvement developed rapidly. In 1873, the Froebel Society was established in Manchester (and in London in 1874) which began its own examinations in 1876.

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<sup>81</sup> Brehony K.J. (2000) in 'English Revisionist Froebelians and the Schooling of the Urban Poor' in Hilton M. & Hirsch P (eds.) 'Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress 1790-1930' Chap.2

<sup>82</sup> Curtis A. & O'Hagan M. (2005) 'Care and Education in Early Childhood : A student's guide to theory and practice' p.146

<sup>83</sup> Allen, Ann Taylor, (2006) 'The Kindergarten in Germany and the United States, 1840-1914 : A Comparative Perspective', Hist.of Educ., Vol.35, No.2 (March 2006) pp.173-174

<sup>84</sup> Journal 'Household Words' - included first notable essay in English on the Kindergarten Movement - attributed to Dickens but denied by Collins (Philip) in 'Dickens and Education' p.3

In 1874 the British and Foreign School Society formed a model school at Stockwell Training College. (In 1884 a kindergarten was established at their Saffron Walden College and later, a similar facility at Darlington Training College). The newly created London School Board had introduced a kindergarten instructress, Miss Caroline Bishop, a trained Froebelian, to begin classes for teachers. In 1875 she was allowed to award certificates to those who reached a satisfactory standard in knowledge of kindergarten methods.<sup>85</sup> One of the inspectors had reported that :-

‘...with few exceptions, infant teachers regard Kindergarten rather as an ordinary subject to be taught like reading and writing, than a system which should underlie the whole fabric of Infant Education...’<sup>86</sup>

In 1878, Miss Bishop’s title was changed to ‘Superintendent of Method in Infants Schools’ and in 1888, the Board asked the Froebel Society to act as examiners for their training classes. In the same year, the National Froebel Union was founded as an examining body. Froebel Certificate courses were set up for teachers through its own colleges and through extra-mural outlets which revealed a change from pure mechanical pedagogy to the more liberal, including Dewey’s ideas in the early 20th century.<sup>87</sup>

Kindergartens were established in Manchester, Belfast, Dublin, Croydon, and Bedford mainly due to the efforts of a band of devoted women, who followed up the pioneering efforts of Frau Ronge, emerging as the natural pioneers in the field of kindergarten work, towards the end of the 19th century. Writing in the History of Education Journal, Brehony draws attention to the fact that...

‘Much of the interest in the history of early childhood education has emanated from feminist historians who studied the Froebel movement and who broke with earlier

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<sup>85</sup> 1933 Report p.25

<sup>86</sup> Spalding T.A. (1900) ‘The Work of the London School Board’ p.102

<sup>87</sup> Smart G.R.M. (2006) ‘The training of Froebelian teachers in England 1874-1914’(Ph.D.thesis)

accounts by regarding as significant that this movement was mainly composed of women...<sup>88</sup>

Froebel's method also became recognised internationally and was ...

'...the most popular system for pre-school education in Russia...'<sup>89</sup>

The day of 'votes for women' was still several years ahead. Reform Bills had extended the franchise to a wider electorate, more women had themselves been the recipients of schooling, and with the spread of learning, came the thirst for knowledge, reading and acquiring new ideas, and confidence to project themselves.<sup>90</sup>

'The relationship between Socialist visions of a good society and educational ideas was becoming more apparent with those of left wing persuasion although as yet, the Labour Party had not made enough progress in that direction...'<sup>91</sup>

One of the most important promoters of Froebelianism was Miss Eleanora Heerwart who became lecturer in Infant Method at Stockwell, along with Madam Michaelis, pupil and friend of Baroness von Marenholtz-Bulow. These two ladies with Miss Caroline Bishop (Superintendent of Infant Method) and Joseph Payne, who held the Chair of Education at the London College of Preceptors, were '... the driving force in the newly formed Froebel Society, founded in 1873...'<sup>92</sup> In spite of its slow progress the work of the Froebel Society was a great contribution towards improving the standards in Infants' Schools, although Eleanora Heerwart, as President of the International Kindergarten Union was later (1897) to lament... '... the kindergarten received little help from the parents and no help from the schools..'<sup>93</sup>

Up to this time there was still no real understanding of Froebel's principles.

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<sup>88</sup> Brehony K.J. (2006). 'Early Years Education : Some Froebelian Contributions' in *Hist.of Educ.* Vol.35, no.2 (2006) p.168

<sup>89</sup> Valkanova Y & Brehony K.J., (2006) 'The Gifts and Contributions ; Friedrich Froebel & Russian Education (1830-1929)' in *Hist.of Educ.* Vol.3., No.2, March 2006, p.189

<sup>90</sup> See Chap.2

<sup>91</sup> Lawton D. (2005) 'Education and Labour Party Ideologies 1900-2001 and Beyond' intro.viii.

<sup>92</sup> Nawrotzki K.D. (2006) 'Froebel is Dead: Long live Froebel. The National Froebel Foundation in English Education'. In *Hist.of Educ.* Vol.35, No.2 March (2006)

<sup>93</sup> Nawrotzki, K.D. (2006) p.173

People continued to regard 'kindergarten' as if it were a *subject* and the 'gifts' as if they were 'bits of wood' which the children could play with to pass the time away.

However..

'...the informal network established by Froebelian women provided a supportive structure that served to foster a common sense of purpose...'.<sup>94</sup>

Even in teacher training colleges, the 'manuals of method' had been written by *Masters of Method* - as yet, the ideas of women lecturers in teacher training colleges had not appeared in print. These masters were bound to the 3R bias, which had been prescribed by the Code for Infant Schools. During the whole of the 19th century the structure of elementary education was designed by *men*, and *men* alone inspected the schools, and controlled, through denominational societies, the management of training colleges, even for women teachers.<sup>95</sup> Hence the Froebel Movement made slow progress. The students in training colleges (with the exception of Stockwell) were not prepared for kindergarten teaching. Also there was still a lack of well-trained teachers in the schools, whilst those already *in* schools were often reluctant to try anything new. The idea that reading, writing and counting were synonymous with infant education, died a slow death. Excellent advice, demonstrations and instruction had been issued in a 'Circular of Instruction for Inspectors' (1883), in which the Education Department indicated approval of a Froebel Certificate as qualification for assistant mistress-ship and stressed that the object of kindergarten occupations was to stimulate intelligent individual effort. The Cross Commission reported on deficiencies and approved good practice. It had recommended that no pressure should be put upon teachers in infant schools '...to give prominence to direct instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic in younger children...' - a very negative approval of Froebel. In fact, the infusion of Froebel's

<sup>94</sup> Read, Jane (2003) 'Froebelian Women ...'

<sup>95</sup> Sutherland, G. & Hurt, J. (1971) 'Education in the Nineteenth Century'



ideas in infants' schools in the last quarter of the century was very slow and sporadic.<sup>96</sup>

Such was the world-wide acclaim of Froebel's methods, women even travelled from New Zealand to gain teacher training qualifications and through the pioneering efforts of one, Mary Richmond, a Froebelian kindergarten was established in Wellington. Like many of the pioneers of nursery education, Mary 'shared a common interest in public service, education and politics along with an openly expressed sense of community service'.<sup>97</sup>

In contrast with the free-thinking of the Froebel movement abroad, the forty years 1830-1870 in Britain, had been a period of legislation, state recognition, school inspection, finance and further expansion. Up to this time the interest of the young child had been the concern of the pioneers, and interesting in this survey is the preponderance of men. In fact the only two women who had made any impact, Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Mayo, had only been able carry out their ideas under the 'umbrella' of a male relative. No doubt some of the 'dames' did sterling work, but it needed men *and* women of vision and influence to bring the position of the education and care of the youngest children to national levels.

The Committee of Council on Education, established in 1839, included in its first minutes that there should be separate provision for younger children as distinct from elementary schools and that these schools should be established wherever possible. In the same year, Baker in one of the first essays targeting Infants' Schools says, '...Infants' Schools contemplate the training of children

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<sup>96</sup> Read J. (2006) 'Free play with Froebel: use and abuse of Progressive Pedagogy in London's Infant Schools, 1870-c.1904 : Paedagogica Historica , Vol.42, No.3 pp.299-323, shows that some adaptations were proceeding long before the turn of the century.

<sup>97</sup> Bethel K. (2006) 'To bring into play; Miss Mary Richmond's Utilisation of Kindred Networks in the Diffusion of Kindergarten Ideals into Practice' in Hist. of Educ.Vol.35,No.1, Jan.2006, pp.227,243

between the ages of two and six years...’,<sup>98</sup> thereby defining the ages which were to be catered for and pointing to the focus on *training* rather than *education*. Between 1839 and the publication of the Report of the Newcastle Commission in 1861, much enterprise and experiment was carried out in elementary education and the ideas of the pioneers were modified and improved. Inspectors’ Reports (1840-1861), show how progress and organisation in elementary education lacked a system. In fact such ‘progress’ was often a result of legislation in Factory Acts (1833-1867) and the Mines Act 1867, which made stipulations protecting children from premature employment, thereby leaving an opening for early schooling as provided by voluntary bodies. The Commissioners pointed out that these schools received children up to the age of 7, beginning with the earliest age at which they were able to walk alone and speak (about 18 months). Assistant Commissioner A. F. Foster reporting on the state of popular education in the mining districts of Durham, Auckland, Weardale, Penrith, and Wigton, in the counties of Durham and Cumberland said that ‘...little account can be made of any schooling these children receive before six years of age...’.<sup>99</sup> The schools were, in effect, public nurseries, where the children of the poor were kept in safety as well as educated. However these varied from place to place and the numbers involved could only be estimated. Dame schools were still very common, and served a useful purpose in remote villages, but they were generally ‘... very inefficient and often badly ventilated, crowded and dirty...’<sup>100</sup>

In contrast, the public infants’ schools presented a very favourable picture

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<sup>98</sup> Baker C. Essay on Infants’ Schools, ‘Third Publication of the Central Society of Education’ (1839) pp.6-7, in 1933 Report

<sup>99</sup> Newcastle Commission, Vol.2 p.327, although good work was being done in some infant departments in the North East e.g. in the schools of the London Lead Company in Weardale, Teesdale and Allendale

<sup>100</sup> Prebendary Rogers, ‘Reminiscences’ (1887) - member of the Newcastle Commission (1858-1861) quoted in 1933 Report, p.18 (1)

and the Committee states that:-

‘...in their opinion, infant schools formed a most important part of the machinery required for a national system of education...’<sup>101</sup>

Rightly or wrongly Bartley assumed that the establishment of infants’ schools on a wider scale was undoubtedly restricted by the traditional dame schools:-

‘The want of Infant Schools has for a long time been evident from the number of Dame Schools which have for so many years existed in all parts of the country, nominally for education, but really only for taking care of the children while their parents were at work. The fees received by these ‘dames’ amounted to 3d(pence) or even 4d. per week per child, and the business was a source of profit to persons who could earn a living in no other way. To their consequent opposition may be attributed to a considerable extent the comparative slowness of the development of the regular Infant School system, which at the present day is far from perfect.’<sup>102</sup>

Unfortunately, the emphasis on 3Rs in the infants’ school became completely exaggerated due to ‘payment by results’, which was introduced into the Elementary Schools in 1862. In order to qualify for grants, children over the age of 7 were subject to annual tests by the Inspectorate and had to pass in all 3Rs. whilst many of the under 7s were neglected, or ‘*forgotten*’. Few teachers, other than those especially trained at the Home and Colonial College, tried to follow the principles of Pestalozzi and his far-seeing disciples.

Up to 1870, the general development of infant schools was irregular and uneven, but in the passing of the Elementary Act (1870), the problem of education for large numbers of children was addressed, and the School Boards were authorised to frame bye-laws making attendance at school compulsory for children between the ages of five and thirteen. This provision was only permissive, and there were many exceptions. The Act, perhaps the most important in the whole of the history of elementary education, was also a very important milestone in the

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<sup>101</sup> 1933 Report p.18 (1)

<sup>102</sup> Bartley G.T.C. (1871) ‘The Schools for the People’ p.107, 1933 Report, p.16(1).

history of infant and nursery education. By suggesting statutory education from the age of 5 to 13, and also that infant departments should cater for children up to seven, we see emerging the shape of the infant school as we know it today. But.. 'there was a tendency to differentiate provision made for infants under the age of 6...' <sup>103</sup> and although the 2s, 3s, 4s and 5s were still accommodated under the 'umbrella' of the infant departments, these were classified as 'babies', and from the 'baby' classes and kindergarten were eventually to emerge the nursery schools and nursery classes, thus revealing a huge complexity of arrangements. As yet there was no national system of education in place but a prototype, which accommodated both voluntary and state provision.

Following the Education Act (1870), Infants' Schools were incorporated along with the elementary schools as part of the national system, and when new schools were built, an infant department was always included. With the increase in provision of infant places, many of the dame schools disappeared, being no longer viable. In the Education Act of 1880, the ages of statutory attendance suggested above, were made a *duty*. There seems to have been some debate as to whether the compulsory age of 5 or 6 was to be adopted, but the age of 5 years was decided upon and became the statutory starting age. <sup>104</sup>

For the purpose of this study, appraisal of the infant school provision is paramount with the incorporation of children below the statutory starting age of 5 years. The result, from the 1888 Cross Commission, <sup>105</sup> was general approval for the under-fives with continued provision endorsed with ample accommodation though not detracting from the requirements for the children of statutory age 5 to

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<sup>103</sup> Szreter R. (1964) 'The origins of full-time compulsory education at 5' BJES (Nov.1964)

<sup>104</sup> Szreter R.(1964)

<sup>105</sup> E.Herbert Lyon (1888) Royal Education Commission, 1886-8'.A Summary of the Final Report containing the Conclusion and Recommendations of the Commissioners' pp.96-97

13. As Cross recommended, attendance of the under-fives should be *encouraged*.<sup>106</sup> The general assumption was provision for three and four year olds, whilst 'babies rooms' for under 3s were not uncommon in some larger conurbations, especially those under the London School Board. One significant witness, Chief Inspector Stewart was not aware that out of 163,832 children between the ages of 3 and 5 in the area of the London School Board, only 62,107 actually attended *efficient* schools. In the rest of the country only 424,038 children between these ages out of 1,211,704, appear on the registers of annual grant schools.<sup>107</sup>

In retrospect, the Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons, on the 'Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales' (1838), had suggested that children should be received from the age of *three*, and urged to study until the age of 13 - a proposal way ahead of the times. Younger children were still admitted after 1870 Act, and in 1872, the Education Department fixed 3 as the *minimum* age at which children in attendance at school might count for a grant, although children under the age of 3 might be admitted where places were available.

In England and Wales, compulsory schooling, finally confirmed in the Mundella Act of 1880, provided a safe haven for the younger children of parents working in factories; and by 1900, 50% of 3 to 4 year olds (even some two year olds)<sup>108</sup> were in infant schools with different teachers and teaching styles.

Kathleen Bathurst, Inspector with the Board of Education, however, appealed for

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<sup>106</sup> Smith F. (1931) 'A History of English Elementary Education 1760-1902' pp.329-330. Prof. Frank Smith omits this feature in his catalogue of recommendations from major and minor 'Cross' Reports. But before and after publication, he strongly supported the nursery school movements on Tyneside and later at Leeds.

<sup>107</sup> First Report of Cross Commission, 1886 (2998-3000) shows about one third of 3s to 5s were in school

<sup>108</sup> Lowndes G.A.N. (1969) 'The Silent Social Revolution' p.270 endorses this, comparing the number of 2's to 5's in schools (634,785) in 1900 was three times the number attending in 1965

nurseries.<sup>109</sup> Still many of the Inspectorate were unconverted. ‘Payment by Results’ had too big a hold on the whole administrative structure from the Department of Education through to the Inspectors, to the managers and teachers. No wonder the youngest children were ‘drilled’.

‘During the late Victorian and Edwardian years new ideas or, in the language of social science, ‘social constructions’ of children and childhood gained currency and became widely acceptable truths.’<sup>110</sup>

Even towards the end of the 19th century the ‘*good*’ teacher, or, the one who gained glowing reports from ‘*efficient*’ inspectors, was the teacher who drilled masses of small children in the 3Rs. They could not cope with kindergarten exercises, or, if they attempted to do so, more or less reduced them to a kind of drill. Somehow they were in the grip of a system.

The needs of the youngest children, however, began to be addressed with the administrative changes of the early 20th century. First came the Education Act of 1902. The 1870 Act had set up the School Boards, but these were now abolished, and Local Education Authorities took over control in Counties and Boroughs. Sir Robert Morant was appointed Permanent Secretary to the Board of Education, and from this turning point, *provision* for the education of young children became more ‘child-centred’ rather than teacher/administrator/ inspector/ or school-board centred.

The chief effect upon the education of young children at this time lay not with the great administrative changes of 1902, but with the formation in 1903 of a small but dynamic inspectorate of women which affected the history of education

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<sup>109</sup> Bathurst K. (May 1905). ‘The Need for National Nurseries’ in ‘Nineteenth Century and After’, pp.818-824 quoted in van der Eyken (1973) p.20

<sup>110</sup> Hendrick H. (1997) ‘Children, Childhood and English Society, 1880-1990’, p.9 ; James A. & James A.L. ‘Constructing Childhood’ (2004)

of very young children.

A brief look at the history of the inspectorate will show that during the first years (1840-1883) women were rigidly excluded even though there were special problems in connections with girls' and infants' schools. Their exclusion was merely a feature of Victorianism, and no one seemed to object. When the code of 1882 was introduced however, needlework and cookery became curriculum subjects in girls' schools. Surely *these* subjects could not justify a male inspector! A Directress of Needlework was appointed, and later an Inspector of Cookery – appointments made strictly by force of circumstances. In 1896, '...when the needs of girls and infants in elementary schools were considered sufficiently important'<sup>111</sup> a few women were appointed to junior positions to assist the men inspectors in girls' schools and infants' schools, but not in womens' training colleges. Their positions were subordinate to the men, but in 1903, a separate female inspectorate of eleven was formed under a chief *woman* inspector, the Hon. Maude Lawrence.<sup>112</sup> The women were to undertake inspection and enquiry into 'all matters needing the scrutiny and advice of women'.

In 1904, five of the women inspectors were commissioned to conduct an enquiry into the general question of children under five years of age attending the elementary infant schools. The points at issue seem to have been interpreted in different ways by different ladies, and so each reported independently of the others, and an individual slant was gained on each report. All reports were included in the publications of the Board of Education, in spite of the fact that one in particular was so blunt that many of the truths, hitherto unobserved or ignored,

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<sup>111</sup> Gordon, Peter (1988) 'Katherine Bathurst: a controversial woman inspector' in *Hist.of Educ.*(1988) Vol,17.No.3,p.193. Katherine Bathurst was one of the five women inspectors (1904) and her subsequent blunt criticisms led to a request for her resignation.

<sup>112</sup> Board of Education, (1905) Annual Report on years 1904-5, p.9

were brought to light. These reports of the women were especially noteworthy because of the keen observation of detail which had previously escaped the notice of the male inspectorate.

They seemed to have a greater understanding and sympathy for the difficulties facing the teachers of very young children and reported at great length on the good work of the kindergartens. They got down to realities on all practical difficulties which teachers have to cope with - the little things which consume precious hours of teaching time. The women also protested against the teaching of needlework to children from 3 to 5, saying that it was absurd to attempt to teach the babies to produce work when ‘...the tiny hand is still an imperfect, unformed tool...’<sup>113</sup>

As well as sweeping out the dead wood of the curriculum they brought to light the unhygienic, filthy conditions prevalent in many of the infants’ schools at that time. There was no sleeping accommodation for the babies - in fact many of them fell asleep on the floor and in corners, exposed to draught and dirt. They also attacked the galleries (so proudly invented by Wilderspin) because they harboured rubbish and dirt. The children were cramped together and the resultant teaching was of a military type - although perhaps the only means of ‘coping’ with 60 to 80 children! The actual teaching was often parrot-like repetition of object lessons and many of the topics were unsuitable for young children. As Roberts retrospectively remarks...

‘...There is surely little point in condemning the nineteenth-century infant school: it was of its time. The notorious galleries in which babes were packed to watch their teacher, the singing of alphabets and tables, the obsessive moralising so frequently practised - all these regrettable features were one of the best answers

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<sup>113</sup> Board of Education, (1905) Reports on Children under Five Years of Age in Public Elementary Schools by Women Inspectors of the Board of Education (1905) Cd.2726, pp. i-iii et passim



to large numbers of short-term pupils whose home environment was truly barbarous...<sup>114</sup>

From further attacks on the work in infants' schools it was gradually assumed that women should be appointed to inspect infant schools, as they were more qualified by nature for this work. Thus the reports made by women inspectors were summarised by the Chief Inspector and he endorsed the recommendation that there should be no formal instruction of the under-fives but, '...more play, more sleep, more free conversation, story telling and observation...'.<sup>115</sup>

He goes on to deplore the cramming of young children for the Standard I examination while still in the infants' school, and says that teachers of young children ought to aim to...

'... produce children well developed physically, full of interest and alertness mentally, and ready to grapple with difficulties intelligently...'<sup>116</sup>

In fact he infers that as '... children between the ages of three and five get practically no intellectual advantage from school instruction...', they had better be at home with their mothers, unless the home conditions are bad, in which case,'... 'they should be sent to nursery schools rather than schools of instruction...'<sup>117</sup>

As Raymont comments:-

'The fallaciousness of this inference lies in its identification of 'intellectual advantage' with progress in such matters as the 3Rs, and in its assumption that a nursery school is a place in which a child is taken care of, but learns nothing. A modern advocate of nursery schools would claim that on the contrary, a child in a good nursery school is learning things much more important for him than letters or figures, and that he is gaining a distinct intellectual advantage.'<sup>118</sup>

With the publications of the various reports of women inspectors, it became obvious that a systematic enquiry should be made into conditions of schools and education of very young children. In April 1907 the Board of Education referred

<sup>114</sup> Roberts A.F.B. (1972) 'A New View of the Infant School Movement', BJES (June 1972) , p.154

<sup>115</sup> Introductory memorandum by Chief Inspector, (1905) p. iii

<sup>116</sup> Intro. Mem. (1905) p. iii

<sup>117</sup> Intro. Mem. (1905) p. ii – one of the first uses of the official designation 'nursery school'

<sup>118</sup> Raymont T. (1937) p.273

the problem of ‘...the school attendance of children below the age of five...’ to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education. Its purpose (from terms of Reference to the Committee) was :-

‘To consider and advise the Board of Education in regard to the desirability or otherwise, both on educational and other grounds, of discouraging the attendance at school of children under the age of (say) five years, on the assumption that, in the event of the change being found generally desirable, the moneys, now payable by the Board of Education in the shape of grant in respect of the attendance of such children, should still be payable to Local Education Authorities, in greater relief of their expenditure in educating the children over five years of age...’<sup>119</sup>

That such an enquiry was necessary, showed that there was considerable doubt as to the wisdom of allowing children under five to attend infant schools at all. Attendance between three and five had always been permissive and during the last fifteen years of the 19th century, about one third of all children in this age group in England and Wales were on the registers of the elementary schools. As has been shown, objections had been raised by medical men on grounds of hygiene, and by educationists on unsuitability of curriculum for the very young child.

By this time several of the School Boards in London had medical officers - the first one was appointed in 1890. Bradford followed when a report in 1892 by Dr. Francis Warner, based on an examination of 50,000 pupils in various types of schools, was published. Attention was drawn by him and other medical officers of the incidence of infectious diseases in relation to school attendance, and urged that :-

‘... attendance at school below the age of five was prejudicial to health since it deprived young children of fresh air, exercise, adequate freedom of movement, and sleep at a critical stage in their development...’<sup>120</sup>

‘The Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904) called attention to unhygienic conditions in public elementary schools and

<sup>119</sup> Report of Consultative Committee of Board of Education, (1907)

<sup>120</sup> 1933 Report p.31

recommended that systematised medical inspection of all school children should be imposed as a public duty on every Local Education Authority...<sup>121</sup>

When all the relevant material was collected and studied by women inspectors, the Board lost no time in issuing appropriate administrative sanctions (Article 53 of the Code, 1905). Thus it was decided that Local Education Authorities need no longer be compelled to admit the 3s to 5s, but could settle the problem of *provision* in their own way.

Evidence from the North East came from the Secretary of the Newcastle-on-Tyne Education Committee in post for only twelve months having previously served in the Borough of Darlington. The decision to exclude under-fives from the public elementary schools in Newcastle had been taken before the witness Mr. Coffin, arrived. In common with several other authorities the decision arose out of the Board's proposal to increase the grants for older scholars if the younger ones were excluded. An educational consideration was also present arising from a feeling 'in the north', not prevalent in the south, that the children are sent to school to *learn!* There was no medical consideration in detail.<sup>122</sup>

Thus after unclear and unpromising beginnings, a classic English compromise emerged which accelerated a chaotic state of affairs! The complexity of the situation was acknowledged by the Board in its Prefatory Note to the Report (1908).

'There are few questions arising in the field of educational science or practice upon which a greater diversity of opinion has been found to exist than that of the age at which it is desirable in the interests of the children themselves and of the community at large that attendance at school should commence.... This diversity of opinion is due in no doubt to the unusual complexity of the problem, which is nowhere more effectively displayed than in the exhaustive Report upon which the Consultative Committee have just presented to the Board of Education and which is published herewith...'<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> 1933 Report p.32 (Footnote 1)

<sup>122</sup> Witness Mr. Coffin to Consultative Committee (1908) – see Appendix 1

<sup>123</sup> Board of Education (1908) Report of the Consultative Committee upon the School Attendance of Children below the Age of Five. HMSO, cd.4259, p.1. London.

Some LEAs tried to draw a parallel with the continental countries where the entry age was six. Others studied the social and medical conditions and, even more, the finance...

'The marked fall in the number of children below the age of five in public elementary schools during the first decade of the present century was doubtless accelerated by the action of various local authorities in excluding children below the age of five under article 53 of the code for 1905...

...In 1900 ... there were 615,607 children between the ages of 3 and 5 in the Public Elementary Schools. In 1904-5 the number of such children had fallen to 538,268. In 1905-6 the number again dropped, to 479,643'.<sup>124</sup>

Thirty two local authorities totally excluded the under-fives but the major industrial towns were not among these, (thereby ear-marking future potential areas of greatest need)<sup>125</sup> Thus '... the case for the public provision of nursery schools in industrial towns was strong, if only on humanitarian grounds.'<sup>126</sup> By the outbreak of the Great War, of the 35,482 children between the ages of 3 and 5 in the 13 administrative districts of County Durham, none were in elementary school.<sup>127</sup>

Many individuals were called upon to give evidence from all aspects of the problem of the under- fives, e.g. educational, medical and administrative. Bilton even found a significant similarity between these conditions, findings and recommendations in the later 20th century, although she does not acknowledge the work of Plowden, 1967.<sup>128</sup> However no reference was made to the work of the free kindergartens when these institutions made such an important contribution to

<sup>124</sup> 1933 Report p.32, (Footnote 2)

<sup>125</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1908) Report of Consult.Com.

<sup>126</sup> Whitbread N. (1972)' The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School' p.65

<sup>127</sup> D.C.C.Elementary Education Census, July 1914; D.R.O.Annual Report 30.9.14

<u>Year</u>	<u>Children under five in Durham</u>	<u>Attending Elementary School</u>
1909	33,832	5,239
1910	34,171	3,458
1911	35,652	371
1912	37,245	6
1913	36,879	1
1914	35,482	0

<sup>128</sup> Bilton H. (1993) 'Under fives in compulsory schooling 1908 and 1988. How far have we come?' in 'Early Child Development and Care' Vol.91 pp.51-63

provision for the under-fives.

The English Nursery School therefore had numerous roots. Not only have we to consider the dire conditions of the pre-school child within the infants' schools, but also the fact that at the same time in this country a number of *free* kindergartens had evolved, established by philanthropic effort in London, Manchester and other large towns in the last quarter of the 19th century. Their origins were inspired by similar developments in France, Germany and Switzerland, e.g., *ecoles maternelles*, and *ecoles gardiennes*, kindergartens and *crèches*. Such institutions were designed for children in very poor homes, and it was hoped that within the environment of the kindergarten the child's whole personality and physique would develop in a healthy way. The ethos of the kindergarten or 'child garden' focused more on the physical well-being of young children, in the belief that 'health and education went hand in hand...'<sup>129</sup>

In Italy, Maria Montessori opened her first 'Casa dei Bambini' in 1907, where the underlying principle was that of '...treating children with respect as unique individuals with individual needs...'<sup>130</sup> Maria Montessori was the first woman to receive a medical degree in Italy and like Froebel, she saw '...the value of self-initiated activity for young children under adult guidance...'.<sup>131</sup> Most of her work was with disadvantaged children in a structured, prepared environment. She put more emphasis on learning about real life, with constructive play materials which helped sensory discrimination in colour and shape matching, some of which are still found in Montessori schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In England they had concentrated on the physical well-being of the children,

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<sup>129</sup> Straw H. 'The nursery garden' in 'Early Child Development and Care', p.111

<sup>130</sup> O'Donnell M. (2007) 'Maria Montessori' p.168

<sup>131</sup> Smith P.K. (2010) p.23

and often provided meals and baths. The most notable name associated with the Free Kindergarten Movement was Sir William Mather who had set up an establishment at Salford as early as 1873, which could be regarded as a forerunner to the nursery school movement in Britain.

The Free Kindergartens were instituted because it was observed that many of the children in infants' schools in Salford in the early 1870s were noticeably underfed. Sir William Mather thought of building a special institution for training infants on kindergarten lines, but also with arrangements for feeding and clothing them during school hours and to give adequate provision for rest and play. Describing the school, Mather says that several cottages in a slum were bought and demolished. On this space Queen Street Institute was built and opened by Bishop Fraser in 1873, and later became known as the William Mather Institute.

It had kitchens, baths, rest rooms and classrooms to accommodate 500 infants from 2 to 7. A German Kindergartnerin from Berlin was engaged and with English assistants formed a very successful school. In 1883, the Salford Day Nursery, which carried out the 'Nursery' part of the Free Kindergarten was opened, and Sir William Mather was one of its founders. It was later incorporated (1903) with the Greengate Dispensary, again with Mather's help, and became one of the earliest Open Air Schools for city children in England. Others were established at Bradford, London and Birmingham.

However England was not the only country engaged in this form of social welfare work. Free Kindergartens were being established throughout the United States, and influenced by the movement there, Miss Adelaide Wragge, Principal of Blackheath Training College, established a Free Kindergarten at Woolwich in 1900 where she gave a series of lectures on 'Froebel - the man, his life and work,

philosophy and methods' which were attended by Grace Owen,<sup>132</sup> who was also involved in the kindergarten movement in the United States. A third was opened at Edinburgh in 1903 and many other large towns followed suit.

The Free Kindergartens aimed chiefly at the provision of a healthy environment with free activities, training in good habits, and social training between peers and between parents and staff. With subsequent legislation, many of these Free Kindergartens became Nursery Schools and developed from their original foundations without a break. In allowing the under-fives to attend school, the Consultative Committee (1908) reported that they felt it would be bad policy to exclude *all* children under five from attendance at school, but it was essential that the right kind of school should be provided.<sup>133</sup> Schools which offered only a training in the 3Rs were of little use to the under fives, but where a child's home conditions were *bad*, a nursery school was the answer.

Also the Committee were emphatic on the type of person suited to nursery teaching. Some of the male inspectorate had been guilty of suggesting that a nice motherly, patient young girl would be able to 'mind' young ones quite successfully, but the Committee laid down that the care of younger infants was as arduous as teaching the older ones. They stressed that the teacher should have been 'trained on Froebelian principles in the best sense of the term...'.<sup>134</sup>

The Committee (unlike more recent exponents) did not suggest separate training of nursery teachers from that of infants, but thought that among those trained, some would exhibit a special aptitude for the very young. However they did advise on school helps to attend to the general physical needs of the children –

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<sup>132</sup> Grace Owen's manuscript notebook of these lectures (n.d.) is in my possession. The significance of Grace Owen's contribution can be seen in the following chapters.

<sup>133</sup> Board of Education (1908) Cd.4259, App.5 to Comm.Rep.

<sup>134</sup> Rep. Cons. Com. (1908) See also Witness Grace Owen on Nursery Teachers - Appendix 2

to be appointed in addition to, and not in place of the teacher.

On the whole the Committee's attitude was that 'the proper place for a child between 3 and 5 years of age was at home with its mother', provided that the home conditions were satisfactory in the sense defined by the Committee. Satisfactory home conditions were those in which the mother did her duty by the children - where she knew how to care for them properly, and to make the best use of her limited means. That is to say, where employment did not keep her away from home, where the home itself was clean, well-lighted, well-ventilated and not over-cramped, and where the youngest children were within easy reach of some safe place to play out-of-doors, then the committee commented:-

'... that the home affords advantages for the early stage of education which cannot be reproduced by any school or public institution...' <sup>135</sup>

However, the ideal system of home education for very young children was far from being universally obtainable in England and Wales.

'... The condition of English working class life must be taken as it is found. It would be fatal to ignore this and to insist prematurely on the general adoption of a system which, however desirable in theory, is suited only to those parts of the community where the industrial and social conditions are in an unusually advanced state. In most districts the improvement of those conditions, and the improvement of public policy in respect of the education of younger children must go hand in hand...' <sup>136</sup>

Did the Committee mean that nursery schools were not necessary, or even desirable, for the younger children of *average* people? How could people from *ordinary* homes, no matter how devoted and loving the mother, provide anything like the facilities of the nursery school? Nor was the average mother trained in child development, so that she could assist and regulate the child's physical and mental needs.

The Committee also considered that from the educational advantages,

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<sup>135</sup> Report of Consult.Com (1908) quoted in 1933 Report p.32

<sup>136</sup> Report of Consult.Com (1908) quoted in 1933 Report p.30



economy and convenience of administration, schools attached to existing infants' schools were the best type:-

'The work and influences of good nursery schools, combined with improvements in the course of education provided for older girls, will do much to foster a truer and better tradition of home life, which in turn will enable Education Authorities to leave the education of these young children more and more to their parents.... For the present the Committee consider that nursery schools are in many cases a practical necessity. They believe that great advantages may be secured by their proper use, and that any effect that may be directed to this end will be amply repaid in the improved healthiness, intelligence and happiness of future generations'.<sup>137</sup>

Thus an early definition of a 'nursery school' is given as follows:-

'As a general name for schools where the special needs of small children are met by the provision of special rooms, special curriculum, and special teaching the committee would adopt the term 'nursery school'. Under the heading the Committee would include alike those Public Elementary Schools, the number of which they are glad to believe is increasing, which at present contain properly organised classes for younger infants (commonly called 'Babies' Classes' and 'Babies' Rooms'), and also any other institution where the arrangements for the younger infants approximate to those of the Kindergarten or Day Nursery...'<sup>138</sup>

It will be observed that the connotation of the term 'nursery school' was still, in 1908, rather vague and with the turn of the century, a multitude of facets regarding *provision* for the under-fives presented themselves for consideration.

Recommendations from H.M. Inspectors for exclusion of the under-fives due to unsuitable curriculum, and from Medical Officers, due to unsuitable physical conditions, were discouraging; yet philanthropic ventures in many forms of social welfare were growing up in the midst of despair. Although the Committee's Report was made public in 1908, no legal or administrative sanctions were made until 1918. There were no state grants for nursery schools, though grants were available for day nurseries from 1914. (Money *can* be found when social pressures, in this case to provide for working mothers engaged in war work in 1914, become a priority).

<sup>137</sup> Report of Consult. Com. (1908) in 1933 Rep. p.32

<sup>138</sup> Report of Consult Com. (1908) in 1933 Rep. p.19

The role of the State in the provision of education for all ages is as much to do with the relationship between the State and the citizens it represents, as it is about education per se. In spite of the intention of the State, the slow unsystematic growth of English nursery schools lay for the main part, in the hands of private individuals. One early nursery school was founded in Manchester by converting two cottages, but the most famous was at Deptford founded by Rachel and Margaret McMillan in 1911. This school, which became a model for other nursery schools, was built in the form of a low shelter, grouped round a garden so that the children experienced open-air conditions - clearly in 'the Owenite developmental tradition.'<sup>139</sup> Margaret McMillan was one of the pioneer figures of social reform from the 1890s until her death in 1931. She was a prominent member of the Independent Labour Party and active on the Bradford School Board in the 1890s. With her sister she was involved in the development and introduction of medical inspections, school meals, school clinics, camp schools and the nursery school movement.<sup>140</sup>

'...The passing of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act in 1906, and of the Act of 1907, which provided for medical inspection, was due in no small measure to their efforts...'<sup>141</sup>

Great improvements were effected in the first two decades of the 20th century with regard to child health. Medical officers were appointed and in 1908 systematic inspection of children in public elementary schools followed. Salaried school architects were also appointed to design better buildings, with emphasis on lighting, ventilation, sanitation and cubic space per child.

So the fuse was ignited; now events gathered impetus, and spurred on by

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<sup>139</sup> Whitbread N. (1972) 'The Evolution of the Infant-Nursery School' p.53

<sup>140</sup> Laybourne K. in Bradburn E. (1989) 'Margaret McMillan ; Portrait of a Pioneer' (1989) in J.E.A.H. xxiii. No.1, Jan.1991, p.69

<sup>141</sup> Barnard H.C. (1971) 'A History of English Education from 1760' p.229

the Great War, with its emergency measures, legislation was inevitable. This finally came in 1918, and marked the climax of the efforts of several enlightened individuals. With the coming of the franchise for women, the emancipation of females changed the role of women and contributed to a renewed focus on *provision* for the youngest children.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Social, economic and political issues leading to improved living conditions; and the changing role of women during the 19th and 20th centuries**

As nursery provision must involve the mothers of the youngest children it is essential to look at the changing circumstances in which women found themselves. These included not only economic changes but also new legislative and demographic proposals. Movements for Women's Rights emerged whilst improvements in health and social care, reduction of working hours, and various measures to offset poverty were introduced. A chronological survey will indicate women's working conditions from the beginning of the 20th century to the post-war period with particular focus on women in both world wars.

The proliferation of educational ideas in Britain and Europe was rendered less effective without a receptive seed bed, and that seed bed was undergoing dramatic changes during the 18th and 19th centuries especially among the working classes.<sup>1</sup> In an agricultural economy the changing role of women over the 200 years of English History was largely a direct result of the social and economic issues of the period, and contributed to '... the increasing emphasis in formal schooling...'<sup>2</sup> for the simple reason that those children whose mothers were at work had to be looked after - somewhere, thus highlighting the need for *provision* for all children of working mothers and especially the youngest children.

In the context of this study, '... appropriate early years education had been

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<sup>1</sup> Workers in factories, domestic service and on the land

<sup>2</sup> O'Day R (1982) 'Education and Society 1500-1800' p.8

called for by school inspectors and by the pioneers of early years education...’,<sup>3</sup> but this was always an area of conflicting research which showed that maternal care within the home is the most secure background for healthy child development,<sup>4</sup> thus challenging those promoting educational opportunities for the youngest children. Also, it was claimed that educational systems were often ‘... an area where the interests and objectives of different classes, strata and even groups, meet and very often clash...’.<sup>5</sup>

Looking at these varying issues from a historical of view, progress in making any provision was slow, but certainly after the middle of the 18th century, an acute awareness of need becomes apparent. The task of earning enough to provide for the basic needs of the family in the 18th century, reinforced by emerging theories and concerns for the education and health of young children, accelerated philanthropic efforts - something had to be done!

The produce of a few acres was not enough to keep a family in comfort yet the picture of women in the home at this time shows that the majority toiled in the fields, managed the household, took some part in textile work as well as looking after the younger children. When weaving and agriculture were separated due to the establishment of factories, many workers were either driven out, or attracted by the opportunities afforded by life in the towns. It was claimed that from the economic point of view, ‘... the Agrarian revolution was economically justified, but socially disastrous...’.<sup>6</sup> However :-

‘The total result was, in the long run, undoubtedly beneficial, with the mass of English workers in 1900 enjoying a substantially higher standard of living than their

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<sup>3</sup> Crawford K.(2003) ‘Contemporary Issues in Education – an introduction’ Chap.4, p.72

<sup>4</sup> Bowlby J. (Geneva,1965) ‘Deprivation of maternal care : A reassessment of its effects’, W.H.O. Public Health Papers. No.14

<sup>5</sup> Simon B. (1985) ‘Can Education Change Society?’ in ‘Does Education Matter?’ p.20

<sup>6</sup> Gregg P. (1973) ‘A Social and Economic History of England,1760 -1955’ p.27

forefathers had enjoyed before industrialisation.’<sup>7</sup>

Toynbee and others have interpreted the results by social costs rather than by economic gains. Certainly it led to a changed position of the wife within the home, and, eventually, the woman within society. Children were still to be cared for, but the relative independence of the home contrasted with the discipline of the factory; and, significantly there was no plot of land to supplement income. So women who found work in factories and mines, needed *provision* for their children while they were at work.

Another important feature of change during the industrial revolution impinging on educational provision was the explosion in the *population* from approximately 5.5 million in 1700, to 36 million in 1900; which, linked to the growth of the factories, led to concentrations in parts of the North East and particularly areas along the Tyne.<sup>8</sup> This highlighted the need for *local* as well as national educational provision, especially for the younger children, as older brothers and sisters were often also employed in the factories.

Life in a factory or colliery row was also quite different from life in a cottage. People lived closer together, and ideas ‘rubbed off’ from one to another. Legislation in the work place in respect of women and children, initially *protected* children from being used as cheap labour, and is directly linked with the beginnings of compulsory education for children in England. In the last quarter of the 19th century, the opposition to the extension of factory legislation in so far as it applied to women, was associated with a movement for the improvement of the political, social and economic status of women.

Women of the upper and middle classes began to resent their exclusion

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<sup>7</sup> Hartwell R.M. (1965) ‘The Industrial Revolution in England’ p.22

<sup>8</sup> Figures from the Registrar General’s Statistics show:- 1700-5.5million, 1750-6million, 1801-9million, 1851-18million, 1901-36million (rounded-up totals)

from the franchise and from the learned professions, and some of those who were agitating for the removal of these constraints, saw in the limitations imposed upon women's work in factories, further examples of injustice to their sex. However women of the working classes were not so excluded from work. They were given too much of it, at too small a wage, so that *paying* for child care was not an option. During the later part of the 19th century there was a gradual improvement of working conditions and enhanced status, so that working for a wage became desirable (even necessary) for some women, obliging the providing bodies to set up appropriate schooling for their children, and in this context, the under-fives.

Other areas of social amelioration affecting the daily lives of working class women included such institutions as the *Co-operative Movement* which helped even the poorest people to become share holders in the retail purchasing of basic supplies. Robert Owen, one of the first providers for the youngest children<sup>9</sup> was also considered the father of the Co-operative Movement. His 'socialism' not only promoted philanthropy but also a degree of self-help which would enhance self-esteem. The growth of family allegiance to the Co-op. extended well into the 20th century. A spirit of solidarity among the members was handed down from one generation to another and the Co-operative Movement contributed towards improving conditions in working class homes. With food, clothing and household goods sold at competitive prices, families enjoyed a better standard of living than previous generations.

Meanwhile during the 18th and 19th centuries, many people lived under appalling conditions. There was no knowledge of elementary hygienic rules, and no effort was made by the authorities, local or national, to remedy conditions

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<sup>9</sup> See Ch.1 pp.24-25

prejudicial to health. Disease and epidemics were rife. Infant mortality was high, and few of those who did survive managed to live to a ripe old age. Conditions in Durham City in 1849 were reported :-

'Upon personal inspection the condition of the principal dwellings of the poor were found to be ill-ventilated, excessively crowded, and surrounded by accumulations of filth of the most offensive type, calculated in a very high degree to engender all kinds of disease. The Market Place drains all its charge by open moats into Silver Street Lane and Back Lane where they fill an offensive gutter which, beyond St. Nicholas's Church, ends in an open stagnant ditch. Further on is a large depot for street sweepings including soil, filth, and slops cast out from the houses into the street...  
...Mine has been no grateful task. This city is associated in men's minds with the architectural splendour of ecclesiastical dignity.'<sup>10</sup>

There was no domestic sanitary provision, and it was not considered necessary to install an independent water supply for each house. These were badly ventilated and quickly became foul and verminous. As in Durham City (above) no network of mains drainage was established, and it was 1850 before cesspools were abolished in London. There was no system of collecting and destroying house refuse, and this was deposited in gutters and odd corners, where it contributed to further disease. The existing water supply was often polluted by nearby cesspools or burial grounds.

To improve health, therefore, necessitated a pure and adequate water supply and mains drainage - utilities which were still absent in many homes even in the early 20th century and which inhibited healthy growth and development among young children.

After a severe epidemic of cholera, in 1847, public demand, roused by Edwin Chadwick had led to the formation of a Central Board of Health. It then became the *duty* of local authorities to provide water, drainage and street cleaning.

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<sup>10</sup> Clark, George Thomas, Superintendent of the General Board of Health (Report on Durham City calling for the introduction of the Public Health Act ). Findings were accepted and appropriate measures put in place.



Progress was slow - the task was vast and petty bureaucracy and administration could hamper schemes. By the Public Health Act, 1872, the whole country was divided into sanitary districts, and by a further Act of 1875, each authority was required to appoint a medical officer of health, a surveyor and a sanitary inspector.<sup>11</sup> Measures also had to be taken to prevent the spread of infectious diseases as well as the paving, lighting, cleaning of streets, and provision of fire engines. Later, inspection of shops, markets, slaughter houses, and workshops was undertaken by sanitary officers.

One of the great scourges of the era was the contagious disease, diphtheria. It continued in England and Wales, and in a diminishing degree to the period of WW2 and afterwards. At the annual Harben lecture(1900) Prof W. R. Smith, President of the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene, drew on his experience as Medical officer of the School Board for London and as Chairman of the Medical sub-Committee of the Metropolitan Asylums Board...

'The figures for children's fatalities from diphtheria are alarming. In the years 1891-1897 over 11,000 under 5s in London and almost twice that number outside London with roughly half those numbers in the 5 -10 years group. The northern counties had less incidence than the south though Durham was amongst the highest for the North...'<sup>12</sup>

By 1900 medical experts were already working hard to identify treatment and preventive measures leading to the establishment of a future full-time school medical service.<sup>13</sup>

However many families with young children lived in towns of squalid housing even though by 1850 local authorities had been empowered to erect cottages for workmen. Many of these were very basic and soon led to

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<sup>11</sup> Rachel McMillan initially trained as a sanitary inspector and came face to face with deplorable conditions in public health

<sup>12</sup> Extracts from 'Journal of State Medicine' Vol. VIII Nos.1,2,3 pp. 1-34, 65-105, 151-183 Jan.-Mar.1900 (Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene)

<sup>13</sup> Begg, Dr Norman T. (Communicable Disease Service Centre) in 'Health and Hygiene' (Oct.1999) Vol.20, No.4 pp. 141-154

overcrowding and subsequent ill-health. Authorities could condemn private property but often feared the power of landlords, who were usually in prominent positions on councils, and could seek dismissal of over-enthusiastic medical officers and sanitary inspectors. The local authorities were not yet strong enough to tackle the housing problem. As legislation strengthened their position however, the housing problem worsened due to the rise in population and became one of the chief causes of poor child health which activated the work of the McMillans, Mather and others in the large industrial towns in respect of provision and care for the youngest and most vulnerable members of society. For millions of children their daily lives were spent in unhealthy, overcrowded, insanitary conditions.

Even by the 20th century there was still an acute shortage of living accommodation, aggravated by demographic increases, which further added to problems of overcrowding, rendering the housing problem virtually insoluble and which was only addressed by the massive programme of building council (social) housing from the 1920s, and particularly in the 1930s, which saw the biggest programme of house building in British history. By 1961 the census figures showed that several millions of people were still living in sub-standard housing without the essentials of a fixed bath, hot water, water closets, etc<sup>14</sup>

How were living conditions further improved? For the benefit of the working classes, a *national insurance* scheme was set up in 1911 (commonly known as 'Lloyd George', after its promoter)<sup>15</sup> to help when sickness rendered the breadwinner unfit for work and to provide for medical attention, which had formerly been beyond the means of working people. The public health authorities also made

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<sup>14</sup> From personal experience as a census enumerator in Durham City (1961)

<sup>15</sup> Pike E.R. (1972) 'Human Documents of the Lloyd George Era' pp.100-103. A contributory scheme which provided for all manual workers between the ages of 16 and 70

great strides in combating infant mortality by making births notifiable within 48 hours, by engaging health visitors and by training midwives. As for further child benefits...

'The importance of childhood had been assuming social prominence and led to school feeding(1906) and School Medical Inspections(1907)'<sup>16</sup>

In 1919, the Local Government Board was replaced by the Ministry of Health and some health matters which had been conducted by the Board of Education and Home Office, now came under the Ministry of Health.<sup>17</sup> In 1946, the National Health Service Act was passed, making *ALL* health services available for *ALL* people, free of charge, the scheme being financed by National Insurance and grants from local rates and the Treasury - all measures contributing to better health and care for all adults and children without being a drain on the family income.

Improvements in social and economic conditions for the poorest families throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries usually came as a direct result of philanthropic works often of religious inspiration.<sup>18</sup> Private charities were assumed to be the *normal* way of relieving suffering, educating the young and dealing with social malaise.<sup>19</sup> Both by its successes and its failures *philanthropy* did a great deal to disclose the real dimensions of social capital being dependent on 'the ability of human beings to create trust, norms and networks that facilitate social

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<sup>16</sup> Hendrick H. (2007) 'Optimism and Hope versus Anxiety and Narcissism : Some thoughts on Children's Welfare, Yesterday and Today' in Hist.of Educ.Vol. 36, No.6 Nov.2007, p.749 : Acts of 1906 & 1907 supported by the McMillans

<sup>17</sup> In particular, powers relating to mothers and young children (Maternity and Child Welfare Act,1918) and to the medical inspection and treatment of school children

<sup>18</sup> Report of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority and Welfare Services 1959, par.1031 (Younghusband Report)

<sup>19</sup> As far as the provision of nursery education goes, this facet of philanthropy continued well into the 20th century

organisations',<sup>20</sup> so that by the 1930s it could be said that:-

'Practically every public social service in operation today has its roots in some form of voluntary provision'.<sup>21</sup>

Voluntary effort, whatever its accomplishments, could not cope effectively with the problems of urban industrial society and ultimately, the greater resources of the state, using private charity as a model, were required. This was the case in the fields of public health and education, and is mirrored in provision for the under-fives. In this sphere philanthropic support came from Quakers, Presbyterians, the Church of England and the Save the Children Fund, all being responsible for local foundations<sup>22</sup> many of which were eventually taken over by public organisations. Contemporaneous authors of social surveys tried to determine the *causes* of poverty and the palliative measures for its alleviation. Booth put poverty as caused by casual or irregular employment. About one-fifth were in poverty because of circumstances - large families or sickness, and one-seventh were poor because of habit - idleness, thriftlessness or drunkenness'.<sup>23</sup> In addition to this, Rowntree would include low wages, or low wages combined with large families, so that if the wife or one child, was *not* working in addition to the breadwinner, the family was living in poverty.<sup>24</sup>

Additional measures for ensuring the *security* of life among the working classes were simultaneously enacted during the 19th century, which made conditions less precarious, e.g., Employers' Liability Act (1880), and Workers' Compensation Act (1896). In 1909, Old Age Pensions were instituted, and in

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<sup>20</sup> Putnam R. (1995) 'Journal of Democracy' quoted in Spence J. Aiston S.J & Meikle M.M.(eds.) (2009) 'Women, Education, and Agency, 1600-2000'.

<sup>21</sup> P.E.P. (1937) Report on British Social Services, p.49

<sup>22</sup> See Chap 4 - case studies

<sup>23</sup> Booth Charles (1892) 'Life and Labour of the People in London':1, pp. 46-49 quoted in Floud R.& Johnson P. (2003) 'The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain vol.2, Economic Mobility 1860-1939' pp.302-3

<sup>24</sup> Rowntree B.S. & Lasker B. (1911) 'Unemployment, a social study' pp.130-3

1911, National Insurance Accounts show how the conditions improved for *all* workers including *women*,<sup>25</sup> for as well as being the ‘unpaid housekeepers’, many now had time for reading, viewing wider horizons and seeking educational opportunities outside their own homes. For centuries the *education* of women had been within the household or church, so that a quantitative or qualitative analysis of educational ability was almost impossible. Nevertheless, as working class conditions began to improve, many women became more employable outside the home, thus highlighting a demand for support for their young children. This change in women’s role was helped by the progress made in *parliamentary reform*, although in fact the franchise was not extended to *all* women until the 20th century when it was finally achieved largely as a result of the work of the Suffragettes, 400 of whom served prison sentences for their cause. After 1909, militancy increased and ‘...the first world war may have been the final catalyst which proved women deserved a vote...’<sup>26</sup>

The extension of the franchise was also a result of *social and economic* reform, and one which shows most clearly the struggles of ordinary people for a voice in social concerns and, in this context, in *educational provision*.

Members of Parliament were still recruited from the wealthy classes, but it was inevitable that the day would come when the working classes would prefer to be represented in Parliament by a man - *or woman* - of their own kind who would support such pertinent social causes as education. Women, through the vote, would be able to make demands on the respective Governments to champion the *causes most important to them – such as provision for their children!*

Suffragette pressures pushed forward the cause of women and by the

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<sup>25</sup> Bruce M. (1968) ‘The Coming of the Welfare State’

<sup>26</sup> Sebba A. (2009) ‘Sisters in arms: mistresses of their fate’ p.34 , in ‘Sunday Telegraph’ 17.5.09

Representation of the Peoples Act (1918), a redistribution of seats took place on a mathematical basis according to the number of eligible voters, and, for the purposes of this survey, the franchise was enlarged by the extension of the vote to *women* over thirty who were householders, or wives of householders. At the same time, women were made eligible for membership of the House of Commons. In 1928, the vote was given to all women of 21 years of age. From now on they had a voice in the affairs of the country on an equal footing with men.

Outstanding amongst women M.Ps. was Nancy, Lady Astor. Born into a wealthy American family in 1879 she married at 21 and arrived in England in 1904 as a young divorcee, to marry Waldorf Astor, a Conservative M.P. for Plymouth. When he was elevated to the House of Lords on the death of his father in 1919, Nancy won the vacancy and became the first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons, at the age of 40. Her maiden speech was in favour of the Temperance Society, and in 1923 she introduced a Bill to raise to 18 the age qualification for the purchase of alcohol. She campaigned for women's suffrage (at 21) and equal opportunities in the Civil Service as well as being a strong supporter of *nursery schools*. She had visited a nursery school in Stepney as early as 1914, and was aware of the requirements of a model nursery.<sup>27</sup> With unlimited effrontery, 'Nancy' Astor charmed everyone with her passion for women's causes.

She was supported in her campaigns for women and young children by Margaret Wintringham, (also b.1879) who became Liberal M.P. for Louth, (Lincolnshire) in 1921 on the death of her husband Tom, the sitting member. She became the second woman to gain a seat in the House of Commons. Educated at a girls' grammar school and Bedford College, she became a teacher, and, like

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendices 3 & 4

Lady Astor, she was also a member of the Temperance Society. She championed the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, Equal Guardianship of Infants' Bill, and women in the Police Force (the first being appointed in Grantham, Lincs.) Although Lady Astor continued as an MP until 1945, Mrs Wintringham lost her seat in 1924 and failed in both 1929 and 1935 to return to Parliament.<sup>28</sup> Although of opposing political persuasion, both were involved in founding the Nursery School Association in 1923. Also in 1919, the embryo Labour Party, led by Arthur Henderson, President of the Board of Education, added to their Conservative and Liberal efforts and ...

'...came out in favour and issued a pamphlet advocating universal nursery education...'.<sup>29</sup>

The years 1900-1945 also saw a revolution in *attitudes to women at work*. In fact, the changing role of women in the 19th and 20th centuries has been described as 'a revolution in two stages'.<sup>30</sup> The shift of industry away from the home had produced far reaching effects creating the dependent family with a change in social pattern from the co-operative family unit, working and living as a group, to the 'breadwinner' with a wife and family, whose economic welfare depended on his successes in bringing home an adequate wage to support them. Should there be an opportunity for the wife also to work, then there would be a *demand for provision* for the youngest children not in full time education.

During and following the Great War, employment undertaken by women became more varied. In July 1915, 40,000 women in London, led by Mrs. Pankhurst, leader of the Suffragettes, had demanded ... '*The Right to Work*' and to participate in the war effort, for...

<sup>28</sup> [www.spartans.schoolnet.co.uk](http://www.spartans.schoolnet.co.uk) (03.01.2010)

<sup>29</sup> Labour Party (1919) 'Nursery Schools', a Memorandum prepared by the Advisory Comm. on Education pp.21-22 in Van der Eyken W. (1973) 'Education, the Child and Society, a documentary history 1900-1973'.

<sup>30</sup> Myrdal A. & Klein V. (1956) 'Women's Two Roles' p.1

‘...despite the Treasury Agreement, employers and unions are dragging their feet over allowing women in the workplace...’<sup>31</sup>

Consequently attitudes of society towards working women began to change and ‘...due to the demand for labour, women moved into better paid jobs.’<sup>32</sup> Between 1914 and 1918, the number of *working women* went up by one and one third millions. Nearly 200,000 women entered Government departments. Half a million took over the clerical work in private offices. Women acted as conductors on trams and buses. A quarter of a million worked on the land. These examples high-lighted the need for *provision* for their younger children. By the summer of 1915 the Government had...

‘...introduced a Women’s War register with the purpose of investigating the availability of women’s labour, either trained or untrained. Within two weeks 33,000 women had enrolled ...’<sup>33</sup>

In the following year the greatest increase in women workers was in engineering shops where almost 800,000 were recruited. Against this there was one striking decline: domestic servants were fewer by 400,000.<sup>34</sup>

‘...It is difficult to get a complete picture of wartime employment of north eastern women but some details for Darlington are interesting. After an offer from two women to serve as tram conductors to release men for active service on 2nd May 1915, by the end of the month it was decided that eight women should replace six men on the Cockerton /Barton Street route. So that domestic work should not be upset, only women of 25 and over would be employed. One woman learned to drive on the Eastbourne route...

‘...The shell factory was built on to the North Eastern Railway works in 1915 and thousands of applications were received from women. Basic earnings were about 30/- per week but it was possible to earn £5 - £6 especially on night-shift work...’<sup>35</sup>

Indeed women workers numbered over 1000 out of a total of 1150 of the workers at the shell factory in the Darlington railway workshops<sup>36</sup> and like other

<sup>31</sup> Nicholson C. (2001) ‘The First World War. Europe 1914-1918’ p.158

<sup>32</sup> Andrews I.O. (1921) ‘The Economic Effects of the World War upon Women and Children in Great Britain’ Ch. IV

<sup>33</sup> Mayer Annette (2002) ‘Women in Britain 1900-2000’ p.16

<sup>34</sup> Taylor A.J.P., (1965) ‘English History, 1914-1945’, p.45 ; Thomas M. (2003) in Floud R. & Johnson P. (eds.) pp.123-4

<sup>35</sup> Darlington Historical Society, ‘Darlington 50 years ago’ p.5

<sup>36</sup> McReady M. (ed.) (2002) ‘The People’s History : Women of Old County Durham’ pp. 68 & 72



female munitions workers (or Munitionettes, as they were called) fielded a women's football team which played other munitions workers throughout the North East. For many of them this was a liberating experience, as they pushed back the boundaries of social conventions, not only in the workplace, but in the recreational activities too.<sup>37</sup>

The driving force behind the expansion of arms manufacturing was Lloyd George whose appointment as....'Minister of Munitions ...saved the British army from defeat...'.<sup>38</sup> Sixty new munitions factories were established throughout the country.

'The Ministry became the largest wartime employer, notably of women, who made up half the workforce of the arsenals, an unhealthy and dangerous job...'<sup>39</sup>

Tyneside also became a vast munitions centre and many Tyneside women worked in the factories, who, but for the war, '...would never have become wage earners...'.<sup>40</sup> This incidence of women's work outside the home *accelerated the demand* for appropriate educational provision for their children. Overall, very few women were employed on work normally done by men in any industry, and the engineering industries, although short of labour, were loath to employ women.<sup>41</sup> By April 1918, '... the total number' (of working women) ... stood at 4,808,000...<sup>42</sup> but by the end of WW1 '...women workers were already being dismissed and the peak of their employment was over...'<sup>43</sup>

The most sensational increase in female employment was in commerce

<sup>37</sup> Brennan P. (2007) 'The Munitionettes' intro.p.65. Local and national charities benefited from the proceeds of the matches.

<sup>38</sup> Purcell H. (2006) 'Lloyd George' p.39; Pike E.R.(1972) Women working on munitions were proud to be known as 'Lloyd George's munition girls'. p.162

<sup>39</sup> Purcell H. (2006) p.41

<sup>40</sup> Andrews I.O. (1921) Ch. IV

<sup>41</sup> Braybon G. (1982) 'The need for women's labour in the First World War' in Whitelegg E. et al.

<sup>42</sup> Kirkaldy A.W. (1921) 'Industry and Finance' Vol. II. Sec.I

<sup>43</sup> Bryson G. (1981) 'Women workers in the First World War' in Whitelegg E. et al. p.93

rather than industry, and in the first 40 years of the 20th century, the number of women clerks multiplied twenty fold, whilst the number of men clerks only just doubled itself. This was due to the large scale expansion of business firms and the developments in state education giving more opportunities for girls.

To facilitate women's role in the work place '... the notion of nursery schools began to appear in official reports and documents...'.<sup>44</sup> *Nursery provision* was incorporated in the Education Act 1918, although on an optional basis. This situation inspired Grace Owen, Principal of Mather College, Manchester and later Secretary of the NSA to write...

'...the decision to make Nursery schools the foundation of England's system of education is one of far reaching importance.'<sup>45</sup>

Overall, ...

'the war (1914-1918) saw greater interest and concern over the development of national education than was ever aroused in the previous fourteen years of peace...'<sup>46</sup>

and as the *scope* of women's work rapidly widened, the two wars merely accelerated situations which would probably have developed quite naturally but over a longer period.

Male opposition was one of the stumbling blocks, and many of the unions had prohibited the employment of women workers, but after coping with home and a job during the Great War, '*women at work*' were actually here to stay, the old occupational patterns were never restored and due to increased educational opportunities for girls, women's employment aspirations were enhanced!

The change in the role of middle class girls was even more dramatic. The industrial revolution had separated the working class girl from her home but it had

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<sup>44</sup> Moss P.& Penn H. (1996) 'Transforming Nursery Education' p.53

<sup>45</sup> Owen G. (1920) 'Nursery School Education' p.11

<sup>46</sup> Barker R. (1972) 'Education and Politics 1900-1951 – a study of the Labour Party' .p.59

also excluded the women of the middle class from the economic process and made their lives idle and futile. Such girls who were not 'provided for' had entered the only avenue open to them - as governesses or companions. The entry of the daughters of middle class parentage into the professions towards the end of the century had come after much agitation and force for entry into universities, professions and parliament by feminist pressure groups but as Raftery comments...

'... educating women can be dangerous...' as '...it can free women from social and financial dependence on men...' and '...can re-configure their sense of place in the world...'<sup>47</sup>

The *feminist movement* was essentially middle class, for among the working classes women and children had to submit to any wage-earner conditions as an alternative to starvation. The feminists were not always interested in the hardship of working class women, but were willing to address any form of exploitation. Working-class women often had more in common with working class men than with other working women, and it is often not clear how they responded to feminists working on their behalf.

Feminist agitation had begun in 1850s and 1860s with education for girls and went right through to votes for women yet it is difficult to estimate how far changes in the position of women over the past century had been due to their achievements or had been brought about by social and economic changes.<sup>48</sup>

There were also some situations of great significance which owed nothing to feminist influence, e.g. a fall in birth rate, great expansion in opportunities of jobs for women and girls which were a consequence of technological developments,

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<sup>47</sup> Raftery D. (1999) 'Women and Learning in English Writing 1600-1900' in *Albion* Vol.31p.487

<sup>48</sup> Political and Economic Planning investigated the reasons for this; P.E.P. 'Women and Top Jobs'. June 1967. Today Aiston (2009) champions the 'gendered social capital' of institutions and networks built around care (such as the nursery movement) ... 'which have, through historical and social processes become associated in particular historical contexts with a particular gender, usually women.'

and the proportion of married women at work, which ‘... although in line with feminist ideology, has been brought about entirely by demographic and industrial changes...’<sup>49</sup>

Issues of continuity have also figured prominently in the more explicitly historical investigations of the relationship between education and social change.<sup>50</sup> The role of the feminists seems to have been two-fold - as a pressure group and as a challenge to the traditional attitude towards women in society.

Before 1914, three quarters of all middle class girls entering the professions became nurses or teachers. They were only a few hundred in number, but between 1916 and 1939 women also became more numerous as dentists, doctors, accountants, solicitors, barristers, engineers, chemists, librarians and even Members of Parliament. The fact that a woman’s work was thought of as temporary till marriage, meant that few women were interested in ‘organisation’ in unions,<sup>51</sup> and, as members of professions (such as medicine and education), they were protected by their professional associations.

The effects of the Second World War on women’s work were profound, and led to a vast programme of provision of *wartime* nurseries and nursery schools. A national call to work meant that women took jobs formerly unheard of. Also the extension of types of work and service in the Women’s Forces meant that many young women workers became more mobile. Women took up posts of considerable responsibility, so that again the sequence of events affecting the role of women in the 20th century was accelerated. Being forced to accept jobs

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<sup>49</sup> Banks J.& O. (1964) in Zollschan G. & Hirsch W., ‘Exploration in Social Change’, Chap 21

<sup>50</sup> McCulloch G. et al. (2006) ‘Social Changes in the History of Education’ in *Hist.of Ed.* Vol. 36 , No.1 Presidential Address (4.11.06) p.406

<sup>51</sup> Although where Unions did exist e.g. the famous Match Girls’ Union, support had been provided by the Fabian Society, a reformist group of (academic) Socialists founded in 1884

involving skill, responsibility, variety, status (and often run a house at the same time), women proved themselves capable of doing so. It has been suggested that three emergency developments during the Second World War enabled the working wife to take on her dual role ...

‘...firstly the growth of restaurants (including School Meals Service, British and Civic Restaurants) and Nursery schools, secondly the deliberate re-organisation of work so as to make part-time employment possible, and thirdly, a change in the social attitude towards the employment of married women.’<sup>52</sup>

However although in the post war period the School Meals Service became universally accepted, the anticipated increase in the number of nursery schools did not come about. Education, thought Newsom, would ‘...guide working class girls towards middle class standards...’<sup>53</sup> and thereby make demands on Government for better opportunities for their children, but there was not the demand from women wishing to return to work, and this was borne out in the 1960s when strategies to persuade married women to return to teaching, included guaranteed nursery provision for their children. (Out of an estimated total force of quarter of a million, however, less than 78,000 returned.)

Surveys in Newcastle upon Tyne<sup>54</sup> and Aberdeen<sup>55</sup> showed that few pre-school children of working mothers attended nursery schools - usually domestic arrangements were made for their care. In fact between 1950 and 1960...

‘...Priorities in the educational field have not been markedly changed for instance, by any greater emphasis on nursery provision for young children of mothers at work. Indeed it is one of the puzzling features of this decade of change that school provision had declined in relative importance...’<sup>56</sup>

If a mother of young children was determined to return to work she would make her own arrangements regardless of nursery provision, and if she was

<sup>52</sup> Williams G. (1945) ‘Women and Work’, p.100

<sup>53</sup> Newsom J. (1948) ‘The Education of Girls’ pp.102-103

<sup>54</sup> Millar F.J.W. et al. (1960) ‘Growing up in Newcastle upon Tyne’ p.40

<sup>55</sup> Thompson B. & Finlayson A. (1961) ‘Married Women who work in Early Motherhood’ British Journal of Sociology 14, p.162

<sup>56</sup> Jephcott P. (1962) ‘Married Women Working’ from foreword by Richard Titmuss. p.5

determined to stay at home with her children, much further inducement was still required. An expansion of nursery provision, therefore, should have been based on the needs of children rather than the demand for female labour; nursery schools were originally established for the benefit (physical, social, emotional and educational) of pre-school children and not for the convenience of employers.

Thus during the 20th century...

'... far reaching changes in social, economic and technological factors affected the status and role of women as wife, mother and home-maker which also contributed to the economy of the family.'<sup>57</sup>

The population of post-war Britain continued to expand almost explosively and stimulated the demand for quality provision for the under fives. In some societies the role of the grandmother may have been taken over by professional experts in child care, but in the inter-war years this had not been so in North East England (or Scotland).<sup>58</sup> Future projections deemed...

'...the position of the younger generation in the structure of family support must be seen as specific to particular points in historical time. The major changes in their economic position which began in the late nineteenth century and have lasted until the present, essentially are responsible for creating the dependence of younger people which now appears such a natural part of human life...'<sup>59</sup>

The decline in the size of the family also led to a rise in the *standard of living* which up to the outbreak of the Second World War was...

'...more influential than any additional benefits derived from the expansion of the social services and improvements in medical care...'<sup>60</sup>

The increased emancipation of women led to more equality and freedom. Certain problems arose from these facts. In modern Western Society woman had a *dual role*, although there was personal conflict between her role as mother and

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<sup>57</sup> Titmuss R. (1958) 'The Position of Women' in 'Essays on the Welfare State' pp.88-89

<sup>58</sup> Young M. and Wilmot P. (1962) 'Family and Kinship in East London 1957' and Thompson and Finlayson (1961)

<sup>59</sup> Finch J. (1989) 'Family Obligations and Social Change' p.73

<sup>60</sup> Titmuss R. (1958) p.89

wage-earner. With more money (from employment earnings) and more time, she needed new outlets in the field of leisure as well as new rights for an emotionally satisfying and independent life.

Of course these dilemmas need not have arisen, as is pointed out :-

'... the obvious discontent among contemporary women has led some people to the conclusion that the emancipation of women is at the root of the evil. Were it not for the success of feminist agitation as it is sometimes argued, women could still be happy as housewives and mothers with no aspirations outside their homes. Egalitarianism has "put ideas into their heads" which have done more harm than good'<sup>61</sup>.

But women *were* in employment and constituted an ever increasing proportion of the labour supply. When non-professional women were 'stood down' after WW2, it was written :-

'She misses the stimulus and companionship of her fellow workers; she resents the waste of capacities for which she has no outlet and she realises that the income she is qualified to earn would enable her to employ somebody to help in her domestic tasks and still leave a margin and provide a higher standard of living for her husband and family. It is among this section of women workers that the desire to combine marriage and employment has grown, but they had and are still having an uphill fight to establish their right to do so....'<sup>62</sup>

Many married women did not seek employment due to dire economic necessity, but rather to supply the trimmings,<sup>63</sup> and there were also subtle differences between working mothers as distinct from working wives.<sup>64</sup> The additional concerns of the former were surveyed, and included arrangements for families while the mothers were at work, the effects (long term and otherwise) on their children, and attitudes of society towards the working mother.

Where there were pre-school children the findings of this survey are interesting and significant, and confound those anxious to promote nursery

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<sup>61</sup> Myrdal A. & Klein V. (1956)

<sup>62</sup> Williams G. (1945) p.89. Even teachers who had occupied the positions of male teachers away on war service were stood down when they returned.

<sup>63</sup> Zweig F; Rowntree B.S. & Lavers G.R.; Myrdal & Klein: Thompson & Finlayson, (1961) pp. 82-87; Gavron H. (1966)

<sup>64</sup> Yudkin S. & Holmes A. (1963)

provision. Only 1 in 5 of the mothers questioned had a child under five, and only one sixth of these were cared for in nurseries. Only one sixth more wanted to use nurseries should they become available. Most preferred to make use of relatives especially grandmothers and neighbours and friends, as in the Bermondsey and Aberdeen surveys,<sup>65</sup> although 79% of working class mothers with children under five in the Kentish Town Survey said they would use a nursery school or day centre.<sup>66</sup> Major firms in Birmingham were asked to set up day nurseries on their premises.<sup>67</sup> Similarly a local example was the nursery set up at the works of the Durham Paper Mills, West Hartlepool, Co. Durham. Also, in connection with future development of the North East, Mr. George Chetwynd, when Director of the North East Development Council indicated that an additional female labour force of 50,000 would be needed by 1970 and that the Board of Trade was to be asked to consider the provision of day nurseries at each of the 45 Government Industrial Estates in the North East.<sup>68</sup>

It is interesting to look back to war-time days when the provision of day nurseries was part of the war policy. The P.E.P. pamphlet on part-time employment included a report on some examples of arrangements made at a number of factories,<sup>69</sup> and showed that the supply of part-time labour was available, and that difficulties could be overcome, although there was no set formula for part-time schemes.

When the children were ill, almost every mother took time-off. Thus many women accepted inferior posts lacking in responsibility. To all employers, the working mother presented possibilities of absenteeism. These practical difficulties

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<sup>65</sup> Young & Wilmott, (1962) ; Thompson & Finlayson, (1961).

<sup>66</sup> Gavron H. (1966) p.80

<sup>67</sup> 'Observer' (09.01.66)

<sup>68</sup> 'Guardian' (05.03.66)

<sup>69</sup> Political and Economic Planning Pamphlet, No.185, 10.02.42



could be avoided as is suggested in the survey, if community provision were made for children during the holidays, e.g. play centres, adventure playgrounds, holiday camps and 'home helps'.<sup>70</sup> Bermondsey was found to be well-provided in this respect.<sup>71</sup>

In general, however, *public opinion* was usually *against* women who worked outside the home for money - they were given little help and made to feel guilty should their children show any physical or emotional disturbances. On the other hand, a woman *without* a husband was actively encouraged to work, and her children were given full priority of care in a day nursery. A national scandal was the closing of so many day nurseries after the war as increasingly exorbitant charges led to the falling off in the demand for places. Even at the height of the WW2, there had been 1500 war-time nurseries accommodating only 2.5% of the under fives.

By 1967 there were about 450 nurseries and 420 nursery schools and many more working mothers, so there was even a waiting list for the 'priority groups' (children of widows and single mothers). Consequently the problem became more and more exaggerated. Pre-school play-groups<sup>72</sup> sprang up like mushrooms and it was claimed:-

'more and more children are cared for by unorganised child minders, in conditions totally without supervision by any authority. Already conditions perilously near baby farming exist in many of our industrial cities.'<sup>73</sup>

Though financial and social pressures may have been responsible for the mother returning to work, it cannot be denied that she was also essential to the

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<sup>70</sup> Yudkin & Holmes (1969)

<sup>71</sup> Jephcott P. (1962) p.154

<sup>72</sup> Pre-school Playgroups Association numbered about 600 registered groups with new applications for membership arriving each day. Many PSPs were not members of the parent association

<sup>73</sup> Yudkin S. & Holmes A. (1969)

country's labour force, and would become even more so.<sup>74</sup> One of the most valuable supplies of labour was the married woman teacher. By 1967 it was openly acknowledged by chief education officers that education services throughout the country would practically collapse without married women.<sup>75</sup> An inducement to persuade them to return was the priority given to their children for nursery places.

Fortunately, many women wanted to return to work and 20th century opinions gradually adjusted themselves to the new shaping of family life. By offering more opportunities for mothers to take part-time jobs, industrial practice re-adapted itself, and social policy was re-adjusting with changes in National Insurance contributions and better facilities for the care of children while their mothers were at work. A gradual change in public opinion towards working mothers encouraged more women to come forward, without feelings of guilt, to offer themselves for employment in many of the shortage professions and trades.

By the mid -1960s both major political parties had issued pamphlets on married women at work. The Young Fabians<sup>76</sup> and McCarthy<sup>77</sup> both addressed the negative deterrents and the general climate of opinion which did not support working wives.

Among the practical proposals, only one political party supported the expansion of day nurseries, nursery schools, auxiliary training, and extra-school facilities to enable more women to return to work.

'As a nation, we need all our resources. No one wants to make it a crime for women to stay at home - but it is surely worth while to try to tempt them to go out

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<sup>74</sup> Beckerman et al. (1975) 'The British economy' .Participating rate of married women to 69 years in National Productivity estimated to rise from 32% in 1960 to 37.7% in 1975.

<sup>75</sup> C.E.O. North Shields Local Authority, March 1966, in DC Lib. Northern Echo, 23.03.66

<sup>76</sup> Young Fabian Pamphlet (Jan.1966) 'Woman Power' - study group

<sup>77</sup> McCarthy F. (1966) 'Work for Married Women'

to work.’<sup>78</sup>

What did women earn to make them want to return to work? In the 1960s there were still 6 million who preferred to stay at home. There were great regional differences in the number of women in employment throughout Great Britain. This rose to an average of 45% - in the South East to 49%, but in the North East remained at 35%, because this was traditionally an area of heavy industry with men on ‘shift’ work, where women were *obliged* to be in the home to cook meals, heat bath water and look after their youngest children<sup>79</sup>, suggesting that, by implication, less nursery schools would be needed in the North East compared to the national average. In the South East with its prevalence of light industries, and a 9 to 5 working day for most workers, a woman could take work outside the home to coincide with her husband’s hours of work.

However it was the *education* of women in the 20th century which was the prime underlying factor bringing about the changes in their attitude to marriage, child-bearing and working after marriage. To maintain the latter required support in the form of nursery provision.

Following the Second World War there was considerable progression towards a classless society. The old days of unemployment when people were made to feel like paupers if they received social benefits, were left behind. Wages kept pace with the rises in the cost of living enabling persons of all social classes to maintain common standards in dress, hygiene, and feeding. Post-war social changes were indicative of a new era and one of the most explosive situations was the increase in the birth rate, making the problem of *nursery provision a priority*. More women worked, the standard of living rose as well as the birth rate and

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<sup>78</sup> Guardian Survey (19.03.66) William Davis, Financial Editor

<sup>79</sup> Dennis N., Henriques F. & Slaughter C. (1956) ‘Coal is our Life’

survival rate contributing to an even greater strain on existing educational provision. An increased demand for provision for the pre-school child, not only in the 'care' of children, but probably because many parents, realising the benefits of all educational facilities, wanted a better foundation in their children's lives than they had had in their own, and thus laid the foundations for concepts of sustainability.

The working wife and mother was to be accepted as an essential part of the social and economic development of the country and plans were needed for future provision to meet her needs.

'Married women's employment can be seen as one of the social changes resulting from smaller families, better health, improved services, and lighter domestic chores. These Bermondsey wives had developed an attitude in which they viewed going out to work, not as neglect of their family, but as a sign of their concern for it'.<sup>80</sup>

Brian Simon, one of the leading historians of education in Britain, showed how social class conflicts have influenced and are influenced by education as a 'social function'.<sup>81</sup> He argued that ...

'...it should be one of the main tasks of historical study to trace the development of education in this sense, to try to assess the function it has fulfilled at different stages of social development and so to reach a deeper understanding of the function it fulfils today...'<sup>82</sup>

Such is the interaction between social, economic and political conditions and its influence on all education, including nursery provision.

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<sup>80</sup> Jephcott P. 'Married Women Working' (1962) p.135

<sup>81</sup> McCulloch G. (2004) 'Education, History and Social Change : the Legacy of Brian Simon' in *Hist. of Ed.* 33, No.5 (2004)

<sup>82</sup> Simon, B. (1966) 'The History of Education' in 'The Study of Education' ed. J.W.Tibble : 91; reinforced by Simon in Salimova.& Johaaingmeier E.V. (1993) 'Why should we teach the History of Education?' reprinted in Arthur J. & Davis I. (eds.) (2010) 'The Routledge Education Studies Reader'

## **Chapter 3**

### **Provision for the under-fives up to 1939**

#### **The Nursery School Association and the Tyneside Nursery School Association**

By the beginning of the 20th century it was recognised that *nursery provision* was 'a good thing'. The first 40 years up to WW2 saw nursery education included in most Education Reports or Acts, but as it was not compulsory and totally dependent on the financial state of the economy, it experienced a series of 'stops' and 'starts'. Philanthropic individuals as well as groups in the Nursery School Association and its Tyneside sub-group, *kept the cause alive*.

To continue the historical sequence of the development of nursery *provision* is to return to the work of Rachel and Margaret McMillan. The part played by social amelioration and the gradual entry of women into politics (local and national) as voters and representatives, was paralleled by the work of philanthropists. Of major importance during this period was the significant role of individuals, the critical element of financial support and the role of the state in the provision of nursery education.

In 1908, the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education reporting on the school attendance of children under five, came to the conclusion that large numbers of under-fives were in need of care and training, that the infant schools were unsuitable for them, and that in many cases nursery schools were a practical

necessity<sup>1</sup>

However it was not until the McMillans, by their sustained work in demonstrating the need for a widespread system of medical inspection and treatment, and the missionary zeal of Margaret in proclaiming the new gospel of nurture, made the cause of the young child a living issue, that the movement towards the *provision* of nursery schools became truly national and within the range of practical politics.

Margaret had worked for some years as a private governess and companion. She then studied for the stage and during this period of intensive training in voice production she learned the importance of correct breathing and the proper use of all the organs of speech, hearing and respiration. In 1894, she was elected to a seat on the School Board at Bradford, where she had gone to live a year earlier at the request of the newly formed Independent Labour Party, and Mr. W. F Jowett, later M.P. Her first visit to an elementary school appalled her and she describes...

‘...children with adenoids, curvature, and children in every stage of neglect, dirt and suffering .... all the while millions of children who needed help, had none. Our intentions hardened into purpose.’<sup>2</sup>

Like so many of the early pioneers of nursery education, Margaret's methods deserve particular mention, as immediately she discovered a need, she set about satisfying it, whether legislative sanctions existed or not. Here was a woman showing how an independent nature and true spirit could rise above convention. Thus, because she had discovered that...

‘...considerable numbers of children attend school in such a state of uncleanness, either personal, or from dirty clothes, that they are objectionable to others...’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Board of Education (1908) Report of Consultative Committee on school attendance of children below the Age of Five cd.4529

<sup>2</sup> McMillan M. (1927) ‘Life of Rachel McMillan’ p.80

<sup>3</sup> McMillan M. (1927) p.88

...she induced the Bradford School Board to provide baths. Also she noted that large numbers of children were afflicted by ailments which she believed to be remediable, and so she agitated for school medical inspection; and, recognising the futility of trying to educate young minds in starved bodies, she introduced a scheme for feeding school children. Initially, education was *not* the priority. The town was, however, gaining a reputation as ‘...an educational pioneer...’<sup>4</sup> which extended into the 20th century and was the inspiration for Miriam Lord<sup>5</sup> and others.

The large school boards such as the London School Board had already made positive steps in this direction, but it was not until 1907 that an Act was passed containing a clause which placed medical inspection among the *duties* of Local Education Authorities, and gave them power to attend to the health and physical condition of children in elementary schools.<sup>6</sup> Sir Robert Morant, Secretary of the Board of Education at the time, at once set about giving effect to the new laws, his first step being the appointment of Dr.(later Sir) George Newman, as Chief Medical Officer of the Board. He proceeded to draw up a circular issued to Local Authorities in November 1907, laying the foundation for the great School Medical Service of the 20th century. So high did Margaret McMillan’s reputation stand, that before the circular was issued, Morant sought her opinion and criticism, and later, when the first report was ready, he wrote to her :-

‘This is the FIRST clear proof of the FIRST Annual report of the FIRST National System of School medical Inspection that the country has known, and I cannot resist giving myself the pleasure of sending it in confidence to yourself, for you are to me the person who has most successfully embodied in a private individual the

<sup>4</sup> James D. (1990) ‘Bradford (Town and City Series)’ p.104 ; Bradford Corporation (1970) ‘Education in Bradford 1970’ gives extensive detail

<sup>5</sup> Murray Ruth (1993) ‘ The development of nursery schools and child welfare policies and practices in Bradford from 1890s to the 1950s with particular reference to the work of Miriam Lord’ (Ph.D thesis)

<sup>6</sup> 7 Edw.VII ch.43 section 13 (1) ; in 1918 the ‘power’ was converted to a ‘duty’ 8 & 9 Geo.V ch.39 sections 2 and 18

best enthusiasm and the most warming faith both in the potentialities of a real honest preventive conscience in the state of the people.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, Rachel McMillan, her sister, had qualified as a sanitary inspector and had become a travelling teacher of hygiene under Kent County Council. Margaret now left Bradford to join her sister in work in the more squalid parts of London where they saw ‘... children creeping on the filthy pavements, half-naked, unwashed and covered with sores...’<sup>8</sup>. Here they schemed and pleaded for school meals and health centres and secured help from influential people and generous friends. They wrote to the Press and held public meetings, all in an effort to get the public interested in the cause of the young child.

One factor which indirectly gave impetus to their cause was the high rejection rate of Army recruits during the Boer War, on medical grounds.<sup>9</sup> Even after legislation on the School Medical Service, the actual outcome was that huge lists of cases needing treatment were made, but there were no means of meeting them.

With financial help from a friend, Mr. Joseph Fels,<sup>10</sup> the McMillans opened a treatment clinic at Bow in 1908. This was the first of a type which was gradually extended throughout the country. Because of lack of financial support from the LCC, it was closed two years later,<sup>11</sup> and a school clinic was opened at Deptford in June 1910. Here treatment was given for adenoids, dental troubles, skin diseases, spinal curvature, etc. There were remedial exercises for mis-shapen bodies and twisted limbs; the weak-chested were taught how to breathe ; fresh air was advocated, and a camp school was set up in the garden where children of six

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<sup>7</sup> Allen B.M., (1914) ‘Sir Robert Morant’ (letter) p.223

<sup>8</sup> McMillan M. (1927) p.103

<sup>9</sup> Bd.of Ed., (1904) Rep. of Physical Deterioration

<sup>10</sup> American Jewish philanthropist who had made a fortune through the manufacture of soap.

<sup>11</sup> McMillan Legacy Group (Dec.1999) ‘The Children Can’t Wait’ p.17



to fourteen slept out at night under the canvas awning.

The open-air regime was not new however. Charlottenburg in Germany was ‘...the first town to establish an ‘Open Air Recovery School’ later shortened to simply Open Air School...’<sup>12</sup>. English towns followed and, beginning at Woolwich (LCC) in 1907, quickly spread throughout the country.

Yet the work of the McMillan clinic was a mere drop in the ocean and although many children were cured, the diseases still raged because there was no attack at the root causes...

‘...They came in at all hours....nearly always the case was so urgent that to delay treatment was cruel....it was relief work in many cases - a kind of First Aid...’<sup>13</sup>

For example in the last three months of 1913, the Deptford nurse treated 950 cases of skin disease and within the same period 927 of these returned after being cured, to have the same kind of disease treated again.<sup>14</sup> The clinic never emptied its waiting room. But the diseases of the slums could not be eradicated in this way. What was needed was some means of giving the children of the poor the same chances of healthy growth as more fortunate children of the wealthy, i.e. fresh air and sunlight. Housing conditions were in many cases appalling and the open air school seemed the only answer. Also, the effect of dirt and disease on young bodies meant that when they started school at five, damage was often irreparable. The under-fives were vulnerable both physically and psychologically and such physical and mental impairment could be prevented if the ‘tap were turned off at its source’.<sup>15</sup>

So in 1911, the McMillans opened their first open-air nursery school in a

<sup>12</sup> Broughton H. (1914) ‘The Open Air School’ p.14

<sup>13</sup> McMillan M. (Sept.1917) ‘The Camp School’ p.48

<sup>14</sup> Deptford Forum L.G. ‘The Children Can’t Wait’ p.20; McMillan M. (Sept.1917) p.49

<sup>15</sup> Newman, Sir G. ‘Annual Reports of Chief Medical Officer’ (1908-1911)

garden at Deptford.<sup>16</sup> There were six children under five, one trained teacher and one girl helper who had herself recuperated in the open-air school. The philosophy of the open-air movement was eventually translated into well-ventilated pavilion schools by imaginative architects.<sup>17</sup>

For the first time slum children received good food, fresh air, regular undisturbed sleep, training in healthy habits, happy association with their peers and freedom of movement in activity suited to their growing minds and bodies. In addition, with the impact of the School Medical Service, the President of the Board of Education, Mr. J. A. Pease (of Darlington) was able to refute the claim of Mr. Bathurst in December 1912, that more than half of the children in public elementary schools were suffering from malnutrition or its morbid effects. The Government were giving careful attention to the whole question of the relevant legislation and increased attention to hygiene.<sup>18</sup>

Two years later, the London County Council granted the use of the Stowage site at Deptford at a nominal rent and in 1914, the nursery school, now with its long south side open to the air, low cupboards, bathrooms, etc., served as a model for all subsequent ventures. While Rachel McMillan planned and organised, her sister travelled all over the country, speaking at meetings, conferences and committees, pleading for the sunshine and fresh air, nourishing food and sleep, movement and music, for the under-5s, (but *not* for formal education).

The progress of the *nursery school movement* as a national institution was very slow. Deptford became the centre of interest because of its influence on

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<sup>16</sup> London's oldest nursery school was at Notting Hill opened circa 1908 under Miss M. Laurence

<sup>17</sup> Seaborne M. & Lowe R. (1977) 'The English School : Its Architecture and Organisation' Vol. II (1870-1930)

<sup>18</sup> H.C.Deb.vol. XLV Dec.1912 :1676-7

similar attempts in other places, and more important still, its influence upon public policy.

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 placed a terrible strain upon the institution, relieved to some extent by a Government grant for each child of a woman munitions worker. Rachel McMillan's courage and tenacity of purpose triumphed over extra-ordinary difficulties, including air-raids which shattered their house and caused staff to desert. However, the strain led to her breakdown and tragic death in 1917. But the war years demonstrated beyond any doubt that there was a *crying need for nursery schools*. It proved over and over again that minor ailments of early childhood can be prevented and cured by nurture and fresh air. Infections which caused the deaths of many young children were avoided by the nursery children...

'... not segregation but nurture was the door of escape... To open the door wide, not merely to twenty nine children, but to two millions who now run every risk at an age when risks are often fatal, was no longer a problem. It was now an aim, an intuition, a mission...'<sup>19</sup>

The nursery made its impression. As has been described the sound body was its first consideration, but the 2s to 5s were not left entirely to nurses and doctors, as in Day Nurseries. The nursery school was to be a place where side by side with health, the mind was trained by people who were disciples of the educational pioneers, Froebel and Montessori.<sup>20</sup> An informal association of friends of education sharing the same views and sympathies held a series of annual conferences and published reports in 'New Ideals of Education'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> McMillan M. (1927) p.145

<sup>20</sup> H.C.Deb.Vol.XLV,1912 Dec.9th-12th. In fact a question was asked of the President of the Board of Education ( Mr.J.A.Pease of Darlington) by Mr. King about the application of Montessori methods where LEAs exclude children under five years of age, and with special reference to the requirement of 15 sq. feet of space per child when only 9 sq. feet was guaranteed in 'our' schools. Although a report was produced by Mr.E.G.A.Holmes, as an educational pamphlet, the govt. did not necessarily endorse the opinions and did not suggest the introduction of the system into public elementary schools.

<sup>21</sup> 1st Conference, July 1914 at West Runton, Norfolk on Montessori methods

One of the recommendations of the Consultative Committee's Report in 1908 had been that the nursery schools should be for young children who would otherwise be neglected. The Report was an adverse criticism of the conditions, and a recommendation for the establishment of nursery schools especially designed to meet the needs of these young children.<sup>22</sup> However, those who lived in poor little houses, but whose mothers could manage to keep them out of harm's way, were not considered. The Deptford school, in the midst of a slum neighbourhood, was certainly what the Committee had in mind, but the McMillans held strongly to the view that nursery schools were needed in other places *besides* the slums.

The rich had their nannies who could devote their whole time to the 'nurture' of the child, but what of the average mother who could not afford private nursery schools or nannies?

Social conditions *were* improving - the average home now had piped water, gas or electric lighting, and sanitation but also mothers wanted better facilities for their children where they could be...

'...gathered together in safe pleasant places, close to their houses and mothers, and under the charge of trained and educated nurse-teachers...'<sup>23</sup>

The argument that nursery schools tended to replace the sense of parental responsibility was proved to have no foundation. In fact, where good relations existed, the parents and nursery school worked, and have continued to work, together for the welfare of the child.

In addition to the experiments to found *nursery schools*, some attempts were also made before the war, both by Local Authorities and by Voluntary

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<sup>22</sup> Percy, Lord Eustace (ed.) 'The Education of the pre-school Child' in (Hume E.G. in 'Year Book of Education' (1932) p.132

<sup>23</sup> McMillan M., (1919) 'Nursery Schools and Parents', Times Educational Supplement 6.3.1919., p.113 (DUL)

Organisations to establish schools for mothers, baby clinics and day nurseries (creches). These were also under the supervision of the Board of Education until 1919, and received grants-in-aid. At the same time Eglantine Jebb and her sister, Dorothy Buxton, who had deplored the deprivation of children during wartime, launched the 'Fight the Famine Council' (1919), parent of the 'Save the Children Fund'.<sup>24</sup>

However the McMillans and their supporters viewed with *disfavour* the Day Nurseries, '...the houses behind whose windows and doors, thirty to forty little ones are penned in ...'.<sup>25</sup> They advocated fresh air, sunlight, and space. Nevertheless a useful purpose was, and still is, served by these institutions in certain circumstances. In 1919...

'...all powers of the Board of Education with respect to attending to the health of expectant mothers and nursing mothers and of children who have not attained the age of five years, and are not in attendance at schools recognised by the Board of Education were transferred to the Ministry of Health.'<sup>26</sup>

Since that time, maternity and child welfare centres were set up throughout the country, and mothers often continued to take their children there until they reached school age.

The earliest surviving record of an official visit to a nursery appears to be that made shortly *before* the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>27</sup> It describes what in fact were some of the desirable nursery school features attained in difficult premises, such as an adapted public house. Unfortunately, no information is given about its foundation and financial support. It was not of the pioneer open-air, more-spacious McMillan model, but had a 'roofed playground'.

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<sup>24</sup> Mulley, C. (2009) 'The Woman Who Saved the Children'

<sup>25</sup> McMillan M. (1927) p.11

<sup>26</sup> Min.Health, (1919) Annual Report ,sec.3 (1) (3)

<sup>27</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1M 4969/14, (14.7.14) - see Appendix 3, Lady Astor's visit

But the wartime record of a visit to one of the earliest nursery schools at Somers Town which occupied a house on a corner, 18, Crowndale Road, N.W., shows it to have had the desirable garden for play.<sup>28</sup> It had been in existence for about eight years under the direction of Miss Lawrence, Principal of the Froebel Institute. Officially opened in November 1910 it was supported by private donations and subscriptions. There were 34 children aged 3 to 6 attending and a waiting list of 30.<sup>29</sup>

With the onset of war, the cause of the nursery schools slowed down. Day nurseries were opened for children of mothers working on munitions, but many causes promoting social amelioration were temporarily halted, and pressures of war had to be satisfied quickly and cheaply. Only one other nursery school was opened in London - the Jellicoe Nursery School in Kentish Town in 1916 - in a disused garage. A nursery school was also opened at Manchester, Ardwick, by the conversion of two cottages in 1915.<sup>30</sup>

In 1911, with the withdrawal of Sir Robert Morant from the Board of Education, the nursery school movement had suffered another setback, for he had always been a true friend of the poor. The often accepted origins of the 1918 Act were generally attributed to H.A.L. Fisher, but a draft Education Bill *had* existed in the summer of 1913 when J.A. Pease (of the Darlington family) presented it in outline to parliament.<sup>31</sup> Along with many issues affecting all forms of education from elementary schools to universities, was the proposal to establish nursery

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<sup>28</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1M 935/17 31.1.17 Visitor, Dr. P. G. Corse

<sup>29</sup> Annual Report, Somers Town Nursery School (1910-1911) 1<sup>st</sup> balance sheet (31.12.11) shows personal donations from Miss Lawrence (£200) and 'A Friend' (£100) with others ranging from 2/6d to £30, totalling £547 giving a healthy balance of £48.

<sup>30</sup> Owen G. ed. (1920) pp.139-140

<sup>31</sup> Sherington G. (1981) 'English Education, Social Change and War 1911-1920' p.30

schools for under five year olds.<sup>32</sup> Medical fitness of these children would link up with the public health system.<sup>33</sup> At the time Sir George Newman, as Chief Medical Officer of the Board, prepared a written report in 1916, which paved the way for the legislation affecting nursery schools in 1918 pointing out that since 1908, when the Report of the Consultative Committee had been published, the numbers of children between three and five attending infant schools had dwindled to about one-eighth of the total. Thus more children were at home, or playing in the streets, and a new problem was being created. He therefore supported the ideas for nursery schools, suggesting they cater for ages from two or three to five or six, hoping that the provision would prove so acceptable as to be universally desirable.

In response to this and other pressures, the President of the Board of Education appointed a small committee<sup>34</sup> whose terms of reference were...

'...To consider the lines on which nursery schools should be organised and the conditions under which they should be aided, and to prepare draft regulations and explanatory circulars for consideration of the Board...'<sup>35</sup>

The members were in fact senior civil servants of one or other of the Board's Departments, including Medical, and in their files were known as the 'Office Committee'. One of their first tasks was to put out a memorandum to all of the Board's Inspectors who were required urgently to send certain details direct to Mr. Fawkes.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> It would be very useful to know the 'triggers' which spurred J.A.Pease to include the nursery school movement at its earliest stage by 1913. Invaluable insight is gained from the carefully edited version of his journals and papers but the published volume ends at the election of December 1910. The promised second volume is not forthcoming, see Hazlehurst C.& Woodland C. (1994) 'A Liberal Chronicle; Journals and Papers of J.A.Pease, 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Gainford 1908-1910'

<sup>33</sup> Harris B. (1995) 'The Health of the School Child' pp.80-82 explains the nature of discussion with the BMA over limits to the extent of the medical services which a LEA could provide. With 1918, the treatment was available at 'nursery' level but not necessarily domiciliary, depending rather on G.Ps.

<sup>34</sup> Members were :-

Mr. F.H.B.Dale, C.B.,HMI.  
Mr.H.Ward, Div.Insp.

Mr.E.H.Pelham  
Mr.G.P.Williams,HMI

Miss J.M.Campbell, M.D.  
Mr.W.H.Fawkes  
(Jun.Exam.for Secretary)

<sup>35</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1 March 1917

<sup>36</sup> P.R.O.Ed.160, March 1917

A description of the type of school 'at present few in number and experimental in character' proposed to be aided, reveals an official requirement of the...

'... additional features to those of the best Infants Departments of Elementary Schools in which children under five are taught ...'

This would include situations such as:-

- 'children retained all day and fed as a matter of school routine
- particular attention to physical care of children, such as special facilities for baths and for resting
- regular medical supervision : the services of nurses would also be expected'<sup>37</sup>

The types of children and areas were defined - children for whom this type of school would be required, fall roughly into two categories...

- '1) children whose mothers go out to work and are therefore unable to give them, or secure for them, proper attention at home, and
- 2) children who reside in undesirable surroundings (slum children)...

... It follows that nursery schools might at any rate in the first instance be confined to certain well-defined urban areas. It is not anticipated that such schools will at present be established in any rural district, save in the most exceptional cases.'<sup>38</sup>

The Committee wished to know any parts of those urban areas in the inspectors' districts in which the above conditions prevailed to any serious extent, together with an estimate of the total number of slum children between two to five years of age, or children of those ages who could not get proper attention at home on account of their mothers going out to work. It was suggested that an approximate figure could generally be obtained by taking the number of children of 5 or 6 years in public elementary schools multiplying it by three and making such deductions as may be required for more prosperous children mixed up with the others. Information was also sought on the children under five if any, in

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<sup>37</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1 n/d ; New Ideals in Education (1916) a medical colleague of the 'Office Committee' R.H.Crowley explained the 'physical and educational possibilities' of the open-air school with five therapeutic measures applicable '...in the training and education of all children' pp. 241-243

<sup>38</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1 n.d. 'Model Nursery School' see Appendix 4



attendance at public elementary schools and whether they came under the special categories. Apparently with the view to building possibilities, an account was to be returned of any vacant space in the area or, if a 'congested district' and entirely built over, the class of property.

The need, as revealed by the survey, was given thus...

'...Ultimately from a very rough estimate based on figures supplied by HMIs., it might be expected that some 100,000 - 150,000 children of 2 to 5 years of age could properly be regarded as standing in need of nursery school accommodation...'<sup>39</sup>

In general the Committee endorsed the view of the Consultative Committee 1907, to the effect that the proper place for a child between the age of 3 and 5 was at home with its mother, provided that the home conditions were satisfactory. In presenting the outlines of the Education Bill 1917 in the House of Commons, Mr.H.A.L.Fisher said,

'...We propose to encourage the establishment of nursery schools for children under five years and we empower the L.E.As.to raise the age at which normal instruction in elementary schools begins, to six, as soon as there is an adequate supply of nursery schools for the younger children in the area '.

He reiterated the Committee's feeling...

'that wherever the home is good the child should be encouraged to stay with his or her mother'.<sup>40</sup>

In answer to the question, 'What if the home is not good?' he replied,

'...We do not desire to *compel* the provision of nursery schools, but we intend to enable such schools, attendance at which must be *voluntary*, to be aided from the rates, and we believe that to the development of these schools, which will, I trust, often be open-air schools, we may reasonably look for a real improvement in the health of young children'.<sup>41</sup>

A few days later he received a deputation of interested and influential persons representing various organisations already concerned with provision

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<sup>39</sup> P.R.O. Ed 102/1 1917

<sup>40</sup> 97 H.C.Deb.5s Col .803, 10.8.17

<sup>41</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1,16.8.17

for the under-fives. They were:-

Dr. M .E. Sadler	Vice Chancellor, Leeds University
Prof. Bompas Smith	Manchester University and Chairman of Conference on Nursery Schools, Manchester
Prof. Percy T. Nunn	London Day Training College
Miss Margaret McMillan	Deptford Nursery School and Clinic
Miss Winifred M. Mercier	Manchester University, late Vice-principal of City of Leeds Training College
Captain St. John	Penal Reform League
Miss E. V. Eckhart	Hon. Secretary for Baby Week in Manchester
Miss Clara M. Grant	Fern Street School Settlement
Miss F. M. Hawtrey	Darlington Training College
Coun. Caroline Herford	Manchester University
Miss Julia Lloyd	Hon. Sec. Birmingham Peoples' Kindergarten Association
Miss K. Noakes	Whitelands Training College
Miss B. Rennie	late Hon. Sec. Montessori Society
Miss A. Wragge	late Vice-Principal Blackheath Kindergarten Training College
Miss Grace Owen	Organising Secretary Manchester Nursery School Association ;
Mrs Mackenzie	Hon. Sec. to Conference on Nursery Schools in Manchester
Mr. Norman	'Education as National Service'
Mr. Lowe	Society for the Prevention of Infant Mortality
	Representative of the W.E.A.

Several of the above persons were attending a conference in London on 'New Ideals in Education'. On Monday 20th August a whole day was devoted to nursery school education. The first of three papers, chaired by Sir Robert Morant, was given by Margaret McMillan C.B.E. who spoke on the 'Ideal Nursery School', whilst Freda Hawtrey put forward proposals for the 'Training of Teachers for Nursery Schools'. Grace Owen spoke on nursery school teacher training in Manchester, drawing partly on her own kindergarten experience in New York City and the links with parents.<sup>42</sup>

Besides this and other oral evidence, many written comments were aired on the nursery question along with the claims of other spheres of education in the outline proposals. An 'internal' comment received by the Office Committee raised the vexed question of aid to voluntary institutions...

'...I think at the present day the feeling of L.E.As. is not so much a feeling of hostility to denominational institutions as an unwillingness to have anything to do with them owing to the fact that the discussion of their position at meetings of L.E.As. is likely to imperil the harmony which at present prevails... it seems to me that any proposal to give assistance out of the rates to voluntary institutions must

<sup>42</sup> New Ideals in Education – Conference Papers (1917) pp.157-179 (omitted by Steedman,C.1990)

almost inevitably raise the inherent difficulties as to conditions with respect to freedom from religious interference and as to public control with which we are familiar in connection with public elementary schools'.<sup>43</sup>

The following month in Fisher's proposals to the Cabinet the cost was estimated at £500,000 which, compared with the cost of raising the school leaving age to 14 and abolition of half-time education seems reasonable<sup>44</sup>. An 'external' comment also written in 1917 by one not directly concerned with the promotion of nursery education says ...

'It will be interesting to see how far the authorities who have talked of them (i.e. nursery schools) mainly as it has seemed as an excuse for excluding children under five from school, will now be prepared to bear their share of the cost of providing such schools.

Educationally, it has to be remembered that most of the reforms of late years have grown up from the kindergarten. Some of the said reforms we may in fact look at askance - some we may regard as passing fads. The fact remains that the thinking has, as a whole, proceeded upwards and not downwards, and to cut off the younger children from our schools may possibly be sapping their power of growth'<sup>45</sup>

As a culmination to discussions and previous philanthropic efforts legislation finally came in 1918. The power to supply, or aid the supply of, nursery schools was granted for the first time to local education authorities by the Education Act of 1918, introduced by H.A.L.Fisher, President of the Board of Education and personal friend of the Liberal Prime Minister, Lloyd George. Dubbed the Prime Minister who 'made the peace' (after the Great War), his radical measures ensured that he 'launched the Welfare State'.<sup>46</sup> Section 19 (as re-enacted in Section 21 of the Education Act of 1921) runs ...

'...The power of local education authorities for elementary education shall include power to make arrangements for :-

a) supplying or aiding the supply of nursery schools (which expression shall include nursery classes) for children over two and under five years of age, or such later age as may be approved by the Board of Education, whose attendance at such a school is necessary or desirable for their healthy physical and mental development and

<sup>43</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1memorandum by Mr.W.R.Barker, 5.1.17

<sup>44</sup> PRO Ed 24/847 located by Sherington G. (1981) pp.84-85

<sup>45</sup> G.L.Bruce re-Education Bill 1917 (Educational Record, Vol.XIX, New Series, No.55, Journal of B& FSS)

<sup>46</sup> Purcell H. 'Lloyd George' (2006) p.145

b) attending to the health, nourishment and physical welfare of children attending nursery schools’.

As regards the expression ‘nursery class’ quoted above it should be mentioned that no nursery class was recognised for grant under the Special Regulations for Nursery Schools. The nursery classes organised in Manchester and Leicester and other urban areas were treated as an integral part of the public elementary school for infants in which they were organised and grants were paid in respect of grants for elementary schools. The new legislative provisions regarding nursery schools imposed no obligations on parents to send their children to them, and nursery schools remained distinct from the public elementary schools within the meaning of the Education Acts. Likewise there were no obligations regarding content of the daily programme, although all nursery schools were subject to inspections by the LEA, Board of Education and Ministry of Health. The first outline of what may be termed ‘Curriculum’ appeared in the Prefatory Memorandum to the Board’s Regulations(1918). This was repeated by the Board in their ‘Handbook’ of 1927. Grace Owen prescribed her own guidance in 1920 (updated in 1928), whilst the 1933 Report had little to add.<sup>47</sup>

The types of children for whom provision became available were those...

‘...whose attendance at such a school is necessary or desirable for their healthy physical and mental development...’<sup>48</sup>

In practice the first nursery schools recognised for grant were those provided in crowded urban areas where housing conditions were unsatisfactory.<sup>49</sup>

Regarding the financing of the schools, the 1918 Act states:

‘Notwithstanding the provision of any Act of Parliament the Board of Education may, out of moneys provided by Parliament, pay grants in aid of nursery school, provided that such grants shall not be paid in respect of any such school unless it

<sup>47</sup> See Appendices 5 & 6 for adaptation of curriculum

<sup>48</sup> Education Act 1918, section 19(1) (a) & Education Act 1921,21 (a)

<sup>49</sup> Sir William Collins M.P. (Derby) claims that this was an excuse for LAs. not to address bad housing H.C.Deb. Col. 774 (18.3.18)

is open to inspection by the local education authority and unless that authority are enabled to appoint representatives on the body of managers, and before recognising any nursery school the Board shall consult the local education authority'.<sup>50</sup>

When the nursery schools were first recognised for grant the general opinion was that they should be small, partly in order that they might be like home, but chiefly that there might be less risk of infectious illnesses. The Board of Education stated that the ideal number for a school was probably about 40 children, though it might sometimes be necessary to provide for more than that number if the needs of the district were to be at all adequately met...

'The Board will, therefore, not refuse to consider proposals for a nursery school providing for as many as 80 to 100 children, but in no case should the number exceed 100.'<sup>51</sup>

Experience, however, showed that, under careful supervision the risk of infectious illness was less than had been anticipated, particularly when the children were grouped in separate open-air shelters.<sup>52</sup>

The Rachel McMillan Nursery School at Deptford grew to accommodate 260 children, but these were grouped into units of 35 to 40. The majority of schools were established with accommodation for groups varying from 25 to 40 children, the chief disadvantage of the smaller unit was that it proved more expensive to maintain than the larger unit, but as it was felt that the nursery school should be within easy distance of the child's home, an obvious limit in size became apparent.

The term 'nursery class' became frequently used to describe any sort of accommodation for under-fives, but from the outset there were distinct differences in the two types of provision:-

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<sup>50</sup> Education Act 1918, section 119

<sup>51</sup> Board of Education (1919), 'Regulations for Nursery Schools' Prefatory Memorandum

<sup>52</sup> 1933 Report, p.107

- 1) nursery schools admitted children at the age of two whereas in nursery classes, the age of admission was usually three
- 2) a nursery school was usually a separate educational unit under its own superintendent, whereas a nursery class formed an integral part of an infant school
- 3) the provision of mid-day dinner was almost universal in the existing nursery schools, whereas in nursery classes it was the practice as a rule to provide milk with a rusk or biscuit during the morning
- 4) the nursery school as a rule remained open for longer hours than the nursery class
- 5) medical inspection and treatment of children was carried out more frequently in the nursery schools than in nursery class
- 6) children passing from a separate nursery school into the infant department of a public elementary school experienced a break in treatment and methods of teaching - this could be reduced if they passed directly from a nursery class into the lowest class of the infant department within the same school building
- 7) the cost of the provision and maintenance of a nursery school was higher than the cost of providing and maintaining a nursery class.

There was, moreover, the important administrative difference that the nursery school was not, from the legal point of view, a public elementary school and was subject to a separate set of official regulations.<sup>53</sup>

By the 31st March 1919 only thirteen schools which had been established as voluntary institutions before 1918 Act were recognised and assured of 90% grant from the Board. One of these was in the North East - in Darlington.<sup>54</sup>

Local Authorities were required to submit schemes of development.

Typical of the North East was that submitted by the largest authority, Durham County Council...

'The authority may establish one or two nursery schools for the purpose of obtaining experience on this question otherwise they do not propose at present to adopt the enabling powers provided in the Education Act.<sup>55</sup>

The Director had written in a published memorandum,

'My own feeling with regard to these schools is that there is no real need for them in the County of Durham. They seem to me to be primarily intended to meet the case of children whose mothers habitually go out to work, and we have little woman labour in this county. Where circumstances permit, young children should be in the care of their mothers, and I believe that the mothers of our own county would prefer to carry out their duties in this respect rather than delegate them to

<sup>53</sup> Adapted from 1933 Report, pp.110-111

<sup>54</sup> See Chap.4 (1)

<sup>55</sup> P.R.O.Ed.120/20

others.... . one or two nurseries might perhaps be established in the less favoured localities - Dunston occurs to me at the moment - as an experiment. After carefully considering the results the Committee would be in a position to decide whether the system should be further extended or not'.<sup>56</sup>

The Borough of Jarrow Education Committee, a Part III Authority,<sup>57</sup>

considered that ...

'...there is no need to incur additional expense at the present time in providing nursery schools. The Authority will however be prepared to give consideration to any representations which may be made on the matter at a future date'.<sup>58</sup>

The Borough of Stockton on Tees had considered 'the unbridged gap', as it has been aptly named, between the Infant Welfare Centre and the Infant School and could not shut their eyes to the possibility...

'that enquiry may reveal home conditions in our midst which render some such provision necessary...'.<sup>59</sup>

Comments of the Medical Department of the Board were that they

'...would be glad to see a sentence to the effect that the Authority would consider whether the home conditions in some of the poorer parts of Stockton do make the provision of one or two nursery schools desirable'.

Significantly, this correspondence was marked 'Suspended', until word came from the President.<sup>60</sup>

Darlington's Director underlined the link between nursery and infant schools and pointed out that their problems were to no small extent social problems...

'Development of the sense of personal responsibility of parents for the welfare of their families and improvement in the standard of home life will lessen the number of children requiring attention in these schools.'<sup>61</sup>

He suggested that all new schools for infants as required should be of the

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<sup>56</sup> Dawson, A.J. Director of Education. (1919) 'Educational Problems in the County of Durham'

<sup>57</sup> Part III of the 1902 Act gave authority for elementary education only to municipal boroughs with a population of over 10,000 and Urban Districts (U.D.s) with a population of over 20,000

<sup>58</sup> P.R.O.Ed.120/23

<sup>59</sup> P.R.O.Ed.120/24

<sup>60</sup> P.R.O.Ed.120/22

<sup>61</sup> Boyde A.C. (May 1919) Memorandum on 'A School Scheme' and questions arising out of the 'Education Act 1918', Darlington.

nursery school type and that existing infant schools be improved as far as possible on the lines of nursery schools.

Hopes ran high nationally, among the promoters of nursery education - the 'go-ahead' had been given, and they expected a rapid expansion in provision. The Board itself was optimistic for nursery schools '...which were likely to increase considerably in number...'.<sup>62</sup> The standards laid down by the Board of Education however were very high, and the Local Education Authorities were so absorbed in fulfilling all other duties in other branches of education which the Act (1918) had imposed, that progress in nursery provision was slow.

The school leaving age had been raised to fourteen without exceptions and was to be raised to fifteen as soon as possible (actually achieved in the 1950s). There was also to be extended part-time education in 'continuation schools' up to sixteen. It was unlikely that local authorities would be able to meet all the costs involved. Their income from the rates was not easily increased and the poorer districts, often with the largest number of children to consider, usually had the lowest rateable values and found it impossible to raise large sums from this source. Even by 1913, education had absorbed almost one third of the total expenditure out of the rates in England and Wales.<sup>63</sup> Thus the 1918 Act attempted to place the burden of expenditure more firmly on the central Government, and not less than one half of the total net expenditure of an authority was to be granted.

Associated with the need for school places was the shortage of teachers to meet the expansion programme. An enquiry under Lord Burnham resulted in a slight improvement in teachers' salaries, a revised pension scheme, and the

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<sup>62</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1919) 'Physical Exercises for Children under Seven Years of Age' p.4

<sup>63</sup> Ashworth W. (1960) 'An Economic History of England 1870-1939', p.226



ending of the worst of the geographical anomalies in teachers' pay, but this involved increased treasury grants. The immediate post-war years were a period of monetary inflation, and the cost of proposals in all branches of education were beyond original estimates. In the voluntary sphere, contributions for nursery schools were not easily raised. Organisers and helpers faced innumerable difficulties in purchasing suitable sites and building costs were high.

But the boom did not last long and less than two years after the passing of the 1918 Act came the need for national economy and financial restraint. The years '...1921 and 1922 were years of distinct distress in many parts of the country ...'<sup>64</sup> The reason for the slump was the decline in world trade and this led to a subsequent reduction in wages and an increase in unemployment. Thus Government expenditure on education and other social services had to be cut, as more money was needed for unemployment benefits and relief.

On 8th December 1920 the Cabinet decided to reduce the amount spent on the education system and two circulars were issued by the Board.<sup>65</sup> But Government efforts to cut expenditure were criticised as half-hearted and in 1922 a Select Committee on National Expenditure (Geddes Committee) further reduced available spending.<sup>66</sup> Of the many suggested expedients, savings on education were finally achieved by a cut in teachers' salaries, reductions in special services and the provision of school meals...

'The main effect of the economy drive was that all plans for major reconstruction on the lines suggested by the 1918 Act were discarded. Nationally the Act remained virtually inoperative as far as nursery schools, day continuation schools, day continuation classes and the raising of the school leaving age to 15, were concerned'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Bernbaum G. (1967) 'Social Change and the Schools, 1918-1944' p.28

<sup>65</sup> Board of Education Circulars 1190 (1921) and 1299 (1922)

<sup>66</sup> Report of Committee on National Expenditure.p.30

<sup>67</sup> P.R.O. Ed 102/1 memo by Mr G.G.Williams 21.12 21 paras.1, 6 and 7

With regard to nursery schools this was a further setback. Following the 1918 Act, provision had been slow because, ‘...it took a considerable time to win popular confidence...’. The position is neatly summarised in an internal unpublished memorandum written in the Board’s offices at the end of 1921...

‘...As popular confidence increased, political conditions grew rapidly worse, and several schemes for opening detached nursery schools or for acquiring buildings and sites for ultimate provision were rejected. In some cases indeed, gifts of sites have been refused and local rebuffs thereby administered. ‘... Tender plants cannot grow on soil which is constantly in the process of being harrowed, and financial stringency, political uncertainty and housing conditions and the shifting population have easily counteracted the impetus given by and in Parliament to this new form of state intervention...’<sup>68</sup>

But there was disappointment throughout the system. The Geddes Committee produced proposals to cut estimates from £50M to £32M and to raise the school entry age to *six*. Geddes maintained that the cost of education had ...‘far exceeded what the country can at present afford...’ The restriction remained in full force until 1924, and ‘...the inter-war period continued much in that style...’<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile in 1923, the Nursery School Association was founded, which took up the cause of establishing new nursery schools, and in answer to their campaign, the president of the Board of Education announced in the House of Commons (March 1924) that he was prepared to consider sympathetically any proposals for the establishment of nursery schools in suitable places.

The preference for separate institutions rather than schools or classes forming part of other organisations such as day nurseries or infant schools, was maintained. Whether this was wise or not, is a debatable point, but it contributed towards the cleavage between infant and nursery schools to the detriment of nursery expansion.

<sup>68</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1925) Special Services Regulations, Chap. VIII

<sup>69</sup> Simon B. (1974) ‘The Politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940’ p.82

In 1925, the separation was carried a step further by the issue of the Board's Special Services Regulations under which the administration of nursery schools was grouped with blind, deaf, physically handicapped, etc; whilst nursery classes were administered along with the school to which they were attached.<sup>70</sup> This arrangement was maintained until the Education Act 1944.

When nursery schools were first established the Board of Education did not prescribe a precise scale of staffing but suggested as a minimum that in a nursery school containing 40 to 50 children, a Superintendent, an experienced assistant and a probationer would be required. In practice in the voluntary nurseries, there was often a Superintendent, a trained assistant, and voluntary helpers. The helpers, probationers or student nurses (called 'helpers' in the 1933 Report and by the N.S.A.) were girls between 15 and 18 who were later recruited for child nursing, general nursing or as private nannies. During their training they received an average of £50 p.a. The duties of the Superintendent were often so extensive as to merit additional trained staff in all schools.<sup>71</sup> Of the ancillary staff there would be a cook, kitchen helper, caretaker and a part-time gardener, making a high ratio of staff to children.

Also, the schools were in small units to ensure individual attention, and to check the danger of spreading infectious diseases; thus there were no 'economies of scale'. In the case of nursery schools provided by local authorities, both capital and revenue expenditure were considered for grant, but in the case of voluntary nursery schools, it was revenue expenditure only. In both cases the grant was 50% calculated on *actual* expenditure.

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<sup>70</sup> Bd. of Ed. (1919) Prefatory Memorandum to Regulations for Nursery Schools, Cmd.87

<sup>71</sup> By the 1960s a 40-unit nursery school normally carried a Superintendent, a trained nursery teacher, a trained nursery assistant, two second year nursery students and two first year nursery students.

Throughout the early period of the history of the provision of nursery schools, the absence of precise figures relating to the cost per place often hampered expansion, and the uncertainty of costs may have deterred interested bodies. Following the Special Services Regulations 1929, the cost of provision was published collectively along with special schools, play centres and school meals.<sup>72</sup>

It was not until the 1935 NSA publication that the actual figures were sent to each LEA. Some early confidential official estimates are revealed in the Board's files. The first appears to be Mr. E. H. Pelham's ...

'... it seems doubtful whether the net cost per child in nursery school could be placed lower than £8 to £10. This is much larger than the cost of educating a child at an ordinary elementary school which may roughly be taken as about £4 10s, but this latter figure takes no account of the cost of cooking and providing food or for the close supervision of health'.<sup>73</sup>

Again costs would vary with the size of school. The Office Committee of 1917 admitted that existing nursery schools were designed, as a rule, for not more than 30 to 40 children and on the whole seemed to have favoured this number in theory. But on grounds of expense they regarded the restriction of numbers to this limit as a counsel of perfection. Their figures were based therefore on an accommodation of 80 children and their estimate which was of necessity formed without much data, made an interesting comparison with the actual estimated cost of a proposed nursery school at Edgecombe House, Portsea, for 1921, as follows : -

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<sup>72</sup> List 43 - published annually

<sup>73</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1, 5.1.17

	<u>Office Committee's</u> <u>Estimate 1917</u>	<u>Edgecombe House</u> <u>Estimate 1921</u>
Staff	£330	£500
Meals	£240	£150
Maint., Fuel & Light	£ 35	£ 65
Rent & Rates	£100	£150
Medical	£ 50	£104
Equipment	£ 15	£ 30
Less for food	<u>£ 80</u>	<u>£150</u>
Net cost per head	<u>£ 8/12s/6d</u>	<u>£12/2s/ 6d</u>

On the whole, allowing for a normal increase in wages, cost of maintenance etc., there is little real difference.<sup>74</sup> In order to show the comparative differences per head for smaller units, e.g., Salford, Encombe House (a three-storied house with accommodation for 30), and the Union Jack, Kilburn (converted shop premises with accommodation for 20), the average cost per child per annum at Salford was £13. 6s, and at Kilburn, £20 5s, illustrating the higher costs involved in maintaining a small unit, and also the great variety of regional costs.<sup>75</sup> This was recognised by the Board when dealing with applications for grant payments as is shown in the memo:

‘Cost per head taken absolutely gives little or no criteria for these schools. A figure which was exorbitant at, for example, Ardwick, would be absurdly cheap at Kilburn. Moreover in some schools there are special considerations which justify special expenditure.’<sup>76</sup>

A summary estimate of £14 to £15 per head per annum for early 1922 is arrived at:-

‘... as an economical estimate for the type of school which we believe in. We do not think it is possible to run any sort of refuge at less than £11 per head, with no mid-day meal’.<sup>77</sup>

Costing was as follows, staff - £7, premises - £2, fuel, light and general maintenance - £1/10/-, contingencies, renovations - 10s., making a total of £11 per child p.a. for a school of 30 children in a slum area.

<sup>74</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1, 21.12.21 para. (ii.3)

<sup>75</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1,21.12.21 para.5

<sup>76</sup> P.R.O Ed 102/1,13.1.22.

<sup>77</sup> P.R.O.Ed.102/1.13.1.22

By the mid - thirties when conditions in depressed areas were making the issue of provision more vital, figures from the Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer, (1935-1936) showed that £74,989 was spent on nursery schools (from national grants and local rates) and grants to voluntary nursery schools from the Board of Education were £6,042. An official statement showed that...

‘...a nursery school place could be provided at a running cost of between £15 and £17 p.a. per ‘child’ and, as far as capital expenditure is concerned ‘a nursery school’ of semi-permanent type for 80 children can normally be built for about £3,000.’<sup>78</sup>

The capital costs would vary of course with actual building costs and local circumstances, e.g. materials, rates of wages, planning, site, etc. The Board of Education’s estimate would work out about £37.10s per place, but in fact varied from £24 (Kettering, Ronald Tree) to £45.13s (Vale Road, Tottenham, 1936). The cost of furnishings varied from £3 to £4 per place.

To justify the need for expansion of nursery schools an interesting excerpt is given from Sir George Newman’s Report....

‘There are two principal grounds for the institution of nursery schools. First, the training furnished in them is a sound method of nurture and education for little children aged 2 to 5 years : and secondly, they provide a system of preparatory medical supervision for the child before admission to the Public Elementary School. In England and Wales there are 2,000,000 children in this age group, with a slight preponderance of boys. In 1923, 5.8% of the total deaths occurred among children aged 1 to 4 years, as compared with 2.9% between the ages of 5 and 14. The sickness and physical impairment among these little children under 5 is also high, and many years of medical inspection have shown that between 30 and 40 per cent of them require medical treatment on their admission to public elementary school at 5 years of age. In London in 1923, out of 68,916 entrants inspected, 35.4% required treatment. The principal ailments were dental caries, measles, whooping cough and inflammation of the throat. Such was the medical problem of these toddlers’.<sup>79</sup>

In 1928, the Board had announced that...

<sup>78</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1935) Annual Report of Chief Medical Officer p.84

<sup>79</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1924) Annual Report of Chief Medical Officer p.82

'... subject to their being satisfied as to the accommodation and equipment, the provision of open-air facilities, and the general conditions of supervision...'<sup>80</sup>

...it was willing to consider proposals for nursery schools of 150-200 pupils, and on 5th December 1929, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, a circular was issued on children under school age pointing out the purpose of a nursery school.<sup>81</sup>

It was emphasised that the provision for the healthy physical and mental development of children, over two and under five, made the role of the nursery school two-fold - 'nurture' and 'education'. In congested districts of industrial towns, and in 'slum' homes, children needed such care and attention as nursery schools could provide. In the North East an ILP reporter found strong evidence of malnutrition...

'Everywhere we saw children - poor pathetic little mites - with legs and arms like matchsticks, thin white faces and all their natural vitality sapped by constant diet of bread and "marg."...'<sup>82</sup>.

In the same circular, the Board stated that in planning new infant schools, it would be desirable to include provision for the threes to fives, modelled on the nursery schools with adaptations depending on the character of the district and alternative accommodation in nursery schools. Thus the accommodation should be on open-air lines, with the emphasis on space, suitable lavatory accommodation to suit the ages of children, and an abundant water supply - hot wherever possible.

As was pointed out, one of the advantages of admitting the under-fives (currently not in nursery schools) to public elementary school was that it brought them within the scope of the School Medical Service, otherwise the 2s to 5s at

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<sup>80</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1929) Circular 1405

<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Health, Circular 1371 (1929)

<sup>82</sup> New Leader 18.01.29 quoted in McReady M. (2002) p.103

home, became the 'Forgotten Children'<sup>83</sup> yet again.

A further *check to expansion* came in the financial crisis in the autumn of 1931, when new restrictions were imposed.<sup>84</sup> Severe measures were taken to effect economies of £7,000,000. Deficiency grant for elementary education was abolished, salaries for teachers were reduced by 10% and local authorities made responsible again for half the salary costs, rather than 40%. Any plans for expanding the education services were postponed.

Slow progress continued however with 'Hadow' reorganisation of schools although this was not uniform throughout the country.<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile an Education Enquiry Committee which had advocated two years earlier the improvement of secondary schooling now reported on the case for nursery schools'.<sup>86</sup> They urged :

- a) that local authorities should be compelled to provide nursery schools wherever required,
- b) that nursery schools should be removed from the category of special services,
- c) that all new schools for children under seven should be open-air nursery school type and
- d) that the amenities and staffing of infant schools should be of nursery school standard.

Indeed much had been done, and could continue to be done to improve conditions for children under five in *elementary schools*.

The methods of infant teachers in these 'baby' classes had been much improved by the influence of Froebel's kindergarten system, the writings of Professor Dewey, Madame Montessori and the work of the Nursery School Association.

The baby classroom had taken on a new look, with tiny chairs and tables,

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<sup>83</sup> Pollock, (1983) p.1

<sup>84</sup> National Economy Act, 1931. The pound was devalued by 30%. Britain came off the Gold Standard in September. Restrictions followed in the Bd. of Ed.Circular,1413

<sup>85</sup> Bernbaum G. (1967) pp.55-56

<sup>86</sup> Cholmeley R.F. et al. (1929) 'The Case for Nursery Schools' p.18



replacing ugly desks, and in some cases beds were provided. More emphasis was laid on hygiene, toilet training and adequate rest, than on trying to fill their minds with the fundamentals of the 3Rs.

In Manchester and Leicester, in particular, positive steps were taken to convert the classes for under 5s into nursery classes, with most of the amenities of nursery schools, as far as conditions would permit.<sup>87</sup> So, although for economic reasons nursery schools could not be built in response to demand, the establishment of nursery classes for under 5s, seemed to be the next best scheme for tackling social evils of poverty and ill-health, and beginning the process of nurture and education as soon as possible although the pioneers of the NSA continued to doubt the efficiency of the nursery class in comparison with the nursery school.

The figures below show the position in England and Wales on 31st March 1932, with regard to the over-all provision for the under fives...

Analysis of figures of 3's to 5's in Nursery Classes (1932)<sup>88</sup>

157,551 in elementary schools, (although 37 L.E.As. had none at all)  
 129,918 in Infant Departments  
 35,877 in Junior Mixed or all-age schools (20,208 in rural schools)  
 There were 6,404 Infant Departments

<u>Nursery Schools, March 31st 1932</u>		
<u>Schools</u>	<u>Total Places</u>	<u>Av. Attendance</u>
30 LEA		
25 Vol		
<u>55</u> (total)	<u>4,520</u>	<u>3,768</u>

The Report of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education in 1933 became yet another *landmark in the history of the provision* for the pre-school child. It deals very fully with the physical, mental and emotional needs of young children and offers striking evidence to justify the 'nurture' which the pre-

<sup>87</sup> See conversions also in 'Chesterfield Education. The Record of Four years of Experiment and Reconstruction' (1932) under Dr.H.G.Stead C.E.O and noted educationist, Chs. II & XX

<sup>88</sup> 1933 Report, pp.45 & 46

school child needs.

‘...The efficiency of the nursery school as a preventive and remedial agency, its beneficent influence on home life, and its undoubted educational value are recognised...’<sup>89</sup>

As the Report states,

‘... the fundamental purpose of the nursery school or class is to reproduce the healthy conditions of a good nursery in a well-managed home, and thus provide an environment in which the health of the young child - physical, mental and oral - can be safeguarded ...’

but it does no more than say that the nursery school is

‘... a desirable adjunct to the national system of education and that in districts where the housing and general economic conditions are seriously below the average, a nursery school should, if possible, be provided.’<sup>90</sup>

Again, the Committee acknowledges that the value of the nursery school as an educational instrument which could have profound influence on the schools and suggests that :

‘... apart from purely social and economic considerations, model nursery schools for children, from the age of two onwards, are educationally desirable, and they should be made accessible to teachers from other schools.’<sup>91</sup>

The NSA yearned for something more decisive. The only recommendation in regard to *provision* for the pre-school child was...

‘...each local education authority should survey the needs of their area with regard to home conditions and the wishes of the parents and after consultation with the Board of Education should take such steps as may seem to them desirable to provide nurture and training in schools for children below the age of five...’<sup>92</sup>

Thus the Report’s recommendations were complementary rather than compulsive, and did not nearly meet the hopes of the campaigners who had zealously tried to create a strong public opinion in favour of the nursery school movement. These campaigners were the members of the *Nursery School*

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<sup>89</sup> Cusden. P., (1938) ‘The English Nursery School’, p.18

<sup>90</sup> 1933 Report (Recommendation 72)

<sup>91</sup> 1933 Report (Rec.74)

<sup>92</sup> 1933 Report (Rec.77)

*Association.*

The NSA had been formed in 1923, and it was felt that, although Circular 1190 (1921) and Circular 1299 (1922) had come as a check on the possible increase to nursery schools due to the need for drastic financial economies, public opinion would rise up against this. The welfare of the rising generation of the post-war years seemed to them to be the *last* thing to be sacrificed to the national economy, and in such times of poverty and unemployment, it was even more important to safe-guard the young.

But *public opinion* was neither strong enough, nor well enough informed. The mass of people were quite ignorant of the aims, purposes and content of nursery schools. In the environment of the schools which had been 'recognised', there were certainly many grateful parents and long waiting lists of children who would benefit from its influence. But, nationally, nursery schools were practically unheard of. Voluntary effort was at the heart of many 'good causes' and Findlay forecast '...the voluntary *principle* (his italics) perhaps under new titles, will reassert its strength...'<sup>93</sup>

In the existing nursery schools, the Superintendents were isolated from one another, and looked for some organised means of getting together with their assistants, managers and interested philanthropists to exchange ideas, help one another, and with a combined effort, arouse a public opinion strong enough to influence the LEAs and Board of Education to meet the urgent need. Thus events had culminated in 1923, when Mrs. H.J.Eveleigh, (who had pioneered in Kentish Town to start the Jellicoe Nursery in 1913), in consultation with Dr. P. B.

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<sup>93</sup> Findlay Prof. J.J. (1923) 'The Children of England : a contribution to social history and to education.' -uncertain whether he included '*nursery* voluntary effort' although working in Manchester he had witnessed and supported his colleague, Grace Owen.

Ballard (LCC Inspector) decided that a Nursery School Association of England, Scotland and Wales was essential. A meeting with Grace Owen, Principal of Mather Teacher Training College (which was one of the colleges training teachers for work in nursery schools) who also had a similar scheme in mind, led to a combined effort in starting such an association.<sup>94</sup>

It was decided to call a conference (22nd-24th June 1923) at Mather Training College and invite representatives of managing committees and staffs of all existing nursery schools. By 1923 there were 24 nursery schools catering for 1,250 children out of a total of 2,000,000 children in the 2-5 age group.

Sixteen of the nursery schools were represented at the Conference and in a speech Mrs. Evelegh emphasised the need that all workers in the nursery school movement should join together in an effort to forward its aims. One of the guests at the conference was Miss Frodsham, Inspector for Infant and Nursery Schools under Manchester LEA, and she moved the resolution that:-

‘The members of this Conference on Nursery School Education being workers in and for nursery schools, deplore the slowness of the growth of the Nursery school movement, and wish to see the public recognition and establishment in our own generation of Nursery School Education for all children under school age .... They therefore resolve to form a Nursery School Association to undertake a campaign of propaganda, and to work for the general advancement of Nursery School Education.’<sup>95</sup>

The Association was founded with Margaret McMillan as President,<sup>96</sup> Mrs H.J.Evelegh as Chairman, and Grace Owen as Secretary. Thirty five members (5 from the North East ),<sup>97</sup> were enrolled during the conference and

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<sup>94</sup> A pressure group already existed in Manchester in 1917 with Miss Grace Owen as Secretary

<sup>95</sup> N.S.A. Report of Conference Proceedings , 1923

<sup>96</sup> Margaret McMillan was President from 1923-1929 when she resigned from the Association (April 1929) over a disagreement with other NSA members who thought that nursery classes should be brought up to the standard of the best nursery schools, but McMillan condemned them outright as a threat to the future of nursery schools. (In a private letter to a member, Miss Lloyd, she writes of ‘nurslings being chewed up by the old elementary school system’ (23.2.29)) : NSA at LSE

<sup>97</sup> Miss G. Penfold , Mrs. I .M. Potts, Sister Rosabelle, Miss S.Walker (Darlington) & Mrs. A. Holmes (Newcastle)

Miss A. Drogan of the Darlington Nursery School was elected to the Committee. An account of the Conference was sent to the press in the towns from which the delegates came.

By the end of 1924, the newly formed Association had 226 members and eight associate groups giving a total of 500, and its influence continued to grow. The sixteen years 1923 -1939, were years of steady, yet slow development, according to fluctuations of the general educational outlook, which was, in its turn, dependent on the character of the current political and economic situation. Helped by generous benefactors and the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, they pushed on with the work.

The objects of the Nursery School Association were set forth in the Constitution of 1923 as follows...

- '1) to secure the effective working of Clause 19 of the Education Act of 1918 for England and Wales, and of Clause 8 of the Education (Scotland) Act in 1918.
- 2) To furnish opportunity for discussion.
- 3) To help to form and focus public opinion on all matters relating to the nursery school movement'<sup>98</sup>

In pursuit of these three objects the activities of the Association between 1923 and 1937 included : -

'... open meetings and conferences, Summer schools, widely distributed pamphlets and memoranda, deputations to public bodies and informal consultations with other organisations as the various problems of the changing situations arose'<sup>99</sup>

After the inaugural meeting in 1923, a letter was sent to the Prime Minister on the opening of Parliament in the spring of 1924 referring to the restriction imposed by Circulars 1190 and 1299 and urging the importance of encouraging nursery schools as a means of laying the foundation-stone of a sound healthy education.

When the circulars were withdrawn the NSA sent a deputation urging...

<sup>98</sup> Constitution of the N.S.A.(1923)

<sup>99</sup> Owen G.& Eggar M. 'History of the N.S.A. of Great Britain 1923-1944' p.20

- 1) that large nursery school centres should be established in congested districts
- 2) that smaller nursery schools should be opened wherever needed.
- 3) that nursery school staffs should include a reasonable proportion - not less than one to every 40 children - of trained and specially qualified teachers as well as other helpers.<sup>100</sup>

The deputation was introduced by Mrs. Wintringham (former M.P. for Louth) ever a friend of the nursery school movement, whilst Lady Astor continued to watch carefully the interests of nursery schools throughout the whole of her political career.<sup>101</sup>

At the same time, after the restricting circulars had been withdrawn, the NSA sent letters to all LEAs asking whether they *now* contemplated taking steps to open nursery schools, but replies were not encouraging. Some said there was no real need, and others admitted that the more pressing claims of the later stages of education, drained their finances. In 1925, measures were taken to see that Superintendents of nursery schools were trained certificated teachers, as there was a great danger that LEAs and the public failed to realise that the care and education of very young children required qualifications of a very high order.<sup>102</sup> Many thought that as the infants' teacher managed her class single-handedly there was not the essential need for additional qualified staff nor the high ratio of staff per child as required in nursery schools...

'It is the consciousness of this lack of realisation and the danger of the imposition of administrative standards of the infant school upon Nursery Education, which has been the cause of persistent opposition not only of Margaret McMillan, but of a large number of the supporters of nursery schools, to the institution of nursery classes in the Infants' Schools.'<sup>103</sup>

Throughout the period the NSA continued to inform the LEAs and the public at large, what it thought were the essentials of a good nursery school.

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<sup>100</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 13/4, N.S.A. Annual Report, 1926

<sup>101</sup> See Chap.2

<sup>102</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 13/5Bd of Ed. Response in letter 3.9.25. regarding assistants

<sup>103</sup> Owen G. & Eggar M. (1944) 'History of NSA' p.21

The first of these Policy Statements appeared in 1926, and covered such subjects as staffing, essential features of a nursery school education, suitable sites and buildings, cleanliness of premises, and the importance of medical inspection of children in nursery schools:-

'...Yet this work cannot be said to be more than tolerated by official authority. The child under five has again figured as a special target for the so-called economists in education, both as regards provision of care and training and efficiency of teaching staff. In spite of the widespread scandal of over-crowded - even one-roomed homes - in face of the facts which show that one third of our children enter school handicapped by preventable physical defect - in spite of the daily toll of life demanded of little children knocked down and killed in our streets - in the face of continuous warnings of both psychological and medical experts of the folly of ignoring the influences of these early years on after life - we are still confronted with blind inertia on the part of the large majority of those who have executive power to promote and establish nursery schools. The effectiveness of nursery schools as far-reaching agencies of health and happiness for the people is indeed not questioned ; the support of parents of nursery school children is universal - the approval of medical and psychological experts is emphatic - but no amount of favourable evidence, not even the clear proof that Nursery School Education need cost no more than that of the elementary school has so far moved the powers that be to make any determined effort to carry out the will of the people as expressed in Clause 19 of the Fisher Act. Nevertheless, public opinion is steadily strengthening and becoming more informed while the number of trained nursery teachers at work is increasing. The sympathetic understanding both of administrators and the teaching profession as a whole, is growing. The great new movement towards open-air life and sunlight for all is helping to secure recognition of one of the essential conditions of healthy childhood at its best. Moreover, while progress still halts, yet attempts to undermine what has already been done for 'Under Fives' arouses popular indignation and the teaching profession is immediately up in arms.'<sup>104</sup>

In 1926, the NSA played an active part in protesting against the Board of Education Circular 1405 which had proposed to reduce the grant for children under five in infants' schools. This had led to the closure of a nursery school at Scarborough, and in the City of York there were no trained teachers available for the under-fives!(see distribution maps p.146& p.149) From the annual meeting a resolution was sent to Lord Eustace Percy, President of the Board of Education saying :-

'In the interests of the children under five, the Nursery School Association protests against the policy of Circular 1371 (which though suspended is not withdrawn) the

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<sup>104</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 13/5 (1926) NSA Policy Statement

inevitable consequence of which would be the exclusion of large numbers of such children from the elementary schools and urges that in any fresh proposals the claim of the 'under fives' to health and educational supervision should be recognised and adequately met'.<sup>105</sup>

The Labour Party also issued a policy statement (1926) which promised to provide nursery and infant school places for children from 2 to 7 at the rate of 5,000 new places per year for five years costing £275,000.<sup>106</sup> The NSA felt that the time had come for the nursery school to be given a proper place in the educational structure of the country and in 1927 resolved:-

'That this Association desires to see the Nursery School Clause in the Education Acts of 1918 and 1921 so amended as to make it incumbent on the LEAs to establish nursery schools within their areas'.<sup>107</sup>

During 1927 the Nursery School Association worked to gain support for this resolution and an appeal was drawn up signed by Margaret McMillan (President) and Mrs. Evelegh (Chairman). This was circulated to many types of organisation – educational, medical and social which were concerned with the welfare of the young child.<sup>108</sup>

Organisations supporting the resolution included the following :-

'The Froebel Society  
The Child Study Society  
The Sunlight League  
The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations  
The Workers Educational Association  
The Women's Co-operative Guild  
The Copec Continuation Committee'.

It was also endorsed by the central council of the :-

'Trades Union Conference  
The North Lambeth Labour Party  
Six Women's Labour Advisory Councils  
97 Women's Sections of the Labour Party  
4 Branches of the Labour Party  
The Training Colleges Association  
The Educational Institute for Scotland

<sup>105</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 13/5 (1926) NSA Annual Report

<sup>106</sup> Labour Party (1926) 'From Nursery School to University'

<sup>107</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 13/6 (1927) NSA Annual Report

<sup>108</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 13/6. (1927) Annual Report, App. D



The following organisations expressed sympathy with the resolution:-

The New Education Fellowship  
The National Adult School Union  
The Health and Cleanliness Council  
The Independent Labour Party<sup>109</sup>

Membership of the New Education Fellowship(above) included many of those concerned to promote a more vital education 'across the board' through 'New Ideals in Education' meetings during WW1. The NEF showed its support of the NSA through its journal 'New Era'.<sup>110</sup>

An appeal was also sent to all MPs requesting strong demand for more nursery schools. Mr Percy Harris (Lib.), Lady Astor (Con.) and Mr. Morgan Jones (Lab.)<sup>111</sup> represented the respective parties in putting forward the case of nursery schools, but it was *17 years* (1944 Act) before their demand was actioned.

Also in 1927 the NSA submitted a memorandum to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Education urging:-

'...that the Church should lend its influence and active support to the Nursery school movement, as representing in practice fundamental principles in religious development'.<sup>112</sup>

During this period of growth, the NSA adopted a policy of forming branches throughout the country, whose objects were to secure the concentration of attention on *local* conditions. The first branch was founded in Birmingham in 1927, and in 1929, after a public meeting in Newcastle upon Tyne addressed by

<sup>109</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 13/6 (1927) N.S.A .Annual Report

<sup>110</sup> Boyd W.& Rawson W. (1965) 'The Story of the New Education' & Selleck R.W. (1968) 'The New Education 1870-1914' trace beginnings and development. White M.H. (Dec.2001) 'The New Education Fellowship : an international community of practice' outlines and explores practices that developed in the NEF in the 1920s and 1930s in 'New Era in Education' Vol.82, No.3

<sup>111</sup> Less than three years later, in another context, Mr .Jones wrote a memo concerning a proposal from Miss Walker (Principal of Darlington Training College). Rather large issues were involved, he thought, as '...no general welcome would arise from her proposal to convert power to assist voluntary nursery schools to 'duty'...'. Managers' power would be restricted and the Board of Education's power to give direct grants would disappear. DRO E/Dar. 18/4/13 (2.1.30)

<sup>112</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Education 1927 (Memorandum)

Margaret McMillan, a vigorous movement initiated by the British Federation of University Women, was responsible for the formation of the Tyneside Nursery School Association (TNSA) whose object was to promote the establishment of nursery schools on Tyneside. The curious anomaly of this group (whose activities are later described) was that it remained a group member of the NSA rather than a branch.<sup>113</sup>

In 1928, the NSA submitted (on request) a memorandum on the aims, scope and method of the education of children under 7, to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education. One of the members of this committee was Miss Freda Hawtrey, Principal of Avery Hill Training College, formerly Principal of Darlington Training College (1912-1922) and instrumental in the founding of the George Dent Nursery School, Darlington, in 1917.<sup>114</sup> Evidence given by the NSA was used in the Report on Infants and Nursery Schools in 1933. In this lay the proof of the strength of the NSA. By 1929, however, the *financial resources* of the NSA were *becoming strained* and it was felt that more was needed than the 5/- subscription per member. The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust offered a grant of £500 for three years to help the NSA to :-

‘... further establish the work of educating public opinion’.<sup>115</sup>

With this generous offer the Association was able to rent an office at 32, Bloomsbury Street and to appoint a secretary.

1929 was also General Election year and the Labour Party, sympathetic to the aims of the movement, was returned to power. As this was the first occasion when all women over 21 years of age were allowed to vote, the NSA did not allow such an opportunity to slip through its fingers and in fact produced a rousing pre-

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<sup>113</sup> See Chap.4 (2)

<sup>114</sup> See Chap.4 (1)

<sup>115</sup> LSE BAECE 13/7 (1929) NSA Annual Report

election pamphlet.<sup>116</sup>

In December 1929 the new Government issued a Joint Circular from the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education.<sup>117</sup> This gave definite encouragement to the Local Authorities to open nursery schools:-

‘...As Minister of Health and President of the Board of Education we make a strong appeal to Local Authorities to use the powers which all possess, but which only some exercise. Now that all Local Education Authorities are framing programmes for the next three years we would ask them earnestly to consider the provision of nursery schools for children between 2 and 5 years old...’

As a result nine new nursery schools were opened in 1930 as against nine in the whole of the previous nine years. There were now 40 nursery schools and plans for two more.

Following on this wave of expansion, enthusiasm ran high. The NSA as a pressure group worked hard to continue to focus attention on the Joint Circular. A Conference was called in November 1930 and invitations issued to LEA representatives, and prominent Associations interested in Education, Health and Social Welfare. This received strong support. After interesting speeches and lively discussions a resolution was passed :

‘... that this Conference urges Local Education Authorities to respond to the strong appeal of the Minister of Health and the President of the Board of Education to use the powers which all possess for the establishment of nursery schools in their districts.’<sup>118</sup>

However just when all seemed to be going well, yet another *financial crisis* (1931) intervened, and except for the efforts of various voluntary organisations there was virtually no progress for four or five years.

This was a time of great industrial depression and widespread unemployment which made it more necessary than ever that adequate measures

<sup>116</sup> General Election Pamphlet (NSA) Appendix 7

<sup>117</sup> Ministry of Health Circular 1054 (Minister of Health - Mr. Arthur Greenwood), Board of Education Circular 1405 (President of the Board – Sir Charles Trevelyan)

<sup>118</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 13/7 NSA (1930) Annual Report

for safe-guarding the bodies and minds of young children should be provided. Probably no part of the country suffered more than the North East, and with special reference to the nursery school movement, work in the Emergency Open Air Nurseries helped to ease the hardship.<sup>119</sup>

Poverty was widespread and malnutrition common. The backlog of overcrowding and slum clearance seemed to get worse instead of better. A series of Housing Acts had begun to tackle the problem of slum clearance, but more money was needed. New estates, both private and Local Authority sprang up, and in a letter to the Times in October 1933, attention was drawn to the danger of concentration solely on the substitution of new houses for old and to the conditions necessary for securing satisfactory family life in the new communities.<sup>120</sup> One of the philanthropic measures adopted in many areas was the supply of clothing and footwear to necessitous children by voluntary bodies, and in Leeds, (from 1921), this work was undertaken by the 'Boots for Bairns' Fund.<sup>121</sup> There is evidence of similar schemes throughout the North East often operated by police charities. In particular the needs of the children of pre-school age were stressed and a strong appeal was also made for the reservation of sites for nursery schools in connection with all new housing schemes:-

'...It is widely recognised that the open-air nursery school supplies what is wanted in the best way yet devised. It provides the needed space for the little children's active growth and it supplies medical supervision and healthy conditions, it gives each child opportunity for sound and happy mental and social training in close co-operation with the home. Thus physical and mental health for the future is assured, and a measure that may look like a luxury to some is seen to be no less than a national economy...'<sup>122</sup>

However the hands of the educational authorities were bound and although

<sup>119</sup> See Chap. 4 for further details.

<sup>120</sup> See Chap.2 for further discussion of this issue

<sup>121</sup> Meyer W.R. 'Boots for the Bairns' (1987), J.E.A.H., XIX, No.1, Jan.1987

<sup>122</sup> DUL Archbishop of York 'Letter to the Times', 17th October 1933, signed by officers of the NSA

the campaign was enthusiastically received, all that could be done was to reserve sites in areas of housing development for future nursery schools.

The appalling suffering of children in some areas of Great Britain had come before the members of the Save the Children Fund, who set up a Committee (some of whose members were also of the NSA Committee) to open Emergency Open-Air Nurseries in distressed areas.

These were mainly financed by the Save the Children Fund, the National Council of Social Service, the Pilgrim Trust and Viscountess Astor. Working through local Committees, they established eight emergency open-air nurseries in 1933, the first being in Lincoln.

The North East received a good share (an indication of the great *social need*) in the opening of emergency nurseries at North Shields, Byker, Sunderland and Middlesbrough. (In fact at this time, advice was sought from Miss Walker, Principal of Darlington Training College by Mr Sawyer of Sunderland concerning the successful operation of the George Dent Nursery School)<sup>123</sup>

For these particular nurseries the co-operation of the Unemployed Occupational Centres was secured and in most cases the buildings were erected by unemployed men who gave their services voluntarily. However this practice had to be discontinued as there were certain dangers involved in permitting unpaid labour for this type of work. Nevertheless the making of furniture and equipment within the occupational centres, still continued. The emergency nurseries were staffed by trained nursery teachers and all but one became recognised by the Board of Education for grant. By the end of 1933, there were 59 nursery schools,

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<sup>123</sup> DRO Letter from Miss Walker (9.2.32) to Mr. Sawyer of Sunderland detailing daily routine and a breakdown of annual budget of George Dent Nursery School, urging him to lobby Sunderland's Alderman Swann.

32 LEA and 27 voluntary. The NSA also played an active part in helping to establish Emergency Open-air Nurseries and was represented by one of its members, Miss Freda Hawtrey, Principal of Avery Hill Training College (former Principal of Darlington Training College) on the Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools.

The 1933 Report had merely endorsed the 1918 and 1921 Acts regarding provision by LEAs<sup>124</sup> and Miss Hawtrey whose 'chief passion was the welfare of underprivileged children'<sup>125</sup> added:-

'...I go a little beyond my colleagues in believing that a nursery school would have more value as an experiment, or as a 'model' if it were able to keep its children till seven, the age when they pass into the upper department of a primary school. At present the work of a primary school is unduly curtailed by the break at five. A little child needs food, sleep, exercise, fresh air, and cleanliness, and this 'nurture' essential for his development should not be even partially withdrawn at the early age of five. Nor should he be interrupted in his practice of good habits. 'Nothing is secure at five', though without a break much might be established by seven. A sudden change of environment will be equally damaging to his intellectual development and growing interests. There should be continuity till seven, when this continuity is preserved that extent to which children benefit from education in a nursery school will become apparent'. Miss Hawtrey recommended, 'WE think, therefore that apart from social and economic considerations model nursery schools for children either from the age of two to five, or from the age of two to seven are educationally desirable and that they should be made accessible to teachers from other schools....'<sup>126</sup>

This feeling had been endorsed by several persons and organisations including Margaret McMillan with whom Freda Hawtrey had maintained strong links since her arrival at Avery Hill.<sup>127</sup> Margaret McMillan had, in fact, retained children until 7 or 8 and in 1930, the Bradford Education Authority had amalgamated one of its nursery schools with an adjoining infants' school and placed the unit under one headmistress. Problems of a practical nature were obvious as well as those of administering a school under two sets of regulations.

<sup>124</sup> 1933 Report, p.115

<sup>125</sup> Shorney D. (1989) 'Teachers in Training 1906-1985 : A History of Avery Hill College' p.108

<sup>126</sup> 1933 Report, note by Miss Freda Hawtrey p.196

<sup>127</sup> Freda Hawtrey had established a Rachel McMillan Summer School in 1923. In 1925, 95 children from Deptford Open Air School were resident in College for a fortnight. Between 1924-1937 Avery Hill Training College for teachers housed a school for 40-50 handicapped children.

But the conviction regarding the two to seven plus phases was so strong that the difficulties were surmounted. More nursery/infant schools were opened in Bradford and in 1934, Princeville and Ynyscynon (Rhondda) were opened for an experimental period. The attention drawn to these projects focused on yet another type of provision for nursery years. The 'Depression' of the early thirties and its attendant evils, which had precipitated the emergency open-air nurseries, had increased the pressure of public opinion and...

'...in the inter war years she...(Freda Hawtrey)'... did as much as anyone to keep alive the ideals of nursery education at a time when official support was almost totally lacking and public funding virtually non-existent...'<sup>128</sup>

In 1934 a General Election was approaching and the Government, anxious to be returned, relaxed some of its more stringent measures. In a reply to a question from Viscountess Astor in the House of Commons during a debate on the Estimates, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, Mr. Ramsbotham, said ...

'There is nothing to prevent local authorities from submitting urgent cases, or, where it is considered that the circumstances have altered, from bringing fresh proposals before the Board... where the provision of such a school is found to be urgently necessary it is unlikely that the Board are going to be adamant for all time'.<sup>129</sup>

All three political parties promised to support the provision of nursery schools if they were returned to power. So that LEAs might be clear on the finance involved in nursery provision the NSA conducted an enquiry:-

'...Nursery School Costs - In consequence of the widely varying estimates of the maintenance costs in nursery schools and the absence of precise figures, an enquiry was undertaken during the year. A questionnaire was issued to Directors of Education in those towns where nursery schools are maintained by the local authority, and an analysis of the figures supplied showed that the average cost per child in the twenty nursery schools covered by the replies was £14.13s.per annum based upon the number of children on roll. Figures given by the Chief Medical Officer in his report on the Health of the School Child (1934) show that the total net

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<sup>128</sup> Shorney D. (1989) p.109

<sup>129</sup> HC Deb.290, 30.5.34, col.256

expenditure to be met from grants and rates on nursery schools in the year 1934-35 was £63,260. During that period it is estimated that there was accommodation for approximately 5,000 children in the recognised nursery schools of the country. This would give £12.13s as the average annual cost per child, based on the total accommodation. It would appear therefore that the actual average cost lies somewhere between the two figures...<sup>130</sup>

Following a brief comment in the 1933 Report, Miss Hawtrey was granted leave of absence in 1935 for a survey of French nursery schools – ‘Les Écoles Maternelles’ where her report shows the ‘*paucity of provision in England and near universality of nursery schools in France*’.<sup>131</sup>

The following year an official statement put the running cost of a place for a child in an English nursery school at a realistic £15 to £17 per child. The National Government was returned, and in 1936 issued Circular 1444 (Administrative Programme of Educational Development, 1936). The section relevant to this study was headed ‘Nursery Schools and Children Under Five’, and merely followed the recommendations of the Consultative Committee (1933) in asking LEAs. to ...

‘...survey the local needs and consider how far they call for expansion or improvement, whether in nursery schools or in elementary schools...’<sup>132</sup>.

The general feeling was that...

‘the nursery school is still regarded as a special service for the amelioration of unsatisfactory social and domestic conditions’.<sup>133</sup>

The image of the nursery school as a special school for certain sections of the community had become fixed in the minds of the public and even of some of the members of the Board, and it could not yet be considered as an integral part of a national system of education.

A pamphlet was issued by the Board describing what was being done throughout the country for children in nursery classes.<sup>134</sup> In the introduction it

<sup>130</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 13/8 (1935) NSA Annual Report

<sup>131</sup> Hawtrey F. (1935) ‘Report on French Nursery Schools’ p.87

<sup>132</sup> Bd.of Ed. (6.1.36) Circular 1444 p.1

<sup>133</sup> Cusden P. (1938) p.125

<sup>134</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1936) Educational Pamphlets No.106, ‘Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes’



specifically states that ‘nursery schools have as their primary object the physical and medical nurtures of the debilitated child.’<sup>135</sup> Perhaps this was so in 1911 when Margaret McMillan opened her first nursery. Perhaps it was true for those nursery schools serving congested districts of industrial towns, or in areas of great unemployment, but far-seeing promoters of the nursery school movement felt that not only was the nursery an antidote to social evils, but it also provided a sure foundation on which the whole educational structure of every child should be built.

The pamphlet deals with the advantages which can be offered in a good nursery class and attempts to draw together their similarity with the nursery school...

‘...These two have a common aim, the close co-operation between home and school in order that the child may obtain the greater possible benefits medically, educationally and socially at a critical period of his life’.<sup>136</sup>

It goes on to point out differences in status and organisation and suggests that a close study of local conditions would reveal that in some areas a nursery class may suffice whereas in others a nursery school would be needed ...

‘... In other poor, but not poverty-stricken districts there may still be urgent need for some place where children below school age may be kept safe from the dangers of the streets and be given not so much medical attention, as opportunities found in an ordinary nursery class for companionship and all-round development. These are things which many a busy mother now-a-days, whatever her position, may find it hard to supply....

....so it happens that modern housing conditions, the growth of traffic, all kinds of pressing social, industrial and financial considerations have recently brought the whole subject of the ‘under fives’ to the fore and made it a matter of immediate public concern to examine the available services and how they can be used to the best advantage...’<sup>137</sup>

The pamphlet continues with full descriptions of the everyday workings of nursery classes and nursery schools, compiled from evidence submitted by 40

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<sup>135</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1936) p.6

<sup>136</sup> Bd.of Ed. (1936) p.5

<sup>137</sup> Bd. of Ed. (1936) p.6

L.E.As in different parts of the country, but chiefly in the North and Midlands, and was:-

‘...Published in the hope that it may be of general interest and that practical guidance and assistance may be derived from it by teachers and by L.E.A.s and others who may be contemplating provision for children under 5 by either of the two methods mentioned...’<sup>138</sup>

Thus with up to date information and Government sanction it looked as if yet another phase of expansion was beginning. Many LEAs undertook the survey asked for by the Board of Education and the response was both varied and interesting.

Some LEAs decided that no action was called for in their areas. Some admitted that reorganisation of primary and secondary schools occupied all their time and finance, following the recommendations of the Hadow Report ‘Education of the Adolescent’, 1926, and that they were shelving nursery school provision for the time being. A few put forward concrete proposals for new nursery schools. The majority of those who took action favoured nursery classes in existing or proposed infants’ schools, which when one considers the prevailing situation seemed most sensible.

The pamphlet had described some of the most successful ‘conversions’ leading to the establishment of nursery classes in existing infant schools, and in the late 30s many infant schools had spare classrooms suitable for conversion.<sup>139</sup> The reason for this was the declining birth rate between the two wars. There were also teachers to spare, who would otherwise be redundant, although one should hasten to point out that the redundancy was purely administrative and would have disappeared if all over-large classes had been reorganised.

Also nursery schools were expensive to build and to run, so that many

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<sup>138</sup> Bd. of Ed. (1936) Prefatory Note, p.3

<sup>139</sup> Circular 1444

LEAs regarded nursery classes as adequate and inexpensive substitutes.

‘...The cost of structural alterations and equipment in the various types of school worked out at an average of £19 per place, ranging from as little as £13.7s. to £28.8s...’<sup>140</sup>

A general policy of establishing nursery classes would have been the quickest and most inexpensive way of bringing a taste of nursery education to the largest number of children. They could have been attached to the existing elementary schools, which were situated in the areas where the children lived and existing classrooms could have been adapted for the nursery class and at a much lower cost than establishing new nursery schools. Most teachers in infant school would have endorsed the establishment of nursery classes as in many schools the ‘baby’ classes were already being run on ‘nursery’ lines, but opposition to nursery classes by the advocates of the nursery school movement was very strong. Like Margaret Macmillan they feared that if little children were admitted to an old-fashioned type of elementary school, they would at once be deprived of space, fresh air, suitable equipment and the *skilled training* necessary for ‘nurture’ and education.

In many cases their fears were justified, but in the spirit of enthusiasm, devotion and enlightenment, many children in nursery classes were able to receive some of the benefits of a nursery school. Also, the advantages were reciprocal in that the influence of the nursery class permeated throughout the infant school, encouraging a new *spontaneous* approach to its work, and arousing a strong public feeling of approval.

In 1935, a group of interested persons, including Lady Astor, Miss Freda Hawtrey, Dr. F. M. Spencer, Mrs. Oliver Strachey and Mrs. Wintringham drew up

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<sup>140</sup> Cusden P. (1938) p.176

*'A Ten Year Plan for Children'* which put forward practical proposals for transforming unsatisfactory school buildings, by either reconditioning or replacing them.

In this connection the idea was to convert infant schools into separate open-air nurseries especially adapted to the needs of young children and to admit them from two to seven years of age. The plan suggested that where the LEA guaranteed to carry out the proposals within 10 years, the Board of Education would increase building grants from 20% to 50% of loan charges, with a bonus of 10% for authorities who completed the scheme within the first five years. An estimate of accommodation reckoned on 15% of 2s to 3s, 30% of 3s to 4s, and 60% of 4s to 5s, taking advantage of nursery provision. In 1935 that was 592,000 children at an estimated cost of £10,000,000.

The sponsors published their plan and launched their campaign for sweeping away the old and out-of-date, and bringing them up to the best modern standards. Along with this campaign, the ever-insistent demands of the NSA that the nursery school was the only satisfactory basis of a national system of education and the increasing press coverage showed a growing determination to make adequate provision for the early years. Nursery schools had proved their worth, yet in 1937, there were still only 87 which were recognised - 40 LEA and 47 voluntary, with accommodation for 6,735 of the one and three quarter million children between 2 and 5. There were approximately 158,000 infants in departments of elementary schools, in either nursery classes or 'baby' classes. Between January 1936 and July 1937, eighty three LEAs had made, or had proposed to make provision for children under five in 183 nursery classes. Numbers of children accommodated in nursery classes (such as are defined in

Circular 1444) are not known. However the fact remains that from 1918 down to the outbreak of the war in 1939, *provision* for under 5s *fluctuated* between 13% and 14% of the total. (see graphs for numbers, pp.148)

To summarise the work of the NSA during this period...

Up to 1939 it was engaged in stimulating public interest and trying to effect positive legislation on behalf of the nursery school movement. One of the most powerful weapons was the printed page, and altogether 47 pamphlets were published relating to current situations. Thousands of copies were printed (e.g. 26,000 in 1931) and many were reprinted again and again. The pamphlet 'Nursery schools and the Pre-school child' with opinions by Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer, proved invaluable as a means of propaganda.

Also during the period, the NSA always attacked restrictive measures imposed by the Board of Education, and as soon as these were relaxed, offered constructive assistance towards promoting and extending facilities. By 1938 the total number of nursery schools was 118; 55 voluntary and 63 LEA. Total accommodation was 9,500.<sup>141</sup>

Throughout the period Lady Astor and Mrs. Wintringham lobbied Parliament. The first wireless broadcast on behalf of the movement had been made in 1927 by Margaret McMillan. Films and exhibitions were also staged. In extending the horizon of the nursery school work, much propaganda was done by the branches of the NSA. By 1939 there were more than 26 branches with 44 associated groups, one of which was the *Tyneside Nursery School Association*.

Towards the close of the year 1928, the North East branch of the British

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<sup>141</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 13/8 N.S.A (1938).Annual Report, Also see distribution maps p.147 & p.149 to compare with 1926(p.146) showing new schools ,their geographic concentrations in England and Wales and N.E.England respectively.

Federation of University Women began to discuss the possibility of opening nursery schools on Tyneside, and in 1929, the TNSA was formed. In the same year a social survey had indicated the need for some *provision* of this nature :-

‘About one-tenth of the whole population of Tyneside is in the baby or toddler stage of life; a few of these very small children will go to private kindergartens or other preparatory schools; a few will be in council schools, but the bulk of them will stay at home until they are five years old. The provision of nursery schools for children under five is permitted to local authorities, but it is not obligatory on them - very few local authorities have established them in any part of the country and no local authority has done so on Tyneside.’<sup>142</sup>

In such an area of heavy industry, population figures had leapt alarmingly over 100 years of industrial development and over most of Tyneside, the congested housing and serious over-crowding made it pertinent that some provision be made for children of pre-school years.<sup>143</sup>

On 3rd May 1929, a meeting was held in King’s Hall, Armstrong College (now the University of Newcastle) at which Margaret McMillan was the guest speaker and ‘missionary’ to the North East. At that meeting, the Tyneside Nursery School Association (TNSA) was formed, and on 13th May, a Committee was elected ‘to promote in every way the establishment of nursery schools on Tyneside.’<sup>144</sup>

The president of the TNSA was:

The Right Honourable Lord Eustace Percy

The Vice-Presidents were:-

The Right Hon. Sir Charles Trevelyan, Bart. M.P.  
 Lady Trevelyan  
 Viscountess Ridley  
 The Hon. Lady Parsons J.P.  
 Rt. Hon. the Lord Kirkley  
 Dr. Ethel Williams  
 Miss E. Pease O.B.E., J.P.  
 H. B. Saint, Esq.

<sup>142</sup> Mess H .A. (1928) ‘Industrial Tyneside’

<sup>143</sup> See Chap.2

<sup>144</sup> TNSA (1930) Inaugural Meeting in First Annual Report 1929-30

Miss Margaret McMillan C.B.E.  
 Viscountess Allendale  
 Sir Thomas Oliver M.A., M.D.  
 Sir W. Gratton Doyle M.P  
 Rt. Hon. Margaret Bondfield M.P.  
 Miss Caroline Davies

The Chairman was :-

Professor Frank Smith

The Hon.Secretary was:-

Mrs. E. Wardley Smith

During the year 1928-1929, however, the BFUW had been making plans for a nursery school at Bensham Grove Settlement where for a very moderate charge they could have the use of the Settlement Hall and Garden. It was agreed that this venture, with its own list of BFUW subscribers would be merged into the TNSA. Also it was hoped that strong local groups would strive to raise funds for nursery schools in other parts of the area.

In an exhibition (14th June – 29th June) a model of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School and other exhibits were shown. Leaflets and circulars were distributed, and articles were published in newspapers and magazines. Soon there was a strong public feeling of support and the number of members of the TNSA in 1929 rose to 297.

The Bensham Grove Nursery opened with 40 children. Later, by the generosity of Lady Astor and Hon. William Astor, open-air buildings were erected in the garden of the settlement and numbers were increased to 50 in 1932. When the second half was completed in 1937 the nursery school could accommodate a further 50 children.<sup>145</sup>

In 1931, Miss Steele and Miss Hand opened the Welbeck Road Nursery School, Newcastle for 10 children in a disused army hut. With the help of the

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<sup>145</sup> Details of foundation of Bensham Grove N.S., Gateshead – see Chapter 4 (2)

children's parents an extension was erected and the number increased to 20. The initial venture was generously financed by Miss Steele. In 1932, the Newcastle Education Authority opened Ashfield Nursery School, Elswick Road, for 90 children in a stone-built residential house. To mark their interest in the *first nursery school on Tyneside maintained by a Local Authority*, the TNSA presented to it a framed Medici picture with suitable inscription.<sup>146</sup>

1934 saw a *big leap forward* in the establishment of nursery schools at North Shields, Byker and Sunderland under the Emergency Open-air Nurseries Scheme set up under the auspices of the Save the Children Fund, to help many needy children.<sup>147</sup> In the early 1930s children on Tyneside definitely needed help, as they were victims of poverty, malnutrition, dirt, disease and despair, which often prevailed in districts of widespread unemployment and over-crowding.

In 1934 the Medical Officer of Health for Newcastle upon Tyne, Dr. J. A. Charles, found the mortality rate for measles was three times greater in overcrowded areas of the city than in the residential districts.<sup>148</sup> As well as poor housing, unemployment resulted in insufficient and unsuitable food - especially important for the growing child. Again in Newcastle a survey of health of children between one and five years, revealed that out of 125 children from the poorest houses and streets, 36% were 'unhealthy or physically unfit'.<sup>149</sup> Living in close proximity with others, without amenities of fresh air, hot water, good sanitation, food and clothing many five year olds had suffered severe physical debility.

The first of the Emergency Open-air Nurseries in the North-east to receive

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<sup>146</sup>TWAS (Ref.2891) This cost £2.12s.6d (TNSA Accs.)

<sup>147</sup> See Chap.4

<sup>148</sup> Dr.Charles M.O.H. (1934) 'Investigation into the Health and Nutrition of certain of the Children of Newcastle upon Tyne between the Ages of One and Five years'.

<sup>149</sup> Dr. J.C Spence (Newcastle,1934) 'The Health and Nutrition of Certain of the Children of Newcastle upon Tyne between the Ages of One and Five Years'



the Board of Education recognition as a nursery school was that at Middlesbrough, where a summer nursery school, held at the Middlesbrough Settlement, with voluntary helpers, had for years demonstrated the necessity for regular *provision* for the needs of young children.<sup>150</sup> The coming of the Emergency Open-air Nurseries scheme presented just the opportunity that was needed to make possible the desired development and the local branch of the National Council of Women undertook responsibility for the management and control of the nursery. When the school received a gift of £900 it was decided to increase accommodation to sixty places, as there was a waiting list of over 200 names. A further grant of over £200 was received from the National Council of Social Service and the extension was completed during 1936.

To return to those on Tyneside. The Byker Nursery School was opened for 40 children and was soon able to increase to 45. It was immediately recognised by the Board of Education for grants. The North Shields Nursery at Howdon was opened for 40 children (again it received immediate recognition by the Board), and was doubled in size when an extension was opened in 1935, made possible by a grant from the Commissioner for Special Areas. Similarly, the Sunderland Nursery School opened for 40 children and after four years, extensions were completed to admit 80 children through a 90% grant from the Commissioner for Special Areas. During March 1936 an exhibition was staged at a leading department store (Fenwick's in Northumberland Street, Newcastle), to bring to the public eye the work carried on in nursery schools. It was reported that it was 'visited by a great many people who said they had never heard of a nursery school before.'<sup>151</sup>

The foundations of a nursery school at Hebburn were laid by the Duchess

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<sup>150</sup> During the College Vacations some voluntary help was given by students of Darlington Training College, See Chapter 4(1)

<sup>151</sup> TWAS 1232/7 (1936) TNSA 7th Annual Report (Newcastle Journal, 26.3.36)

of York (later, Queen Mother) in June 1936. It opened in January 1937 with 37 children and by June the full quota of 80 children had been admitted. There was soon a growing waiting list.

In August 1937, the Sir James Knott Memorial Nursery School at Percy Square, Tynemouth, was opened. Again grants came from the Commissioner for Special Areas and from the trustees of the late Sir James Knott. This provided accommodation for 80 children at the east end of Tynemouth. Also in 1937, a holiday home was acquired by the TNSA at Haydon Bridge, a pleasant country town on the upper reaches of the Tyne, about 30 miles west of Newcastle.

In 1938 a nursery school was opened at New Brancepeth, and became a member of the Tyneside group. New Brancepeth was a coal mining community situated about four miles west of Durham City. Up to this point in the history of the development of *provision* in the North East, schools had been opened in congested heavily-industrialised areas, in Tyneside, Teesside and Wearside (with the exception of Darlington whose foundations may be regarded as unique in this particular study.) The New Brancepeth Nursery School was opened in January 1938 for 40 children. The building used was a Social Service Centre (also used for many other purposes) and a delightful nursery school was established. The greater portion of the cost of adaptation was met by a grant from the Commissioner for Special Areas.

In 1938, Bensham Grove Nursery School was taken over by Gateshead LEA.<sup>152</sup> In Newcastle upon Tyne a self-supporting nursery school for fee-paying pupils was opened (mornings only) at Claremont House - an early indication that where parents *could* afford private nursery education they were willing to pay for it.

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<sup>152</sup> See. Chap.4 (2)

By 1939, the Jarrow Nursery School was complete and badly needed. Ellen Wilkinson has described the effect of unemployment on the town in the 1930s. One large family's staple diet was '...tea, bread, margarine, potatoes, cheap jam, with stew at weekends. The mother is ailing, obviously taking less than her share...'<sup>153</sup> However, owing to the outbreak of war, the buildings were not used as a nursery school until after the war. The source of finance was 90% from the Commissioner for Special Areas and a grant of £500 from the Pilgrim Trust. In Blaydon-on-Tyne, the Nursery School Committee had obtained a site for a nursery school for 40 children and grants again had been sanctioned by the Commissioner for Special Areas, as well as £100 having been raised by the efforts of the Committee. In 1939, Byker Nursery School was taken over by Newcastle Education Authority.

Thus, in 10 years, *ten* nursery schools had been established in the North East as well as a growing interest in the nursery movement, and 640 children were now provided for, mostly by voluntary effort. That there was a chronic need for such schools cannot be denied. The local newspapers gave much space to the campaigns urging people to give their time and money to the cause. Grateful parents wrote describing the benefits received by their own children, and local dignitaries launched subscription appeals. The movement was not without critics, but on the whole it was universally agreed that the North East needed such provision.<sup>154</sup> The fact that so many schools qualified for grants from the Commissioner for Special Areas, speaks for itself.

#### What *were* Special Areas?

<sup>153</sup> Ellen Wilkinson (1939) 'The town that was murdered' quoted in MacReady (2002) p.105

<sup>154</sup> TWAS 1232/4/6/7 TNSA 33/4/5 As examples see- Speech of Lady Astor (Newcastle Journal 19.10.33); Letter of Criticism, and Replies (Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 12.12.34) Appendices.8 & 9

We must examine some of the social conditions which had rendered the opening of these schools (up to the outbreak of war) as imperative. Schools established in the North East before 1939 were:-

* Darlington	1917
* Bensham Grove	1929
Welbeck Road, Newcastle	1931
Ashfield, Newcastle	1932
* North Shields, Howdon	1934
Byker	1934
Sunderland	1934
Middlesbrough	1934
Hebburn	1937
* Tynemouth, Sir James Knott	1937
Haydon Park Holiday Home	1937
* New Brancepeth	1938
Jarrow (completed but not open) (Blaydon - site only)	1939

\*see in sample survey/case studies

A closer definition of the area which is under consideration will perhaps explain a few of the social and economic conditions.

With the expansion of heavy industry in the 19th century, concentrations of population on the Northumberland and Durham Coalfield and the area embraced by the Three Rivers, Tyne, Wear and Tees grew from (approx.) 200,000 to two millions by 1930s.

In an area of heavy industries homes for workers were erected on the banks of the rivers and round the pit shafts to provide accommodation for the ship builders and miners. Conditions in a working man's home in the thirties are described. Even then many of the original dwellings were still occupied and many more were needed...

'There were several cases of 10 adults and children living in one room. And what 'rooms' some of them were. One top room with 6 people was just under a railway and its one window had to be kept closed because the engine sparks flew in and set fire to the bed clothes. A family (parents, four girls from 13 to 21, and two boys aged 6 and 9) who had lived in the same basement for nineteen years were all under the doctor. I was shown a slum cottage where the children slept in the attic in the winter to avoid the rats in the basement, and in the basement in hot weather

because the rats downstairs are less fearful than the bugs upstairs... When a death occurs there is often no space for the coffin but the one table. It releases the bed where the living and dying need no longer be together.’<sup>155</sup>

The causes of the depression of the 1930s and its accompanying poverty were not obscure. The region depended on a few heavy localised industries, where mechanisation was replacing manpower. Also competitive world markets had reduced the demand for British ships and coal, and workers redundant in these industries had nothing to fall back on. In some parts of the county of Durham one out of every three men was idle (i.e. unemployed) and relied on ‘dole’, but even this unemployment benefit became subject to a means test.<sup>156</sup> Poverty was so acute that the working man was plunged into the deepest waters of social evil and distress including malnutrition and mental depression.<sup>157</sup> Such was life in mining villages of County Durham :-

‘The cottage contained a living room and a scullery and two bedrooms, a backyard and an outside earth closet. It had been the home of a man, woman and six children for twelve years. The furniture downstairs comprised a table, two kitchen chairs, a form, and a dilapidated plush chair, obtained when the local cinema sold up. The floor was covered, or partly covered with cheap linoleum, and when the baby sat on her mother’s knee, there was just room for the whole family to be seated at the same time. Upstairs in the large bedroom a double bed, mattress, and two blankets; in the smaller, two four-foot mattresses on the floor and a mixed pile of bedding. For five years the husband had no work and during that period four children had been born into the home. They were decently dressed but possessed no proper footwear only rubber soled plimsolls. A good fire kept the house warm, but the only food in the house seemed to be a loaf of bread, a small packet of tea and a bowl of fat. No water was laid on and there was no gas, electricity or drainage. The rent including rates was 8/6d a week. The house was one of a row of forty all similar in build and three men in the street were employed. Ten had not worked for five years, twelve for three, six young men of 16-23 had never worked since they left school. Fourteen children were tubercular, four men received disability pensions, six women had more than eight children and the average number of people living in a room was five. The village had no shops, no public meeting place, no playground, no cinema or public house. The total population was approximately 500. One hundred and ten were insured workers and eighteen were employed intermittently in a colliery three miles distant. Their earnings

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<sup>155</sup> Newsom J. (1936) ‘Out of the Pit : A Challenge to the Comfortable’ p. xiii ;quoting from an unnamed newspaper (J. Newsom, Director of the Community Service Council, Durham)

<sup>156</sup> In 1932, 377,000 out of 2.8 million unemployed were struck off from any source of unemployment benefit.

<sup>157</sup> John Newsom’s interest in social service began in his student days at Oxford when he had come to the belief that good education deserved the best physical environment

averaged one and eight pence a week (1s.8d) more than they would have received from the Public Assistance Committee<sup>158</sup>

This was a typical picture.

Unemployment was not the sole cause of such *low standards of living*.

Looked at retrospectively, we can only say, the 'two nations theory' was in operation<sup>159</sup> - men either worked in the mines or in shipbuilding or they did not work at all. There was no other way out. In such a situation labour could be bought cheaply. Many left the area to find work, but family ties, the difficulty of saving up enough money for fares and lodgings while establishing oneself in the south etc., rendered this impossible for the married man with children. Yet they needed help. The *provision of nursery schools* could make a small contribution towards alleviating the conditions in many families. At least the children could receive a nourishing meal each day and individual care and treatment. As well as improved physical care, the child in the nursery could have opportunity for social and psychological development, away from his over crowded home where despair and worry of parents often dampened the simple pleasures of the child.

Most of the nursery schools which opened in the 1930s in the North East had this great physical and social need in mind.

Contrast this situation with the County of Hertfordshire in the inter-war period.<sup>160</sup> The history of nursery pioneers in this county was always tied up with many other wide ranging issues and developments and ended up being 'relegated to sympathetic asides in educational history'.<sup>161</sup>

In South East England during the inter-war period, the controversies in the

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<sup>158</sup> Newsom J., (1936) Durham Community Service Council 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report, also quoted in 'Out of the Pit' pp.18-19

<sup>159</sup> Unemployment Statistics in 1932 showed London Area - 13.5%; N.E.England -28.5%, second only to Wales with 36.5%

<sup>160</sup> Blackstone T. (1971) 'A fair start. The provision of pre-school education' p.126

<sup>161</sup> Selleck R.J.W. (1972) 'English Primary Education and the progressives 1914 -1939'

development of nursery education were about more than finance, although it must be acknowledged that there was little Government pressure on LEAs to implement the 1918 and 1921 Acts. Lip service was paid to the advantages, but there was much opposition from the legacy of paternalistic values and attitudes. Even with the mass migration into Hertfordshire and the building of the Garden Cities, the county was still ruled by wealthy landowners and farmers sitting on various committees.<sup>162</sup> These traditionalists confined their private generosity to voluntary schools, hospitals, maternity clinics and sports associations. 'None of the major arguments justifying nursery education was calculated to appeal to such guardians of the public purse'.<sup>163</sup>

However the Conservative dominance of rural Hertfordshire did not survive unchallenged and although it was said that '...in the Garden City there are no slums; there are, therefore, no slum children...' ...the towns of Watford, St. Albans and Cheshunt had 'poor' districts.<sup>164</sup>

Thus the cause of nursery schools in Hertfordshire was ill-served in spite of highlighting methods of Froebel, Pestalozzi and Montessori and visits of interested pioneers. Welwyn Garden City was very pro-active throughout the inter-war period and had opened a voluntary nursery school attached to their first elementary school,<sup>165</sup> emphasizing the unique educational value placed upon nursery schools. The LEA promised to consider requests for provision but finally the Board came to the conclusion that nowhere in Hertfordshire would fulfil the criteria. The Board were...

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<sup>162</sup> Keith-Lucas, B. & Richards P. (1978) 'A History of Local Government in the 20th Century'

<sup>163</sup> Parker D. (1998) 'Giving the children back to their parents - the Hertfordshire nursery schools controversy 1915-1939' J.E.A.H. 30:1 (1998)

<sup>164</sup> Purdom C. (1913) 'The Garden City – a study in the development of a modern town' p.169

<sup>165</sup> DUL Daily Telegraph, 30th May 1930

'...only likely to approve for grant purposes the provision of schools in distressed areas, such as **DURHAM** and South Wales, or in areas where the housing conditions were seriously below normal'.<sup>166</sup>

To appease a growing 'Labour' presence the Education Committee agreed 'to circulate six major towns regarding Nursery schools'<sup>167</sup> but they ended up deciding they did not possess any districts sufficiently socially deprived.

However in 1937 Oxhey and Welwyn bucked the trend and made application on the ground that 'a combination of low wages, high rents rather than poor housing caused the concern for pre-school children'.<sup>168</sup> Ironically (Sir) John Newsom joined the Hertfordshire Education Service in 1939. During the war and post war era he needed to fight hard to...

'...preserve and improve a small proportion of the basic wartime nurseries in the face of restriction imposed by both the Labour Government and its Conservative Successors...'<sup>169</sup>

Admittedly, during the period of recession in the 1930s, Hertfordshire was not badly hit in comparison with the North East. This prompted the Government to appoint investigators to examine and report on the conditions in certain parts of England, Scotland and Wales which had suffered acutely from long-term industrial depression. One of these areas was 'Durham and Tyneside' whose conditions were described and reported by Captain Euan Wallace.<sup>170</sup> In December 1934, the Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Bill received Royal Assent.

Two Commissioners were appointed – one for Scotland and one for England and Wales (Sir Malcolm Stewart) whose purpose was to be:-

<sup>166</sup> HRO,HCC2/159,CP76, HES,21.06.1935

<sup>167</sup> HRO,HCC2/150,CP76, HEC,21.06.1935; Daily Express 29.06.1935

<sup>168</sup> PRO,ED66/10, statement in support of case for a free nursery school in Welwyn Garden City,

<sup>169</sup> Parker D. (1998) Sir John Newsom , latterly of DURHAM , Dep.CEO (Herts.) 1939, CEO 1940-1967, Dep. Chairman, Central Advisory Council for Education (England), 'Half our Future' (Newsom Report,1963) A thorough appraisal of Newsom's achievements is given by Parker (2005) 'John Newsom : a Hertfordshire Educationist'pp.1-11 et passim, especially praising the war emergency years '39-'45 and post war developments.

<sup>170</sup> Min.of Lab. : Reports of Investigations into the Industrial Conditions in certain Depressed Areas, III Cmd.4728



'The initiation, organisation, prosecution and assistance of measures designed to facilitate the economic development and social improvement of the areas covered by the investigations.'<sup>171</sup>

The Chancellor of the Exchequer informed Parliament that:-

'...Although at present we need not describe the disease as desperate, it certainly is sufficiently exceptional to warrant exceptional treatment'<sup>172</sup>

Thus money was forth-coming at the discretion of the Commissioner to improve the physical conditions of the people and to stimulate a regeneration of industries.

*Money* was directed towards road building, sewage disposal schemes, hospitals, trading estates, social service centres, agricultural settlements and allotments, settlement centres and training centres. Newsom is of the opinion that they merely scratched the surface of the problem.<sup>173</sup> Funds were made available from the Nuffield Trust, the Special Areas Reconstruction Association and the Treasury Fund and advice was given by such bodies as the Land Settlement Association and the National Council for Social Service. The Community Service Council for Durham Ltd. was formed in May 1935 to develop voluntary social service in the first place for those suffering through unemployment, and then with the community as a whole. The Council was to serve Durham and Tyneside and from April 1937 Teesside was included. Within this area there were three Committees of Social Service. Clubs set up to help the unemployed occupy their time and to keep themselves fit for work when offered, were adopted by other organisations in the south, who gave them financial help. At the time of the Second Annual Report there were 61 Community Service classes

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<sup>171</sup> Min.Lab.1<sup>st</sup> Report of Commissioner for Special Areas Cmd.5373

<sup>172</sup> 293 H.C.Deb.5s, cols.1995-6,14.11.34

<sup>173</sup> Newsom J. (1936) Chap. VIII

for men and 45 for women.<sup>174</sup>

But the Government in London could not fully appreciate the conditions in remote outposts like Jarrow and New Brancepeth.<sup>175</sup>

The details of the problems of the depressed areas are beyond the scope of this survey but it will suffice to say that they were only solved by a greater social evil - *WAR*. When Britain began to re-arm, the men got back to work. Full employment, and a shortage of labour during the war years, gave the working man a fair price for his labour. However from this brief survey of social conditions in the North East in the 1930s it is obvious that there was a great urgency to address the problems of protecting the young .

In the Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas the Chief Medical Officer, referring to the Emergency Open-air Nurseries, is quoted :-

‘One of the gratifying features of the past year has been the progress made in the provision of nursery schools in the special areas. Nursery schools are often most difficult to establish and maintain in the very areas which are in need of them. Particularly is this true of the distressed areas. Here, above all it is necessary to safeguard the health, both mental and physical, of young children; to remove them from homes pervaded by the gloom, attendant on continuous unemployment; to put them into light airy buildings; to provide them with games and toys, and to supply the good food and medical care which material conditions of their homes forbid. But it is precisely in these areas that financial circumstances often prevent an enterprise of this sort. Local Authorities shrink from adding to their responsibilities and increasing the heavy burden on rates, while voluntary bodies lack the financial support necessary for such undertakings’.<sup>176</sup>

Endorsing these views, George M.Gillett, Commissioner (1937), successor to Sir Malcolm Stewart, continued to give assent to financial assistance to the Save the Children Nursery Schools Committee (formerly the Emergency Open Air Nursery Committee of the Save the Children Fund) so that up to the outbreak of the war in 1939, grants had been provided to establish nursery schools in some of

<sup>174</sup> DRO D/DRCC DCSC (1937) 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report

<sup>175</sup> Jarrow only gained notoriety in its desperate hunger march in 1936

<sup>176</sup> Min.Lab. (1937) Rep.Com.Spec.Areas in England and Wales for the year ended 30th September 1937 Cmd.5595, para. 472 : Bd of Ed. (1936) Ann.Rep 1935 of C M O

the worst black spots.

Meanwhile the support of the TNSA was in an advisory capacity in the various nursery schools, as well as being responsible for minor fund-raising initiatives not covered by 'state' provision as will be seen in the following case studies.

Distribution of Nursery Schools in England and Wales in 1926

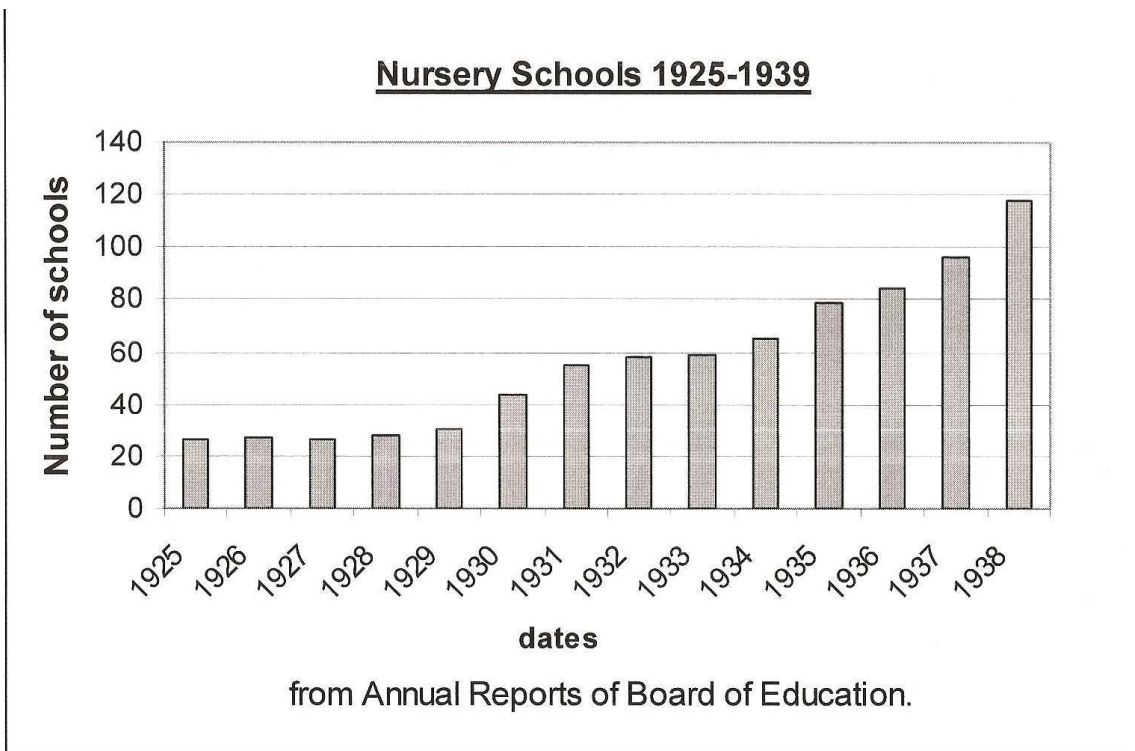
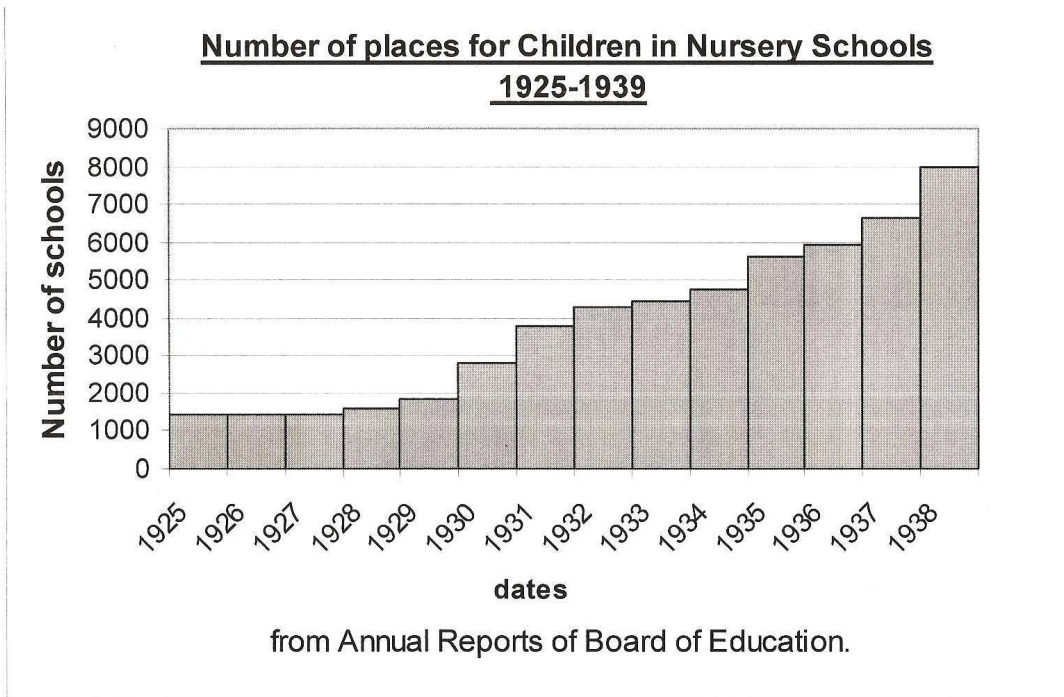
- Voluntary Nursery Schools
- L.E.A. Nursery Schools



Distribution of Nursery Schools in England and Wales in 1939

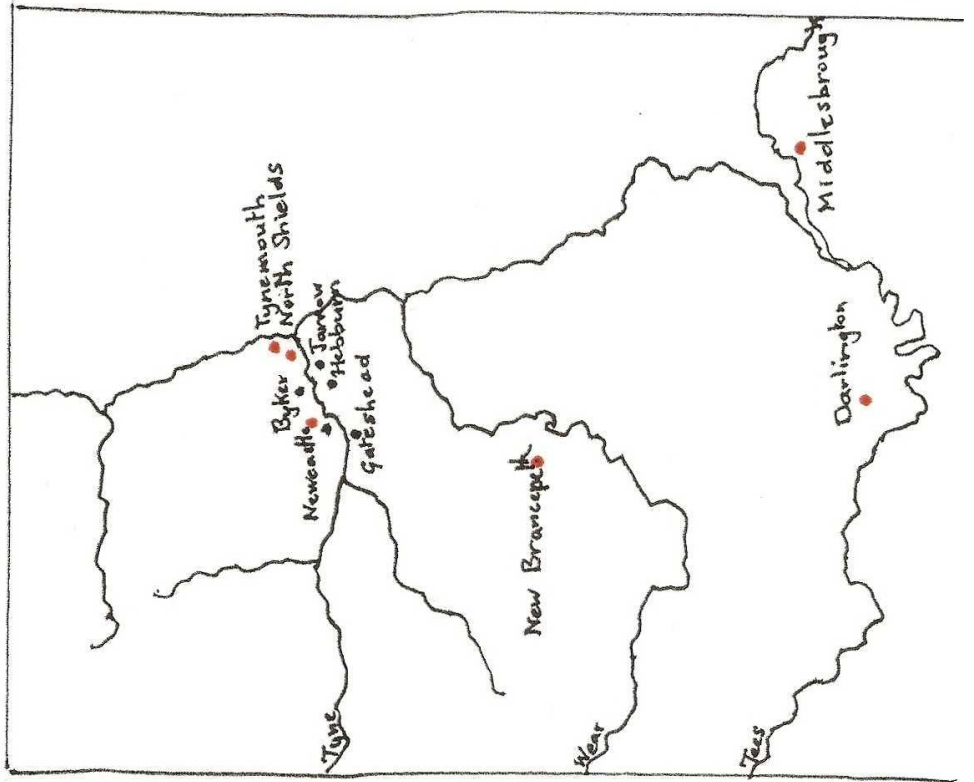
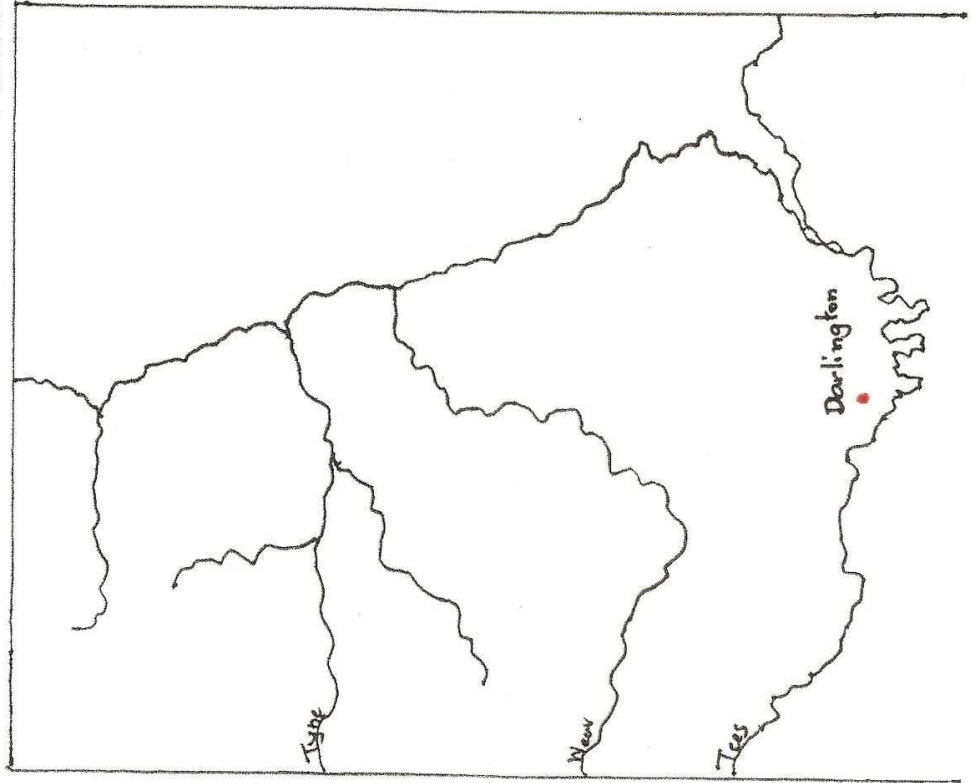
- Voluntary Nursery Schools
- L.E.A. Nursery Schools





### Distribution of Nursery Schools in Northeast England 1926

- Voluntary Nursery Schools
- L.E.A. Nursery Schools



## **Chapter Four**

### **Selected Case Studies**

The North East followed the national pattern of provision in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The selected case studies aim to show the variety of provision up to 1939 and the part played by local dedicated individuals. There was a diversity of initial sponsoring bodies. Quakers showed social concern whilst organisations such as the British Federation of University Women were aiming for social amelioration with various ad hoc groups helping the vulnerable. During the 'Depression' of the 1930s, the cause in the North East was supported by the National Council for Social Service and the SCF in the establishment of Emergency Open Air Nurseries. Throughout there was limited LEA provision. Indicative was the slow development over the period, so that it became increasingly important that social, political and economic factors were focussed on the promotion of nurture and education of the youngest children.

The nursery schools were chosen because of their respective association with the Quaker Movement in the first nursery school in the North East (Darlington); the Settlement Movement and the BFUW (Bensham Grove) ; local initiatives on North Tyneside (Howdon & Sir James Knott) ; and the Community Service Council/EOAN (New Brancepeth). Social and economic deprivation compelled the need for action, and all were supported by the TNSA as an advisory and support body. Thus similarities existed but each case was unique in its own way.<sup>1</sup> Contrasting studies of WW2 nurseries in Durham are described in Chapter Five.

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen L. Manion L. & Morrison K. (2007)



## **(1) The George Dent Nursery school, Darlington, 1917**

The establishment of a nursery school in 1917 at Darlington was truly a pioneer venture. The history of Darlington per se lies outside this thesis, but one factor of great significance cannot be over-looked : the rise of a Quaker<sup>2</sup>dynasty, the Peases, who became heavily involved in issues such as ‘politics, education, railways and the anti-slavery movement...’<sup>3</sup> Edward Pease, often referred to as the ‘Father of the Railways’, married into the Norwich banking family, the Gurneys, produced eight sons and four daughters and began to buy up Durham Collieries and to link them by railways. By further judicious enterprises, his second son Joseph Pease became the largest magnate in the North-east; Liberal M.P. for South Durham, (and first Quaker M.P.), first Chairman of the Darlington School Board, first Mayor of Darlington and President of the Peace Society.

But, as Quakers, they lived quietly and devoted time and money to good works, although they were responsible for building for themselves large imposing town houses which today bear testimony of the wealth of this oligarchic family, friends and numerous relatives. Nevertheless their beliefs ensured that ‘...*social service* was a religious duty because all human life was *sacred*...’<sup>4</sup> Thus it was to Darlington’s gain that many local philanthropic ventures were financed by the Quaker families.<sup>5</sup> Although officially Quakers were disqualified from many aspects of public life, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were... ‘...disproportionately influential in industry, commerce, urban development and

<sup>2</sup> Darlington is still referred to locally as the ‘Quaker’ Town and the football team as the ‘Quakers’. In the 1860s Quakers numbered about 250, rising to 400 in 1871. They were almost entirely middle-class or white collar workers. By 1930s there were about 250 and at present time 60 members (figures from Darlington Monthly Meeting ‘List of Members and Attendance’, (2000))

<sup>3</sup> Woodhouse R. (1998) ‘Darlington – a pictorial history’ intro.xiii

<sup>4</sup> Stewart W.A.C. (1953) ‘Quakers and Education as seen in their schools in England’

<sup>5</sup> A member of the (extended) Pease family served on the Committee of Darlington Training College and George Dent Nursery School throughout its history. Joseph A. Pease, Liberal M.P. for Darlington (later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Gainford) became President of the (National) Board of Education in October 1911.

local affairs...'<sup>6</sup>

In the field of education the Quakers had provided their first Sunday School in 1810 for the illiterate poor which was attended by about 250 children,<sup>7</sup> and as a supporter of Joseph Lancaster, Edward Pease was active in the British and Foreign School Society. During the early years of the nineteenth century both *British* and *National* schools served all public provision for education until 1833 when state assistance was first offered. This stimulated both societies, but thanks to Quaker influence the British schools were better provided.<sup>8</sup>

Among the equally active Pease *women*, Sophia Pease, Lady Fry, became a national pioneer in promoting female teacher training and the study of 'domestic economy'.<sup>9</sup> In Darlington, the North of England Training College of the British and Foreign School Society was founded in 1875 and run by a local committee, on which the Quakers were strongly represented and which included a significant number of women.<sup>10</sup> This grew by the end of the century to accommodate 75 students. The College was also substantially funded by the Pease family, who contributed over half of the £13,000 required.<sup>11</sup> At the turn of the century Joseph Pease (1860-1913) known as Jack (also an MP for Tynemouth, {Saffron Walden and Rotherham}) supported women's suffrage, co-founded the Fabian Society<sup>12</sup> and as President of the Board of Education was disappointed when he could not promote more radical reforms. He was ably assisted by L. A. Selby-Bigge<sup>13</sup> and

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<sup>6</sup> Orde A. (2000) 'Religion, Business and Society in North-East England : the Pease family in Darlington in the 19th century' p.129

<sup>7</sup> Darl.Lib.,E810023897

<sup>8</sup> Orde A. (2000) p.63

<sup>9</sup> Stockdale, C. 'A century of Elementary Education in Darlington' p.7; Orme E., (1898) 'Lady Fry of Darlington'

<sup>10</sup> Stanton O. (1966) 'Our Present Opportunities: the History of Darlington College of Education'. p.12

<sup>11</sup> Stanton O. (1966) p.2

<sup>12</sup> Formed in 1884 – a Socialist, middle class academic group – a 'think tank' for the embryo Labour Party

<sup>13</sup> Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education

worked closely with George Newman<sup>14</sup> in the improvement of School Medical Services. Jack Pease had good relationships with teachers and sought to improve their professional training.

Thus it would appear that the situation in Darlington had most of the features of a carefully considered *programme of educational reform*, i.e. local, well-connected philanthropists interested in education and social reform. Also the women's movement was in action in Darlington at the time of the formation of an Education Committee to operate the new arrangements under the 1902 Education Act.<sup>15</sup> The day before the first meeting of the steering committee, the Darlington Women's Suffrage Society had resolved to ask if the Committee would be willing to appoint more than one woman on it. This request was duly granted, and doubled, increasing to three or more in later years, to include the Mayoress, and Quakers, Miss Lucas and Miss Pease.<sup>16</sup>

Eighteen months later however, male officers of the Darlington Trades and Labour Council were refused membership although their *interests* were said to be receiving attention from the members of the Committee!!<sup>17</sup> Thus at the beginning of the twentieth century education in Darlington was strongly supported by local philanthropists as well as feminist activists already working in the fields of *health and social care*. The *expanding population* in Darlington due to industrial growth<sup>18</sup> led to greater demands on educational provision, changes in life styles and subsequently changes in the role of women.

When the North Eastern Railway (NER) had been established in the 1850s

<sup>14</sup> Chief Medical Officer for the Board of Education

<sup>15</sup> See Chap.3

<sup>16</sup> Darlington Educ. Comm. (Minutes 19.09.03) DRO Da/A/29/1

<sup>17</sup> Darlington Educ. Comm. (Minutes 28.04.04) DRO Da/A/29/1/1

<sup>18</sup> Victoria County History of County Durham, Vol.4, Darlington (2005), Intro. pp.6-7 (adapted)

Census Figures for Darlington 1851-1961

<u>1851</u> - 11,582	<u>1901</u> - 42,195	<u>1921</u> - 65,842	<u>1951</u> - 84,886	<u>1971</u> - 85,938
<u>1871</u> - 27,729	<u>1911</u> - 55,631	<u>1931</u> - 72,086	<u>1961</u> - 84,184	

and 60s, Darlington became one of the major railway centres in the country, being situated on the main railway line from London to Edinburgh. Like all towns which grew up in the wave of industrial expansion in the nineteenth century, Darlington suffered from its share of poverty and other social evils. Problems arising from over-crowding, large families in small houses without play space for children, inadequate and insanitary dwellings and insecurity of employment, coupled with inadequate educational opportunities for most manual workers, meant that many children were suffering from *disease and malnutrition*. Epidemics of diphtheria and measles were not uncommon. Also during WW1 many of the fathers of the children were away on war service and rationing of food prohibited good feeding. Women were increasingly drawn into industrial occupations such as at Peases Mill and the NER.

*Housing* of their workers had been a priority of the Quaker philanthropists but even by the twentieth century there were still some occupied properties with no rear access, no kitchen, no sink, no pantry, no facilities to wash clothes, no damp course, no water on tap and no indoor lavatory. Often there was simply a shared toilet in the back yard.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, whether social and economic conditions were in fact responsible for the establishment of a nursery school in Darlington; whether Quakers with a determination to see their vision for the youngest children fulfilled; whether the fact that the staff of the Darlington Training College for Teachers happened to be among the foremost thinkers in the educational field of the under-fives; whether it was the pressures of war; or whether in fact it was a combination of all these, nevertheless a school was established and for over a decade was the *only nursery*

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<sup>19</sup> VCH, Vol.IV Darlington (2005) p.67

*school* in the North-east of England.

The first 'school' occupied a small rented room at 6, North Lodge Terrace, Darlington, and was equipped as a nursery school. The body which sponsored the opening was the Women's United Services Club (Darlington Branch). Formed on 14th December 1914, by the Mayoress and some prominent lady citizens, the WUSC was instituted for wives of soldiers and sailors living in the town.

The Mayoress was the first President, Mrs. Lloyd Pease was the Treasurer and Miss Hawtrey (Principal of Darlington Training College) was the Hon. Secretary.<sup>20</sup> Already a most noteworthy member of the Elementary Sub. Committee in Darlington since 12th November 1912, she had succeeded her predecessor, Mr Spafford, and proved to be very active on this and the main Education Committee.<sup>21</sup> A graduate of Royal Holloway College, London University and post graduate of Somerville College, Oxford, at 36 years of age she had substantial teaching experience at St. Leonard's School, St. Andrew's, and had tutored at the Bangor Normal College in Wales. She was articulate, forceful and experienced, and certainly needed to be, because by 1912, all but two members of the College staff were (female) graduates. The drive was on for *expansion*, *excellence* and *outreach*. An early involvement was a wartime measure against the occupation by troops of the infant schools of the town.<sup>22</sup> This fits in with the thinking of the *progressives* that early years were to have as full a programme of living and learning as possible, as Miss Hawtrey had also been proposing an extension of training for infants' teachers from two to three years as early as March 1914.<sup>23</sup> This was later approved for nursery students with the third year

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<sup>20</sup> Miss Freda Hawtrey was Principal of Darlington T.C. (1912-1922)

<sup>21</sup> DRO A29/1/2 Elemen.Ed.Sub.Com.

<sup>22</sup> DRO Da/29/1/2 Darl.Educ.Com. (24.09.14)

<sup>23</sup> DRO E/Darl/1/3/Min.Book No.2 (20.3.14)

either end-on or deferred.<sup>24</sup> Miss Hawtreay could well have been aware of the measures being proposed at this time for Maternity and Child Welfare provision. Grants were offered by the Local Government Board and reported by the MOH for Darlington. This was not entirely straightforward as the Maternity and Child Welfare services fell under the control of Durham County Council and Darlington was *only* a borough - though in line for County Borough status. Already by this date, four months into the war, the senior health visitor had visited the 'Babies Welcomes' in Leeds. A *voluntary scheme* was at work in Darlington 'since the last week of November' and attendances had been very encouraging. With County Borough powers forthcoming, a large scheme should follow at an estimated expenditure of £50 to £75 less the grant it would attract from the Local Government Board.<sup>25</sup> The MOH countering criticism defended this, and the whole of the health service provision in Darlington.<sup>26</sup>

Miss Hawtreay's concerns for young children led to the relentless pursuit of facilities on their behalf. The WUSC first rented rooms at 3/- per week from the Spiritualist Society<sup>27</sup> but, in March 1915, the Club was able to rent 6, North Lodge Terrace (Mrs. Lloyd Pease offering her name as guarantor to the landlord).<sup>28</sup> Rooms were sub-let for rent to the Girls' Patriotic Club.<sup>29</sup>

With more secure accommodation the Club's activities developed and expanded and on 16th May 1917, the following proposal was put forward :-

<sup>24</sup> DRO E/Darl./1/4 Min.Book.No.3, (10.12.17) p9

<sup>25</sup> DRO Da/A33/1/2, (17.12.14)

<sup>26</sup> DRO Da/PH/4/3 (12.6.15)

<sup>27</sup> Reports from the Minute Book of the Executive Committee, Darlington Branch WUSC, 14th Dec. & 23rd Dec. 1914

<sup>28</sup> DRO.D/XD/16/42 WUSC Rep. 8th Jan. 1915. The Minute Book (a rough notebook) was rescued from the auction sale at the home of Lady Harbottle and purchased by a Mr. Whyte. This was resold to J.C.Brigham, Quaker Antiquarian Bookseller (8.6.33) who judged it... 'an interesting record of work done by some of the leading ladies in Darlington...'

<sup>29</sup> A volunteer group to support troops on active service and probably modelled on the 'The Women's Patriotic Association of Newfoundland 1914-1918'.

'Miss Hawtrey then outlined a scheme she had been talking over with Mrs. Pease - that of an Experimentary Nursery school when babies from 1 to 5 years could come and be looked after while their mothers were at work - and thought our rooms would be a good place to begin in. She knew a teacher whom we might get for a salary of £50 a year. The mothers would also pay a small charge per week for the babies to be looked after and also for cost of meals. As it could not very well be started until after September, it was suggested that if we had a successful Flag Day we might make a grant.'<sup>30</sup>

Action soon followed, as can be seen from the following :-

'The Mayoress explained Miss Hawtrey had engaged Miss Cordukes.<sup>31</sup> It was suggested that we supply the rooms for the nursery school - it might have 10 or 12 children. They would be brought at 9 in the morning and remain until 3.30. Their dinner would be supplied by Mrs. Fleetham.<sup>32</sup> The members of the club to have first claim. Mrs. Putnam thought it would be more use to mothers who are working if the children could remain all day until five in the evening'.<sup>33</sup>

A sum of £42/19s/ 5d was raised at the Flag Day.<sup>34</sup>

During the intervening summer holiday, 1917, the club was closed whilst the Resident Caretaker took a holiday. At the September meeting the plan for opening the nursery reached a further stage:

'Miss Faithfull, Hon. Sec. of the London Club to which we are affiliated wrote saying the time had now come when the future of the club was to be considered suggesting they might be turned into Infant Welfares, Nursery Schools or Canadian Institutes'<sup>35</sup> and saying she hoped to pay us a visit in the near future.'

The Committee were of the opinion the Club had fulfilled its mission. From its foundation in 1914 when the wives of the men were wanting somewhere to meet, it proved a very pleasant place to spend an afternoon, but it was time to move on. The role of WUSC demonstrates the importance of ad hoc bodies in the promotion of educational ventures.

The opening of the nursery school was fixed for the 17th October, two months after the formal opening of the McMillans' school at Deptford. Miss

<sup>30</sup> Darl. Educ. Committee Meeting, (16.5.17)

<sup>31</sup> Miss Cordukes trained at Leeds T.C. under Miss Grace Owen. Miss Owen travelled to lecture to students at Darlington on a part-time basis. In 1923, with Mrs. Eveleigh she founded the Nursery School Association .

<sup>32</sup> DRO D/XD/16/42 (9.4.15) Resident Caretaker - 10/- per week with rooms, light and coals (9.4.15)

<sup>33</sup> DRO.D/XD/16.42 WUSC 23rd July 1917

<sup>34</sup> Darlington WUSC receipts 1917

<sup>35</sup> Later Women's Institutes.

Hawtrey thought the WUSC Club would hardly be an ideal place for it, as there was no garden,<sup>36</sup> but the nursery might begin in a small way and after a year maybe the Education Committee would bear the expense. In the meantime crockery and small camp beds were required and she had £11 specially given for the purpose. Mrs. Lloyd Pease said if meals were to be provided Mrs. Fleetham would be quite willing to cook them. The teacher would supervise everything and it was agreed to make a small charge of 4d per day.<sup>37</sup>

Thus the school opened in a room in North Terrace. The floor was covered with linoleum and carpets, and there were small chairs and tables. Along one side of the room rows of shelves were curtained off holding toys, mugs and plates. The school was for children from two to five and on the opening day, seven children were admitted. By the spring of 1918, there were 15 children, 5 girls and 10 boys. The usual daily routine of a nursery was followed with story telling and *occupations*.<sup>38</sup> Miss Cordukes, the teacher, resided in the Teacher Training College, and lectured to those students who were following a course in Nursery Training.<sup>39</sup>

The WUSC therefore, having fulfilled its original purpose of supporting women in wartime, now decided that the Patriotic Girls Club be given notice from 13th May 1918, as the club was due to wind up its affairs. At the meeting in December<sup>40</sup> Miss Hawtrey had asked if the WUSC Committee would carry on as the Committee for the Nursery School, as the financial statement showed the Club

<sup>36</sup> DRO. E/Dar/2/84; D.T.C. Mag. Vol.3, pp.317/8. A student reported that on fine mornings the children were taken to the adjacent park for play and nature study.

<sup>37</sup> Exec.Comm. 23rd Sept. 1917. The Education Bill, 1917, had been read in Parliament. Miss Hawtrey, Grace Owen, Margaret McMillan and others had been to the Board of Education (16.8.17). Miss Hawtrey reported to Darl.Ed.Comm. (15.10.17)

<sup>38</sup> See Chap.1 (Froebel)

<sup>39</sup> DRO E/ Dar/2/84; D.T.C.,Mag. May 1918 p.323 Miss Hawtrey had outlined plans for nursery teacher training at the Conference of 'Ideals in Education' (4.8.17)

<sup>40</sup> DRO/D/XD/16/42 WUSC Committee Meeting 12.12.17



could just about manage until May.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile she hoped that the passing of the new Fisher Act, 1918, would mean that the Government would pay half the cost of the nursery school, and the town the other half.<sup>42</sup> It is not without significance that, as is often the case, the money, when it did arrive, was paid retrospectively.

The future of the nursery school, still in its very early stages, therefore seemed *very uncertain* – no permanent home and no immediate prospect of finance. It was hoped that the owner of the premises would grant a three month extension for the sake of keeping the school going, whilst Miss Hawtrey volunteered that the Training College would take over the school rather than allow it to close.<sup>43</sup> It had been principally financed by WUSC and a small charge was also made for the children's food. (Receipts and expenditure for October 1917 to May 1918)<sup>44</sup> The slim balance of eightpence ha'penny shows what a close-run thing it was to keep going.

When the school came under the wing of Darlington Training College, in 1918, a large house 'Fairfield' in Elms Road, (off Woodland Road), formerly requisitioned by the military as a nursing home, was on the market. It was fortuitous that Miss Hawtrey had heard that this property was to be sold quickly and as it promised to be very suitable for the school she suggested to the Council

<sup>41</sup> DRO D/XD/16/43 The most valuable of the half dozen papers associated with WUSC is a final receipts and expenditure statement as at 31.12.17. In hand was a total at Bank and Cash of £63/15/9d. The Hon. Treasurer Mrs Lloyd Pease was praised throughout WUSC's life for careful management of its funds.

<sup>42</sup> Miss Hawtrey as member of the Education Committee and already privy to the outcomes of the 1918 Act, which was passed 8th August 1918, with the assurance that grants would be paid retrospectively.

<sup>43</sup> Certainly not the B&FSS as they did not have the money, but maybe the charitable support of colleagues at the College

<sup>44</sup> Receipts

Per Mrs. Lloyd Pease	£37/13/11½d
Per Dinner Money	£ 9/13/2d

Total	£47/7 /1 d
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Payments

Miss Corduke's Salary	£33/13/2d
Food Accounts	£13/13/3d
Balance	8½ d

Total	£47/ 7/ 1d (DRO E/Dar.2/43)
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N.B. National Archive Converter Tables ([www.nationaoarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationaoarchives.gov.uk/currency)) should be reviewed with caution as prices varied with economic and social conditions. The above balance today (9.11.09) would be £1.14p

of the B&FSS (the providing body of the Darlington Training College) that the Society<sup>45</sup> should purchase the house. Unfortunately the members of the Council were all dispersed on holiday and Miss Hawtrey feared that such ideal premises, only two minutes walk from the College, would slip from her grasp. While it had been proposed that 'Fairfield' should be rented, the owner Mr. l'Anson had received an offer for the *purchase* of the property.<sup>46</sup>

The story is told that while travelling to London to plead with the British and Foreign School Society for assistance, Miss Hawtrey explained her predicament to a fellow passenger, and on reaching London she had in her pocket a cheque for £500, a loan to secure the house.<sup>47</sup> The fellow passenger was J.M.Dent, the publisher and founder of Everyman's Library, a member of the B&FSS Council since 1902.<sup>48</sup>

The main rooms were on the ground floor including the hall/dining room, playroom, rest room, wash/conservatory and lavatory. Upstairs was the bathroom, staff rooms and isolation room for children with infections. The nursery is still housed in this same building, with its large garden for out-door play and nature observation. (see photographs p.172)

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<sup>45</sup> Council of the British and Foreign School Society, founded 1811 – a non-denominational organisation with significant Quaker support

<sup>46</sup> E/Dar.18/1/3 (D.R.O.)

<sup>47</sup> Hugh R. Dent 'Memoirs of J.M.Dent' p.250; The story of an apparently 'chance' encounter seems doubtful as in effect Miss Hawtrey was an employee of the B&FSS Council of which Mr.Dent had been a member for at least 10 years. Tearne W.M. (1997) 'G.D.N.S.' also JMD had paid a visit to the college on 21st June 1915, (DTC Mag. July 1915,p.140) and lectured the students on 'The Making of Books' on 29th Oct. 1917 ( D.T.C. Mag. March 1918, pp.318-319)

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Mallaby Dent was born on Darlington in 1849. He was most generous in gifts to the Colleges of the British and Foreign School Society. During his business life he lived at Woodford and Enfield , and therefore his contacts were mostly with Borough Road Training College, London. He travelled widely and was always ready to lecture to students.

The head of the nursery school was Miss Hodzman<sup>49</sup> who was assisted by Miss Cordukes and Sister Henry (from an Anglican order of nurses working at St. Paul's Church, Darlington). The emphasis was on safe-guarding the children's health and giving good food to offset some of the poor social conditions in which the children were living. Had 'Fairfield' not been purchased at that particular time, the nursery school would have had to be closed. The new premises offered considerable possibilities for expansion and an estimate of 50 places for children of 2 to 5 was given. In 1920 Miss A. Drogon became Nursery Tutor at the College.

The foundation of a nursery school in Darlington was only one of the educational experiments attributed to the foresight of Miss Freda Hawtrey. A college historian at Avery Hill College was later to write...

'It was her wide sympathies and her concern for the under-privileged which made such an impact on the life and work of the College...<sup>50</sup>

Another contemporary said :

'She would let nothing stand in her way if she was convinced of the rightness of her vision. Her most valuable and lasting venture was the founding of a nursery school in Darlington and the inaugurating of Nursery Training at the College... The training of Nursery school teachers at Darlington began in 1918, almost simultaneously with the foundations of the Rachel McMillan Training College in Deptford by that other pioneer, Margaret McMillan.<sup>51</sup>

Not only was she a force to be reckoned with in the Training College but she also served on the Education Committee and on various advisory panels. She was involved in the Darlington Quaker hierarchy and supported medical and social issues throughout her period in Darlington. However the response to her request to the Society was disappointing as they were short of money, so the Nursery

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<sup>49</sup> From 1908 Miss Edith Hodzman was head mistress of the Moray House Nursery School, Edinburgh, which was based in a poor and densely populated part of the City (Gilmore Place) so as to provide help in solving some of the problems of children who were 'exposed ...to the evil influence of the streets..'. She aimed to provide a practical application of Froebel principles and contributed to Grace Owen's 'Nursery School Education' (1920) [www.ed.ac.uk/moray house](http://www.ed.ac.uk/moray%20house). (11.3.09)see also Swanson A.M.M. (1975) 'The History of Edinburgh's Early Nursery Schools' pp. 23-28

<sup>50</sup> Shorney D. (1989) p.108

<sup>51</sup> Darlington Old Students' Association Magazine, 1964

School Committee applied to the Board of Education for assistance. Meanwhile Mr. Dent, who had not only made a gift of £500, also purchased 'Fairfield' and leased it to the Society until funds or grants could be raised:-

'In previous reports, references had been made to the premises at Darlington which were purchased by Mr. Dent for the purpose of a nursery school in connection with the College at a cost including renovations of upwards of £2700. This property will shortly be transferred to the Society. The cost will be met by a generous donation by Mr. Dent of £500, a grant from the Board of Education of £1,350 and the balance (of £850) will be found by the General Funds of the Society.<sup>52</sup>

This gesture was reported to the Darlington Education Committee and it was resolved that a letter be written to Mr. Dent expressing warm thanks for his services to education in Darlington.<sup>53</sup>

Darlington had been raised to the status of a county borough in 1915 and the town became entirely self-governing and took over all services. Financially Darlington gained considerably and the effect on civic pride was enormous. Effective takeover for education and elevation from Part III status had been on the 5th January 1917. Perhaps the opportunities of new powers and duties, together with Miss Hawtrey's vision and persuasion and an interested and sympathetic Director of Education (A.C.Boyde), helped the Committee and Town Council to look favourably on the new project and soon to make a grant.

Further letters from the B&FSS asked whether the Education Committee would be prepared to give assistance on the following terms:

- Rent, rates, taxes and Initial Equipment to be provided by DTC. (B&FSS)
- Cost of staff and any other expenditure other than above to be met from Rates and Board of Education grants

<sup>52</sup> Annual Report B&FSS, CXV, pp. 89 & 90

<sup>53</sup> DRO E/Dar 18/4/1 Elementary Educ. Sub Committee, 10.5.18 (Council Minutes 1917-1918 p.370 Minute 19). Following an emergency meeting of the College General Committee 2nd May 1918, the same day telegram said.. 'Training College Committee gratefully appreciate your generous offer to buy Fairfield, so securing their opportunity for Nursery school experiment.' Miss Hawtrey was careful to suggest a correction to the existing minute that Mr. Dent bought the house 'to be used as a nursery school' since this may give the wrong impression. It meant that the work of the existing nursery school might be able to continue and the Chairman got the committee's agreement to state that 'Mr. Dent has bought and rented to the B&FSS the house 'Fairfield' to be used as a nursery school'

- Committee charged with management of the school to be composed of 8 reps. from DTC (B&FSS) and 6 reps. from the Education Committee

It was estimated that about 50 children could be accommodated, and the following was an estimate of the expenditure and receipts.

<u>Expenditure</u>		<u>Income</u>	
Rent, Rates, Taxes	£140	From B&FSS	£140
Staff	£215	Grants Bd. of Ed.	£240
Caretaker, Fuel etc.	£100	Rates	£100
Equipment	£ 25		
	<u>£480</u>		<u>£480</u>

It was resolved :-

‘...With a view to testing the desirability of supplying Nursery schools in the Borough, the Committee recommend the approval of the above scheme...’<sup>54</sup>

At a subsequent meeting representatives were appointed to serve on the body of managers of the proposed nursery school, the secretary to attend in a consultative capacity.<sup>55</sup>

Fairfield opened its doors to pupils in January 1919, and by the end of July there were 61 pupils on roll.<sup>56</sup> Miss Hodsman, who was also a tutor in Hygiene at the College, gave up lecturing to devote her full attention to the nursery school. Mr. Dent had paid £2000 for Fairfield and also advanced £939/0/2d for repairs at the rate of £100 per annum and interest (at the Bank Rate) on the sum advanced for repairs and equipment. The Darlington Education Authority agreed to aid the nursery school and to contribute £200 per annum and be responsible for any deficit on the year’s accounts. The Board of Education Nursery School Regulations allowed 50% of approved expenditure.<sup>57</sup> One reason for the generosity of Darlington Council probably lay in its rating levels. At its 21st

<sup>54</sup> DRO Elem.Educ.Sub.Comm.13.9.18,min.237 (p.531) Average net cost is not recorded as being discussed, but the above scheme gives £9.10s per head. Compare official ‘National Average’ estimates for this period in Chap.3

<sup>55</sup> DRO Elem.Educ.Sub.Comm.31.8.18.Min.LXX111(p.584)

<sup>56</sup> B&FSS, (1919) Ann.Rep.CXV,p.89 (considerably more than the original estimate)

<sup>57</sup> DTC Annual Report 1918/1919 & D.T.C. Magazine p.338-340 ‘Our Nursery School’

anniversary in 1936, (at the height of the depression), the reason for its comfortable financial status was reported in a national newspaper following the 'budget' meeting of the Town Council the previous day ...

'...while Darlington is in the 'distressed' county of Durham, it is able to levy a rate of 8s/3d in the pound for the year and provide cheap municipal services'<sup>58</sup>

Its good fortune was attributed to its severance from DCC which benefited all municipal services including education and the fledgling Fairfield.<sup>59</sup>

Students working in this 'fortunate' nursery school summarised thus:-

' At 9 each morning came a procession of perambulators and pushchairs, and on arrival the children greeted the staff with "Good morning" and a polite handshake. Taking off their coats, putting on the bright overalls and changing boots for slippers, gave plenty of opportunity for the Montessori occupations of buttoning and lacing! The conservatory .... had been converted to a washroom, equipped with a rack holding enamel bowls which the children filled and emptied for themselves... When the routine of washing, cleaning teeth and combing hair was over the children occupied themselves in the Grey Room with books, arranging flowers etc. until 9.45 a.m. when all assembled in the White Room. Here "in the atmosphere of perfect quiet and reverence" hymns were sung and prayers said. After biscuits and milk prepared and cleared by the children, occupations were resumed, digging, gathering flowers, games, working with paints, plasticene, bricks etc. until it was time for the children to set the tables for dinner and prepare beds for the rest period. Sleep over, they dressed for home and played in the garden until the arrival of mother or sister...

Fairfield supplies in abundance all the essentials of good health, fresh air and exercise and each day ensures a splendid dinner and a restful sleep for all...'<sup>60</sup>

Such was the concept of the ideal provision for all under-fives in nursery schools. It is clear that this experiment in Darlington was significant, but it was unique in at least one respect. In 1920, by special arrangement with the Darlington Corporation, 25 children were conveyed by tram from the poorer parts of town by using subsidised transport. Assistants and students from the nursery school accompanied them.<sup>61</sup> This was a new departure because the nursery

<sup>58</sup> Dar.Lib (3.4.36) Daily Mail

<sup>59</sup> Darlington C.B. (July 1936) 'The Rate Payers Record' p.30

<sup>60</sup> DROE/Dar12/85 Three students , H.M.G., M.A.W., W.P. (10.7.19) 'Our Nursery School' in DTC Mag.

<sup>61</sup> Flynn G. (1987) 'Book of Darlington ' p.8 : Dent H.R. (ed.) (1928) 'Memoirs of J.M.Dent' p.175 ; Stanton (1966) pp.116-117

school was situated in one of the best residential districts of the town and the children of the immediate area were brought to the school by parents. In other towns where schools were being established, they were often opened in the poorer areas where the children lived. Those children in Darlington from poor homes :-

‘...are admitted because they are suffering from some defect e.g. rickets, enlargement of tonsils, adenoids, defective vision and general pre-tubercular conditions of chest and glands, or because their home environment is such that their natural development is seriously impeded. Each new child admitted is medically examined and weekly visits are made to the school by the assistant SMO. The school dentist also attends, referral of surgical cases is made to the local hospital...<sup>62</sup>

In March 1919, Miss Hawtrey as Correspondent, and A.C.Boyde for the LEA, had applied to the Board of Education for recognition of the Nursery School.<sup>63</sup> This was followed by a comment from a member of the Board of Education:

‘This application would appear to be generally one of the most satisfactory which has been received .... As to the character of this school and its suitability from the point of the care and training of young children, there can be no doubt, as the Training College Authorities place their aims very high. You will remember that Miss Hawtrey appeared before the Training of Teachers Committee on 20th February when the Committee was considering the type of training required for teachers for nursery schools and that she set a very high standard both in regard to staffing and arrangements generally ...<sup>64</sup>

The school was officially recognised by the Board of Education in August of the same year,<sup>65</sup> after much discussion as to whether nursery schools attached to Training Colleges were run more for the benefit of students in training than for the children! Although Darlington had applied for a special grant for its nursery school, similar ‘demonstration’ Schools at Gipsy Hill and Goldsmiths had not

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<sup>62</sup> DRO Darl.Educ.Fin. Sub.Com. (27.2.19) Min.653 Regular monthly contact with the school nurse

<sup>63</sup> DRO Darl.Educ.Sub.Com.Minute (4.4.19)

<sup>64</sup> PRO Ed.Min.69/5 (31.3.19)

<sup>65</sup> DRO Darl.Educ.Sub.Com.Minute and Correspondence.Aug.1919

applied for a grant.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless the B&FSS asked for special treatment as they had no balance in hand :

'It is a little difficult to accept a claim from an old and well-established Society like this, made 'in forma pauperis', quite as easily as we accepted Miss McMillan's claim. On the other hand the Society are doing a much better work, and are financially a sounder investment'.<sup>67</sup>

The school was managed at the outset by a joint committee, one third of its members being nominated by the Darlington Education Authority and the remainder by the College Committee. This arrangement continued until the 1960s.

Mrs. Lloyd Pease, one of the co-founders of the nursery school was the first Chairman, and held the office for 30 years. She was succeeded by her son, Michael Lloyd Pease.

During 1920-21 an increasingly large number of children were brought by tram from the poorer districts. In the Spring term the parents and friends of the children subscribed a sum of £7 10s to provide a sand pit at the nursery school.<sup>68</sup> At the end of the year (1922) Miss Hodsman resigned as Superintendent and was succeeded in this post by Miss Drogon, Nursery Tutor at the College. Mrs. Potts was engaged as a temporary probationer and Miss Hampson became the new Assistant.

On 23rd November 1921, Dr. Lillian Wilson of the Medical Department of the Board of Education, paid a visit to the school. The following are extracts from a letter received from the Board of Education with regard to the report made to them by Dr. Wilson after her visits.

'The Board learn from the report that the School is being conducted on satisfactory lines and with initiative, by a keen staff. In addition to fulfilling its purpose as a model training school for the benefit of the students at the Darlington Training College, the School now appears to be fulfilling an equally important role in providing for the needs of a number of children from the poorest homes in the town,

<sup>66</sup> DRO Darl.Educ.Sub.Com.Minute (4.4.19)

<sup>67</sup> DRO Darl.Educ.Sub.Com.Minute (22.6.20)

<sup>68</sup> DRO E/Dar2/48 DTCAnnual Report (1921-22)



and the popularity of the School is evidenced by the waiting list of 30 names. Dr. Lillian Wilson also reports that the arrangements for the medical supervision of the children and the treatment of minor ailments are working effectively and are generally satisfactory.<sup>69</sup>

As the Report acknowledges, by this time as many as two-thirds of the children attending the nursery school were transported from the poorer districts of the town. Dolls and other toys were made or purchased by the students for the children at Christmas, whilst the staff and other friends presented each necessitous child with warm clothing. During the year, gifts of new and second hand clothes were sold to the parents and the money was used to repair boots and shoes for the more needy children, to pay for overalls and to buy toys for the garden. Some of the former students of the College helped to make overalls; thus the nursery school began to take on the role of a social provider in the lean years of the 1920s. A summary of the upkeep in the first six years and one term shows an adverse balance of £220 (and a penny!!)<sup>70</sup> But the picture seems less gloomy if an *average* maintenance income and *average* deficit for this period is calculated (which is not done in the available documentation) For the period these would be roughly £823 and £35 respectively. It is established throughout that the 'Dinners a/c' is always balanced. Further input from 'donations' and 'sundries' could well have effected a positive balance. The school mostly ran with a deficit in expenses varying from £30 (1928) to £300 (1931). It was always very dependent on

<sup>69</sup> DRO E/Dar 2/48 DTC Annual Report (1921-22)

<sup>70</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4/1 During the 6 years and one term, Jan 1919 to March 1925 total cost of upkeep of nursery school £5,472/0/8d

Board of Educ. grants -	£1292/	5/10d
LEA payments -	£1250/	0/0d
DTC -	£1755/	0/0d
Dinners a/c/ receipts -	£893/16/6d	
Donations -	£56/	4/3d
Sundry receipts -	£4/14/0d	
	£5177/	8/5d
Adverse balance at 31.3.25 -	£220/	0/1d
	<u>£5472/</u>	<u>0/8d</u>

DRO E/Dar/.18/4/7 gives details of 1923/24 and 1924/25 receipts and expenditure

voluntary gifts, the sum of which also reflected the inter-war period of strikes and depression, ranging from £3 (1923) to £15 (1927). A performance in March 1923, given by the Darlington Dramatic Society in the College raised £3 for the Nursery Funds, whilst £25, the proceeds of a Garden Party, given by students in June 1923, helped to pay for equipment necessary for the extra 15 children. Four of the senior students helped at the nursery school during the Easter holidays and two others remained at the end of the year until the school closed for the summer holidays.

Throughout its history the school attracted a number of distinguished visitors including J. M. Dent (1922), Margaret McMillan, and members of several Women's Co-operative Guilds. In the same year Miss Hawtrey was appointed to the Principalship of Avery Hill College in London.

'During 1922, the Board of Education made a final payment on account of Capital Expenditure for the purchase and equipment of the School, of £588.10s.2d. This together with £881 received in 1920 completes the 50% allowed on the purchase of house and equipment (£1,469.10s.2d.) and was paid over to the B.& F.S.S., who purchased the house from Mr. Dent.<sup>71</sup>

In April 1923, Dr. Lilian Wilson again inspected the school and reported:-

'The average attendance was increased from 40 to 50 as permission was given by the Board of Education, and from April for the number on the register to be 65 instead of 50. There are now 60 names on the waiting list and some have been waiting as long a period as over two years. Conveyance to and from the nursery school has been greatly facilitated by the arrangement made by the Darlington Corporation for the running of a special car in the morning and afternoon. The Committee of the Nursery School appreciates the concession very much.'<sup>72</sup>

*Medical concerns* had been present from the beginning and 'nurturing' was beginning to show results - hence the long waiting lists. The reports of the School Medical Officer of Health for Darlington show similar conditions to those which the

<sup>71</sup> DRO E/Dar 2/47 DTC Annual Report 1921-22 ; (building and land still owned by B&FSS in 2010)

<sup>72</sup> B&FSS (1924) Annual Report CXX

McMillan sisters were combating in Deptford.<sup>73</sup> Pupils seen by the school nurse were reported on monthly.

Miss Drogon, the Superintendent, was appointed to the Committee of the newly formed Nursery School Association in 1923.<sup>74</sup> Her presence was significant, as it gave Darlington a national platform where it could act as a role model for other initiatives in the north-east, although this is difficult to ascertain as relevant school log books are missing.

In the year 1923-24, the number of children on the register was increased to 70, and the average attendance was 58. A weighing machine was provided for the school, which greatly facilitated the recording of children's weight and height, formerly done in College, thus anticipating Dr. Wilson's subsequent request (1926) for samples of children's weight gains and general physical conditions. Warm clothing and gifts of toys and sweets were again provided at Christmas, by staff and students of the College and other friends. Not only was the children's education a concern, but all aspects of nurturing of young children were prioritised including social, emotional and physical development.

Photographs of the children at work, at play, at meals and at sleep were sent to the Imperial Exhibition, together with some specimens of the children's work indicating Darlington's status in nursery education.<sup>75</sup>

Miss Walker (Principal, who had succeeded Miss Hawtrey in 1922), Miss Penford, and Miss Drogon attended a Conference of the Nursery School Association in Bradford in 1923; and in the Autumn term a Social Study Circle was

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<sup>73</sup> DRO Educ.Finance Sub.Com. (27.2.19) Min.653. Details of Deptford are of course well-documented including reports from the McMillans themselves (Lewisham Local History and Archives Centre; University of Greenwich). See also research group dedicated to study of Deptford /McMillan Legacy group. J.M.Dent was a regular visitor to Deptford.

<sup>74</sup> B&FSS (1924) Annual Report CXX,p.75

<sup>75</sup> DRO E/Dar 2/50 DTC Annual Report,1924

formed by the students 'to try to make a study of social conditions and some definite problems, which would help the future teachers'. The book used as a foundation for the work was 'The Facts of Poverty' by H. A. Mess M.A. In connection with the chapter on 'The Homes of the People', Miss Drogon opened a discussion on some of the conditions of slum life,<sup>76</sup> a further indication of the great concern for the conditions in which the children were living, in spite of the fact that post-war housing 'for the working classes' was featured in an offer from the Local Government Board brought before a Special Meeting of the Health and Sanitary Committee.<sup>77</sup>

Following a visit in November 1924, Dr. Ralph P. Williams, one of the Medical Officers of the Board of Education stated '...that they were glad to note the general excellence of the arrangements for the conduct of the school...'<sup>78</sup> - sufficient to win the approval of the Board of Education, and the number of children in the School was increased to 80 - aged 2 to 5 years. In March 1925, a nursery trainee was sent by the Central Committee of Women's Training and Employment, for a course of six months training in the care of children from 2 to 5 years of age, the cooking of children's meals, the mending and making of their garments and the cleaning of the nurseries.<sup>79</sup> The College staff and students made their usual contribution and gifts at Christmas and a tea-party was provided by the Mayor and Mayoress on the occasion of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Centenary Celebrations (1825 -1925). The children had strawberries, cream and cakes - in addition each child was given a ball.

In January 1926, Miss Drogon resigned as Superintendent and she was

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<sup>76</sup> DRO E/Dar 2/50 DTC Annual Report.1924

<sup>77</sup> DRO Da/A33/1/4 (31.7.17)

<sup>78</sup> B&FSS (1925) Report CXXI p.77

<sup>79</sup> Illustrating the beginning of formal training programmes for nursery assistants

succeeded by her assistant, Mrs. Potts. A new assistant Miss Barnard was appointed and there were three probationers.

In May 1926, the death occurred of the person whose great philanthropic efforts had rendered the whole project possible – J. M. Dent. By Mr. Dent's wish, the school in the future was to be known as the 'George Dent Nursery School' in memory of his father.<sup>80</sup>

During the General Strike of May 1926, the tram used to convey the children to and from school was withdrawn, so perambulators were borrowed so that children could be brought by parents or staff. In spite of initial difficulties the attendance still averaged 70 children.

The school tram was always a thorny question which cropped up from time to time throughout the official correspondence from 1921-25. In 1921 the Darlington Corporation had agreed to supply the tram to convey 25 children from the town centre to the nursery school at the sum of 15/- per week. This fee did not remain static and as time went on appeared in the annual accounts submitted to the Board of Education, causing considerable comment '...We have not met with a similar case of tram fares for nursery school children...'<sup>81</sup> The following year, the tram fares amounted to £22 and again were disallowed for grant.

In 1923, the Board's own Medical Advisor, Dr. Lilian Wilson, had given strong support to the tram, comparing this to the conveyance of children to Open Air Schools, but the Board merely observed: 'We are very concerned to keep down the cost of nursery schools'.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Darl.Lib.(George Dent was remembered as a boy from rural ancestors in Dentdale (Nth.Yorks.). He found work in Darlington where his son J.M.Dent (publisher)was born into a large hard-working family in Archer Street in Darlington in conditions similar to many of the early 20th century nursery school children and is described as 'The boy who went to the top'. ( DRL W.J.Lee, Northern Despatch, 18th March, 1960)

<sup>81</sup> PRO Ed.69/5, (7.3.21)

<sup>82</sup> PRO Ed.69/5. (21.10.24)

**The George Dent Nursery School c.1971**



**Fairfield, a large house in Elms Road, off Woodland Road, Darlington became the home of the first nursery school in the North East.**



**The nursery school from the garden.  
The nursery school still occupies the same building in 2011**

In 1925, Miss Walker, the College Principal, slipped the question of tram fares into correspondence about increasing numbers to 80, when proposing a course of training for Children's Nursing sponsored by the Central Committee of Women's Training and Employment. The reply this time was favourable, and the tram question was settled.<sup>83</sup>

In May 1926, a very interesting account of the work and activities of the nursery school illustrated by photographs was given in the Evening Despatch thus attracting public interest and enthusiasm.<sup>84</sup> At this period the school was recognised nationally as a pioneer and benefited from Queen Mary's interest, thereby attracting regular visits from educationalists. In a letter to Grace Owen Miss Walker reflected the confidence in their efficiency and economy which could lead to a possible second nursery school in Darlington.<sup>85</sup> There had also been a parallel interest and purpose soon after the war on the part of the Elementary Sub-Committee on the possibility of purchasing surplus ex-Army huts in parts of the town for conversion to nursery schools should the Committee decide to establish such schools under the new Education Act (1918). In fact one hut was eventually purchased but was utilised for the town's 'other' endeavours in 'open air' schooling and what was later termed 'special education'.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless by 1926 there were four nursery classes in Darlington schools - Rise Carr, Borough Road, Gurney Pease and Dodmire. Catholic provision was also made at St. Williams in 1930, so that by 1932 about 100 children were in nursery classes.<sup>87</sup>

In September a memorial was unveiled to the late J.M.Dent, in the porch of

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<sup>83</sup> Stanton O. (1966) p.125

<sup>84</sup> DRL.Darlington Newspaper, 18th May 1926

<sup>85</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4/7 13.11.25 (Miss Owen, Secretary of the NSA often acted as an adviser on nursery concerns such as safe guarding of superintendents and staffing).

<sup>86</sup> DRO. Elementary Educ.Sub.Com.,9.5.19, Min.134

<sup>87</sup> Stanton (1966) pp.155-6, Cullen (1974) 'Education',pp.65-6

the School. A Botticelli head in bronze with the inscription : ‘Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, Thou has perfected praise’, was chosen. Another inscription reads, ‘In memory of G. Dent, b. 27th March 1810, died 27th May 1878, also of Joseph Mallaby Dent, born 30th August 1849, died 9th May 1926’. From this period ‘Fairfield’ became the ‘George Dent Nursery School’.

Mr. Hugh Dent, son of J. M. Dent presented a large sunk bath for the children. At Christmas 1926, Mrs. Seymour Benson again presented a Christmas tree and 36 pairs of knitted socks for the children.

The School was again inspected on 3rd May 1926 by Dr. Lilian Wilson and after her visit a letter was received from J R Warburton at Board of Education on 22nd June 1928 <sup>88</sup> :-

‘..The Board are glad to learn that valuable medical, educational and social work is being carried out and that the personal efforts of the Superintendent are meeting with a deserved measure of success...’<sup>89</sup>

...thus indicating the priority of ‘nurture’. A list of 30 children’s weights was sent to Dr. Wilson and all showed physical improvement.<sup>90</sup> In May 1927, 150 members of the Durham County Federation of Child Welfare Workers visited the School. A meeting was held at the Training College in the afternoon and before

<sup>88</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/14/2 15.6.28

<sup>89</sup> DRO E/Dar/8/4, E/Dar/18/1/3; B&FSS (1929) Annual Report CXXIV p.85

<sup>90</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4/2 Reply from Dr.Wilson at Board of Education Medical Branch (temp. address 54, Victoria Street,SW1) 15.6.26 (Examples of 11 children’s weights ; (lbs. ozs. on arrival /on leaving)

	<u>on adm.</u>	<u>on leaving</u>	<u>weight/time</u>	<u>Diagnosis</u>
Child A	22.5	27.8	5.3 in 25 months	small puny child
Child B	30.3	36.5	6.2 in 17 months	adenoid op.
Child C	27.0	33.0	6 in 20 months	mastoid op.
Child D	25.5	39.8	14 in 38 months	adenoid op.
Child E	25.10	32.9	6.9 in 44 months	a pale & wasted child on admission
Child F	29.12	35.12	8.0 in 38 months	pneumonia (1923)
Child G	25.0	37.8	12.8 in 42 months	eczema & chronic blepharitis
Child H	26.10	33.6	6.12in 18 months	extremely weak on admission
Child I	26.9	32.15	6.6 in 19 months	pneumonia twice
Child J	25.8	34.6	8.8 in 44 months	very neglected & delicate
Child K	29.3	39.1	9.14 in 29 months	adenoid op.

( 30 named children listed - no Christian Names therefore no gender distinction)



leaving the visitors generously voted £10 to the nursery school. The usual visits by students from other colleges and abroad were made.

The number on roll at the school remained at 80, whilst the average attendance was 67. On two days 79 children were present. There were 50 children on the waiting list which endorsed the popularity of the provision. Supplementary innovations followed in 1927/28. A club was formed for the mothers and a meeting was held once a month, when 20 to 40 mothers enjoyed a social evening together.

Christmas festivities were greatly enjoyed each year due to local patrons and friends :

‘ ...the tree together with toys and sixteen pairs of soft slippers, having been presented by the children of Miss Pratt’s Preparatory School, Cockerton. Toys and clothing were also received from the staff and students of the Training College, the High School, Polam Hall School and Darlington Girl Guides. The mothers of the children were entertained to tea the same day’<sup>91</sup>.

The number of people interested in the nursery was indicated in the increasing number of visitors, including Directors of Education and members of Education Committees, representatives from other Training Colleges, student Health Visitors, and students from different educational centres in the United States. A local group from Middlesbrough including the Warden of the ‘Settlement’ also visited.<sup>92</sup>

During 1929 and 1930 the waiting list continued to grow.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile the school was in continuous adverse financial circumstances.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, based on Dr.Wilson’s Medical Report of 1929, J.R.Warburton wrote ...

<sup>91</sup> B&FSS (1929) Ann. Rep CXXIV

<sup>92</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4/8,4.5.28

<sup>93</sup> DTC Report 1929/1930 & B&FSS Rep. 1930/1931 p.88

<sup>94</sup> DRO E/Dar 18/4/3 7.8.28 e.g. adverse balance partially due to bank charges on overdraft £180.14.0d (1927-28)

'... the question of the cost of nursery school is of considerable importance and the Board note with satisfaction that in the case of George Dent, it has been found by careful organisation to conduct the school at a unit cost no higher than that of the ordinary Public Elementary school...'<sup>95</sup>

The Mothers' Club became an important feature and many students interested in social work helped by visiting the children's own homes and by entertaining the mothers. Fathers were invited to call at the school to see their children at play and many availed themselves of the opportunity.

The Duchess of Atholl, a member of the B&FSS Committee and first woman to hold the post of Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, paid a visit to the nursery school when she was at the College in November, 1928, and she made the following entry in the visitors' book :

'Much enjoyed a visit to this delightful nursery school. The children are obviously happy and well-cared for and are being well trained.

KATHARINE ATHOLL, 16th November 1928'<sup>96</sup>

*Local and national interest* in the nursery school grew and when Miss Walker spoke to the BFUW<sup>97</sup>(Newcastle) in May 1929, she suggested that interested members of the local Head Teachers Association be also invited.<sup>98</sup> A query from further afield came from Mrs. Polson of the NSA in Oxhey, Watford (Hertfordshire)<sup>99</sup> asking for a breakdown of the costs of running the nursery school. The response was that with 80 children in 1929, the total amounted to £941/0/7d. Of that, £250 came from the LEA and the cost per child was £13/5/1d but this amount was reduced by money received from parents for meals making an overall cost of £11/0/10 per child.<sup>100</sup>

As the waiting list continued to grow, a plan was put in hand for alterations to

<sup>95</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4/3,1930

<sup>96</sup> DRO From GDNS Log Book,1928

<sup>97</sup> British Federation of University Women

<sup>98</sup> Letter to Miss Millican (Head Teachers Association) from Miss Walker 1.5.29

<sup>99</sup> Indication of interest in nursery provision in Hertfordshire - see chap.3 for further developments during 1930s

<sup>100</sup> Miss Walker to Mrs.A.Polson , Oxhey (31.03.29)

the school, which would make the two south rooms into open-air class rooms and give accommodation for 20 additional children. On 8th October 1929, Miss Walker reported that on one day in the previous week attendance was 80/80.<sup>101</sup> With much optimism a fund was started with :

‘...the most generous gift of Miss Alice Lucas, in memory of her sister, Miss Clara Lucas, who was a most public spirited member of the Town Council, and a sympathetic friend of the Training College and its School for many years...’<sup>102</sup>

which made a substantial beginning.

During the summer recess Miss Walker wrote to Sir Evan Spicer (Chairman of the BFSS) for permission to go ahead with the alteration hoping that he could give permission for an early start.

Many organisations and individuals also came forward with *practical assistance*. A long standing friend of the school, Mrs Wintringham<sup>103</sup> visited on 5th of July 1930 to give her support to the venture, whilst the Boy Scouts mended all the broken toys; the members of Toc H offered to put up the garden swings, and gifts of fruit and vegetables were received from the Harvest Festival at the Arthur Pease School.

With the expansion of the nursery school the numbers were increased to 90. The completion of the alterations was an occasion of great celebration and a letter was despatched to Dr. Wilson telling her that the alterations gave more floor space, more light and fresh air.<sup>104</sup> Princess Mary visited the GDNS in March 1931...

‘As recorded in the College Report for 1930, important alterations have been made in the nursery school buildings through the generosity of Miss Alice Lucas, Mr. Hugh Dent and other friends. The two large south rooms have been converted into open-

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<sup>101</sup> DRO E/Dar. 18/4./8

<sup>102</sup> DRO E/Dar2/86 Education Record ‘Items from the Colleges’ (last issue) Dec.1929 in DTC Annual Report 1929 and letter to Miss Walker 26.08.30 outlines proposals; DTC Mag. VIII 21 Dec.1930 cites Clara Lucas as an elected member of Darlington School Board in 1894 and co-opted to the first Educ Com of the Borough of Darlington and became a member of the Town Council in 1915.

<sup>103</sup> See chap.3

<sup>104</sup> Letter to Dr. Wilson, MOH (12.11.30)

air rooms and one of these, the Babies' Room, is to be known as the 'Clara Lucas' Room. On the occasion of her visit to the Y.M.C.A, at Darlington, H.R.H. Princess Mary most kindly consented to come to the George Dent Nursery School and declare these new premises open<sup>105</sup>

The cost of the alterations effected (exclusive of repairs to the central heating system) was £408.11s.6d. Donations for the Building Fund amounted to £486.17s.4d, so that £80 surplus was in hand for further necessary improvements. The most generous donations were from Miss Lucas, £250, and Mr. Hugh Dent, £100. The various friends and organisations continued to help in many small ways. The women's branch of Toc H made overalls for the children. The Superintendent of the nursery was given unfurnished rooms valued at £24 p.a. by the College. With the extra provision it was hoped to have 3 or 4 certificate student teachers in the nursery school and college.<sup>106</sup> Requests came from the NUWT for information on nursery schools and particulars of training courses for teachers.<sup>107</sup>

In March 1932, with the approval of the Board of Education, the number of children admitted to the school was raised to 100 and a further new innovation was launched :-

'A trainee sent by the Ministry of Labour successfully completed a six months course of training at the George Dent Nursery School'.<sup>108</sup>

Visitors during the year included the headmistress of an infants' school teaching under the Shipley Education Authority who spent two months at the GDNS in the spring, in order to observe methods and organisation before taking up duty as Superintendent of a nursery school being provided by her LEA. In addition, study groups could well have included housing replacements and improvements for the working classes which were ongoing in 'unhealthy areas'. Specified replacements and improvements were governed by the Housing Acts of

<sup>105</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4/9 ;DTC Annual Report 1931-32

<sup>106</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4/1

<sup>107</sup> National Union of Women Teachers (22.6.31)

<sup>108</sup> DTC Annual Report (61<sup>st</sup>)1932: B&FSS (1933) Annual Report (128th)

1930 and 1935, and in Darlington alone had included over 7000 ash-pit conversions by 1933.<sup>109</sup>

To promote the school, a prospectus for the George Dent was issued which included photographs taken by a former student of the College. As the number of children had increased, a second trained Assistant was appointed on 22nd August 1932.

In May (14th-16th), the Conference of Nursery School Superintendents was held at the school and many of the members were entertained at the College. The Mothers' Club continued as a social feature and many of these mothers showed their appreciation of the school by responding when additional cleaning help was required.

Among the visitors to the college were members of the Middlesbrough and Stockton branches of the National Council of Women.<sup>110</sup> The former were responsible for the provision of an open-air nursery in Middlesbrough (1932) where several of the DTC students gave voluntary help during their vacations.

Reference is made to the *financial position* of the school again in 1934/1935.

'Many friends of the school give generously to it but it would be a great boon if the George Dent Nursery School has a list of annual subscribers. Few people realise that the total income of the Nursery School is only about £930, which includes grants from Darlington Education Authority of £500, from the Training College of £200, and from the Board of Education of about £230, and yet the Committee is courageous enough to fill the school with its 100 children from 2 to 5 years. Each child costs per head about £11. Thus there is a deficit each year of about £170. The total cost per child, it should be noted is one of the lowest in the country and the Committee is proud of the fact that the small contributions paid weekly by the parents for five hot dinners, milk, fruit, etc. had balanced the expenditure on food for the last eight years. The parents contribute anything from 3d or 4d to 1/6d per week and each week there are children on the free list.

The legacy of one thousand pounds left by Miss Alice Lucas, a generous friend of the Nursery school, has enabled the Committee to clear £500 from the deficit and to

<sup>109</sup> DRO Da/A33/1/7 (10.1.33) & (18.11.35)

<sup>110</sup> Founded in 1895 its aims were:-a) to interest women in this country in local, regional and national affairs b) to represent views at the highest possible level & c) to encourage women to take an active part in public life & 'to improve the quality of life for all ,especially women' www.ncwgb. (16.1.2010)

plan to build more lavatories for the school as well as later to modernise the kitchen and cooking and laundry arrangements.

Few people realise that many of the nursery schools of the land are due largely to private efforts made by individuals who believe that the early care of ailing little ones in slums and overcrowded areas, is their bounden duty. The pioneers hope for great recognition of the place and necessity of the Nursery School in the Nation's scheme of education and training. This is slowly coming....<sup>111</sup>

This report indicates the *growing interest* in making wider provision. In October 1935, the five new lavatories on the first floor were finished and August 1936 saw the completion of alterations in the kitchen which greatly facilitated the cooking and laundry work of the school. A film showing a complete working day in the nursery was taken by Mr. Morland Braithwaite of Birmingham and was shown for the first time at the garden party. The film was available for showing throughout the country for a reasonable fee.

So many woollen garments were knitted for the children by students and friends that each child was given a parcel of clothing at Christmas 1936. When Miss S. Walker (Principal) retired she handed on to the GDNS the gift of £72 given to her by Old Students of the College and her colleagues. This sum was earmarked for improvements and extensions to the nursery school premises.

A highlight in the history of the school was the visit of the President of the Board of Education, Mr. Oliver Stanley, on 28th September 1936 :-

'He was most interested in all he saw and was... 'particularly pleased to see a nursery school in an adapted house.. of which he had heard so much'. He asked many questions about the working of the school, the children and the appreciation shown by their parents'<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile the waiting list continued to grow and by 1938 50% of the fathers of the children were now in employment, compared with 40% in 1937, and 20% in 1936. During August 1938, a most acceptable gift of a rubber floor, costing about £44 was given by the Darlington Ladies Luncheon Club. This was laid over

<sup>111</sup> DRO DTC Annual Report 1934-35 ; B&FSS (1936) CXXXI p.82

<sup>112</sup> DRO E/ Dar 2/60 DTC LXVI Annual Report: B&FSS (1938) CXXXIII Ann.Rep.

the cement floor under the glass verandah, which had not been satisfactory, as the linoleum was found to perish when laid on cement.

In November 1938, Lady Astor, and Mrs. Wintringham visited the school and later Lady Astor sent a cheque for £10 which she wished to be used for making casement windows in the upstairs nursery. This small, though acceptable donation from Lady Astor was perhaps an indication of the school's financial position in relation to other nursery schools, where she had often given a substantial donation to the foundation and even paid the first year's salary of the Superintendent. (Bensham Grove, Gateshead).

During the 1930s, subscriptions and donations continued to meet the school's requirements and to contribute toward improvements and extensions to the buildings in order to accommodate more children.<sup>113</sup> However as the school was in adapted premises there was a constant drain on financial resources for repairs and this was eventually to build up to a considerable deficit.

Frequent visitors (some distinguished) came to look, to comment and undoubtedly to 'report back' not only in the North East, but in other parts of the country.

At the outbreak of WW II the school was closed, but after a few weeks it was felt by the staff and committees, that *some* provision should be made for the most needy children. An offer made by Mrs. Lloyd Pease to provide the residential accommodation at her home at Hurworth Moor for these children, was readily accepted. Great care was taken in the selection of the children and Dr. Isobel

<sup>113</sup> DTC & B&FSS Annual Reports 1931-1938. Donations to George Dent N.S

1931/32	£250/0/0d	Miss Alice Lucas (in mem. C. Lucas);	1934/35	£36/4/9d	Subs. & Dons.
1931/32	£100/0/0d	Mr. Hugh Dent	1935/36	£48/1/8d	Garden Party (Rotary)
1931/32	£136/17/4d	Subs & Dons.	1935/36	£72/0/0d	Miss Walker (Ret. Gift)
1932/33	£ 42/16/7d	Subs & Dons.	1935/36	£116/9/3d	Subs. & Dons.
1933/34	£ 34/11/7d	Subs & Dons.	1936/37	£ 73/4/7d	Subs. & Dons
1933/34	£ 24/11/2s	Puppet Show	1937/38	£ 77/5/3d	Subs. & Dons.
1934/35	£1000/0/0d	Miss Alice Lucas (legacy)			

Brown was most helpful in arriving at the final decision - priority being given to the delicate and necessitous child.<sup>114</sup>

On 16th October after the necessary equipment had been transferred, 26 children took up residence from Mondays to Fridays together with the Superintendent and four members of staff, and they remained there until adequate air-raid shelters had been built for the whole school. The children were conveyed to and from Hurworth each week by the many friends of the school. This residential experience proved of the greatest value to the staff as well as the children. For many it was their first experience of life in the country, and of life under properly organised conditions, with regular meals and regular hours of sleep. All the children gained weight rapidly and they were returned to their parents happy and in good health.

Two air-raid shelters were built and in November the school re-opened in Darlington with fifty children, gradually increasing to the usual 100. The building of the shelters was made possible by a gift of £100 from two anonymous donors:-

'Without this generous gift, the re-opening of the school might have been indefinitely postponed'.<sup>115</sup>

The school soon settled down to its normal routine in spite of the fact that the cellar of the school became an A.R.P. post. Meanwhile the finances of the school were still in a precarious position owing to the gradually increasing deficit, and in spite of stringent economy in the management of the school. In response to a query by Dr. Dawson (MOH Darlington), the Principal (DTC), Miss O. Stanton pointed out that there was always bound to be a gap which had to be covered by voluntary contributions...

<sup>114</sup> DRO E/Dar 2/60 DTC Ann.Rep.(LXIX) 1939/1940

<sup>115</sup> DRO E/Dar 2/60 DTC(1939) LXIX Ann.Rep.It was later revealed that one of the donors was Mrs. Potts the Superintendent. A 50% grant was received from the Board of Education



'...At present our subscriptions fall far short of our needs and we are gradually increasing our debt which will seriously cripple the work unless efforts can be made to get more regular subscriptions...'<sup>116</sup>

Dr. Dawson was anxious that the school should be used for the most deserving cases coming from the worst conditions in Darlington...

'But there are those attending I am sure who could provide more financial help than the (reasonable) paltry demands you make from them. Is it possible that parents of some of the children who are attending might subscribe more where they are in a capacity to do so?'<sup>117</sup>

Miss Stanton replied ...

'It is possible that parents of some of the children who are attending might subscribe more when they are in a capacity to do so. There appears to be some misunderstanding of our position. The cases admitted are all needy ones - either of unemployed parents or children suffering from malnutrition or in other ways needing special care. Every case is scrutinised as no child is admitted unless the parents' circumstances justify it. We have a long waiting list.

Parents pay what they can afford towards the cost of dinners and we do in fact cover the cost of food. The Board will not allow us to charge more than the cost of food. If we do, the amount charged is deducted from the Board's grant to us so that we cannot improve the final position by charging fees. As, however, we do admit children of parents who could afford to pay fees the question does not arise in practice. So therefore we are bound to rely to some extent on voluntary contributions and the number of friends' help is considerable.

It is the last £50 - to make the two ends meet that we have difficulty in funding and this debt is gradually accumulating from year to year - hence our appeal for subscribers...'<sup>118</sup>

Dr. Dawson sent one guinea.

As the year 1940 was the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the opening of the school in its present home, the opportunity was taken of issuing an appeal for new subscribers, thus:-

'The school takes 100 children between 2 and 5 years old; children suffering from malnutrition or otherwise needing special care, and children of unemployed parents. They are taken on the recommendation of the Medical Officer of Health and his Assistants and there is a long waiting list. Many needy and pathetic cases are refused owing to a lack of room.

The finances of the school are met from four sources:

- The Darlington Education Committee gives a fixed grant

<sup>116</sup> DRO Letter Miss O. Stanton to Dr. Dawson (19.5.39)

<sup>117</sup> DRO Dr. Dawson to Miss Stanton (26.5.39)

<sup>118</sup> DRO Miss Stanton to Dr. Dawson (31.5.39)

- The Training College gives a grant which is fixed by the Board of Education
- The Board of Education pay a grant equal to half the difference between the annual expenditure and the sum of the other two grants. You will see, therefore, that the remaining half of the difference is left to be covered by :-
- Voluntary contributions

A total of £200 a year in subscriptions and donations would keep us free from debt.<sup>119</sup>

Subscriptions and donations for 1939 to 1940 were £190.9s.11d. Like all nursery schools during wartime, the peculiar conditions of war e.g. mothers working for the first time, fathers away from home on active service, air-raids, evacuation etc. all left their impression, but on the whole the school carried on without much interruption of routine.

In February (2nd-14th) 1942, a course for Child Care Reservists was organised by the Education Authority and the Ministry of Health to train helpers for the nursery classes and war-time nurseries. Mrs. Potts and Miss Hall assisted and lectures were held at the College and School. The nursery school remained open during the holidays to accommodate children of working mothers and the staff holidays were taken in rotation. Some of the mothers were munitions workers so the school was making a special contribution to the war effort. Financially however, this was done on its customary grant-aid basis supplemented by contributions from well-wishers.

Enquires raised the possibility of extra grant-aid from the Ministry of Health who suggested that though the school was not entitled to 'grant as of right', they may be entitled 'under certain conditions'.<sup>120</sup> After further correspondence via the local HMI, it was decided not to take advantage of additional facilities as the grant was only payable in respect of 'a child whose mother is in full-time employment' and the number of these would be small.<sup>121</sup> Therefore the 'control' image of

<sup>119</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60 GDNS 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Appeal, March 1940

<sup>120</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4//12,(4.1.43)

<sup>121</sup> DRO E/Dar/18/4/12, (11.2.43)

another Government department diminished and the Board of Education remained the prime controller.

Meanwhile a new scheme for training nursery/infant School teachers had been approved by the Board and began in September 1942. This course aimed at a combination of nursing and teaching techniques and with the rapid development of war-time nurseries was introduced to meet new demands.

Sadly for the George Dent Nursery School, Mrs. Potts, Superintendent, died on 20th March 1943, after 23 years at the school. She became an assistant in 1920 and Superintendent in 1926 and it was through her efforts that :-

‘...from a simple beginning she made it one of the best nursery schools in the country, and it can in fact be described as a pioneer school. It is outstanding not only for the efficacy of its working but for the happiness and serenity of its daily life..... Her work with the mothers was especially valuable, she has not only helped them to understand their children, but has been a friend and adviser in many domestic difficulties...’<sup>122</sup>

A memorial in the form of a bird bath was erected in the garden by the mothers and staff (23rd September 1943) and a general memorial fund was opened with a view to equipping a medical room at the school (probably after the war). By the end of the school year in August 1943, £160 had been received.<sup>123</sup>

During the summer of 1943 the Mothers’ Club, abandoned on the outbreak of war, was reopened. The school continued to remain open throughout the year and by 1944, 20% of two to five year olds were receiving nursery education in Darlington.<sup>124</sup>

During these war years it had become almost impossible to enlist probationers to work in the nurseries and in this respect the GDNS was considerably understaffed. Voluntary assistance, though acceptable was not

<sup>122</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60GDNS Comm. Mins. March 1943

<sup>123</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60DTC LXXII Report, 1941/42; B&FSS (1943) CXXXVIII Rep.

<sup>124</sup> Cullen (1974) pp.34 -6; Stanton (1966) pp.173-4;

always suitable so a new scale of wages and conditions were drawn up in June, to come into operation in September 1944. The wages were:-

Probationers aged 14-15 to receive £30 p.a.
( 15-16 to receive £40 p.a.
( 16-17 to receive £50 p.a.
( 17-18 to receive £60 p.a.

One Child Care Reservist and 5 probationers were appointed. Also a new scheme for financing the nursery school by Darlington Education Authority was put forward:-

'... As the school had been unable for some years to collect sufficient voluntary subscriptions to cover current expenditure the Committee appealed to the Darlington Education Authority for an increase in their annual grant. In December 1943 a new scheme was put forward by the Authority and eventually approved by the various committees concerned (the Council of the British and Foreign School Society, and the Committee of the Darlington Training College and Nursery School) and by the Board of Education. Following are some of the provisions of the scheme:-

For a trial period from 1st April 1943 to 31st March 1945, the Education Authority agreed to pay a grant each year equal to the net expenditure of the preceding financial year; net expenditure for this purpose being the gross expenditure less all receipts other than the grant from Authority. The Training College Committee shall continue to contribute an annual sum of not less than £200 to the School, and the British and Foreign School Society shall be responsible for the payments of the accumulated deficit on March 31st(viz.£ 540.8s.9d.)

Not less than one-third of the Nursery School Committee shall be appointed by and from the Darlington Education Authority, and the Chief Education Officer or his representative shall be entitled to be present at all meetings of the Committee. Copies of Minutes of all meetings of the Committee shall be forwarded to the Education Committee and be subject to their approval. The scheme is to be reviewed in 1945.<sup>125</sup>

This new responsibility undertaken by the Education Authority marks a new epoch in the history of the school. The position of the school as a training ground for students and its valuable contribution to the welfare of the children of Darlington, particularly those who were in some way handicapped were to be maintained. In the opinion of the College Committee the freedom of the school to experiment and to act as a pioneer in nursery school method was of great value and could best be maintained if the school enjoyed some measure of

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<sup>125</sup> DRO Darl.Educ.Com 1944

independence of administrative control. The Committee greatly appreciated the generosity of the Authority in allowing so large a measure of independence to the school while at the same time giving it the assurance of a future free from the accumulating burden of debt.

The Correspondent undertook to collect subscriptions to meet the debt of £540.8s.8d. which was outstanding at the time the scheme came into operation, and for which the College and Parent Society were responsible. The Council of the Society had generously promised an annual contribution of £100 for three years, of which the first contribution had already been paid. At the end of the school's financial year the debt had been reduced to £443.12s.10d , and by 31st July 1944, further donations including the Society's £100 had reduced it to £307.15s.10d. The Correspondent said they would be grateful if subscribers would continue their subscriptions until the debt had been met<sup>126</sup>

The Christmas Tree 1943 was again presented by Polam Hall and dolls and other toys were received from parents, students, staff and friends from all over the country. The children also received a bag of sweets each, at their Christmas party again given by the students and friends. In 1945 reference was again made to the working out of the financial difficulties of the school:

'The financial arrangement outlined in the last annual report is to continue until March 1946. The arrangement is working satisfactorily and no fundamental change in the scheme is proposed. In order to give the school funds a balance in the bank, however, the Education Authority have generously agreed to a proposal to pay a proportion of the grants in advance in future.

The College Authorities had undertaken to pay off the debt outstanding at the time the new scheme came into operation viz. £540.8s.8d. Of this, £398.8s.4d. had been paid by 1st July 1945. £100 of the £300 promised by the British and Foreign School Society is still to come, so that there remains a sum of £42.0s.4d. to be collected. The Correspondent extends a very grateful thanks to the generous subscribers who have made it possible to meet the very substantial obligation<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> DRO DTC 73<sup>rd</sup> Report, 1943/44 : B&FSS (1944) CXXXIX Rep.

<sup>127</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60 DTC Report 1945/46 : B&FSS (1946) CXXXXI Rep.

The town showed an *interest in nursery education* almost as keen as the College and tried to meet the needs at least of necessitous and delicate children by opening further nursery classes and later nursery schools of its own. By this time the borough had four nursery schools and four schools with nursery classes.<sup>128</sup> It seems a beginning had been made in 1920 for nursery provision in schools, soon after 'Fairfield' opened. A sub-committee, including Miss Hawtrey, had considered the adaptation of a room in Borough Road school for use as a nursery class.<sup>129</sup> This had apparently suffered from the *financial restrictions* of 1921.

In 1930, two nursery classes attached to infants' schools (Rise Carr and St. Williams) had been opened, and by 1942 a third was established at Borough Road. During WW2 four war-time nurseries were built and 3 of them were converted by the Education Authority to nursery schools after the war. A fourth was opened in a redundant school building at Corporation Road. Thus in the dark days following the war there were seven nursery schools and classes in addition to George Dent, making Darlington one of the most enlightened towns in the provision of nursery education.

To return to the conditions at the George Dent – the post-war years began with staff shortages, particularly in trained nursery assistants. Miss Trevan-Hawkes the Superintendent, resigned, and Miss Wood was appointed.<sup>130</sup>

Again, second to staffing difficulties was the ever-present financial need. In 1946 reference was again made to the arrangements with the LEA. During the war years subscriptions and donations fell by more than half.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Cullen p.174 , Stanton p.166

<sup>129</sup> DRO Darl. Ed..Comm. Min. 253, 3.6.20

<sup>130</sup> Miss Wood served the school until August 1966

<sup>131</sup> 1941/42 £179/12/7d; 1942/43 £96/15/0d; 1943/44 £ 78/11.11d

'The financial arrangements agreed upon with the Darlington Education Authority in 1943 for a period of three years were reviewed in March 1946, with some minor changes. The Committee wish to record their appreciation of the continued financial support given by the Education Committee and to thank all friends of the school by whose personal generosity it was possible to pay off the debt of £540.8s.8d. outstanding in March 1942, for which the Training College had undertaken responsibility. The Building Fund remains open for contributions for capital improvements and extensions to the school'<sup>132</sup>

With the ending of hostilities the school was closed entirely for the recognised school holidays as there proved to be no necessity to continue making special arrangements for the children of working mothers.

The Mothers' Club continued to be a valuable point of contact with parents, and a number of social events were organised. A Nursery School Exhibition was set up from 17th-24th November 1945 with external publicity, displays and lectures.<sup>133</sup>

After the austerity of war-time and the first post-war years, new ideas began to ferment. One of these was for the College to provide a one-year course on Nursery Schools for graduates and experienced serving teachers to begin in September 1948. A special course tutor was appointed and a social centre was opened adjoining Albert Hill Nursery (by kind permission of the Darlington Education Authority) to provide a field of sociological study for the one-year students. The Club had a full-time warden and also had a Play Centre for young children, Clubs for younger and older Juniors, Youth Clubs, Parents' Clubs and an Old Peoples' Club.

From the end of 1947...

'The resignation of Mrs. Lloyd Pease from Chairmanship is received with very deep regret. Mrs. Pease had been Chairman of the Committee since the founding of the school in 1917, and the Committee wish to place on record their appreciation of her invaluable work. It was partly owing to her initiative that the school was founded, and throughout the thirty years of its history she had given freely of her wisdom and loving care. Her personal generosity has been shown in many practical ways,

<sup>132</sup> DRO E/Dar 2/60 DTC 75th Report, 1945/46: B&FSS 141st Report, 1946

<sup>133</sup> Letter to NSA members from Dorothy Hall (Nursery School Committee) Darlington

always meeting some special need of the children. In particular we recall her hospitality to twenty five children and the staff for three months at the outbreak of the war in 1939<sup>134</sup>

On the recommendation of the Ministry of Education the Committee decided to reduce the number on roll from 100 to 85 children. Nevertheless further probationers had to be appointed as a scheme of training for National Nursery Nurses Certificate was inaugurated by the Darlington Education Authority. Probationers spent part of the week in school and the other part at lectures.

By 1949, the money raised for a memorial to the late Mrs.I.M.Potts had been spent in converting a small room, formerly the bathroom, into a Medical Room, and furniture, fittings and medical equipment - 'a fitting memorial to the work of the school's well-loved Superintendent'.<sup>135</sup> A beautiful plaque in Bath stone representing children and animals and with the inscription 'Ida Mary Potts, Superintendent, 1926-1943' was designed by Meg Woolf and fixed to the wall.

The money collected annually in the Building Fund<sup>136</sup> was to be used to finance expenditure not covered by the Ministry's or Authority's grants. Considerable alterations to an adapted building were continually required to bring it up to modern standards. A contribution in 'kind' was made by Toc H, whose small band of helpers came regularly to mend wooden toys. Also through the co-operation of parents new out-door equipment was purchased - a scrambling net and tubular frame, and a climbing ladder and rope which could also be used indoors.

In June 1950, the glass conservatory, which was used as a washroom was pronounced unsafe and had to be closed. The Borough Architect prepared plans for permanent improvements to the building which included the replacement of the

<sup>134</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60 DTC Rep. (77th) 1946

<sup>135</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60 DTC Rep.( 80th) 1949

<sup>136</sup> Between 1946 and 1948 this amounted to £286.11s.0d



washroom by a more permanent structure, the provision of a laundry, milk room and a number of other improvements. The total cost of carrying out the whole plan was estimated at £1100. The subscriptions to the Building Fund in 1950 were only £31.17s.0d!!<sup>137</sup>

With the residue of the money in the Mrs. I. M. Potts Memorial Fund, the Committee decided to re-model the sand pit. A sloping concrete floor and drains, and low brick walls of varying height gave much scope to the young 'builders'. Richard Dimbleby from the BBC interviewed the Superintendent and recorded sounds of the children at play for the 'Down Your Way' programme, which was broadcast on 9th September 1951.

The old conservatory/washroom was replaced by a more permanent brick structure - the work was to be carried out in two stages. Of the £1,120 required, £220 were taken from the Building Fund and the remainder paid by grants and loans from the School Building Fund, Ministry of Education, Darlington Education Authority and Barclays Bank.

Like all building projects, the financial cost of the alterations was higher than originally estimated and further requests had to be made for help.

'The final cost of the alteration is £1,238, of which £238 has been met from the School Building Fund; the remainder partly by Bank Loan to be repaid by the Authority over the years as a deficiency grant, and partly from the maintenance account. In addition there are Architect's fees of £300, of which £200 falls on the Building Fund. As this fund is now practically exhausted voluntary subscriptions will be welcomed to meet the debt'<sup>138</sup>

Unfortunately another source of support for the nursery school was lost in Darlington, when the LEA decided to discontinue training nursery students for the NNEB Certificate. Some students were able to continue to train under the

<sup>137</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60 DTC (1950) Ann. Rep.

<sup>138</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60 DTC (1955/56)83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report

Durham County Council.

In March 1951, Mrs. Lloyd Pease, one of the founders of the nursery school died, and during 1953, her daughter, Mrs Mounsey, presented a gift of Remploy equipment for the nursery school in memory of her mother. This was a packing case ladder house with three ladders, and was widely enjoyed by the children.

In 1955 plans were again put forward for training a nursery assistant for the NNEB examination in co-operation with the Durham County Council. The practical work was to be done in the nursery and the theory in a Technical College in Durham County.

During 1957/58 an attempt to give more children<sup>139</sup> opportunities for benefitting from part-time nursery education was put forward and is reported:

'In an attempt to meet the varying needs of young children, two small groups of children attend the nursery school for a morning or afternoon session respectively. No midday meal is served but the children have milk, and share in all the School Health Services and play facilities. The group was developed slowly to 10. There is no set pattern of a child or a child's behaviour and this flexibility and variation offer opportunities for their general well-being and mental health'<sup>140</sup>

By September 1958 there were 75 children attending full-time and 20 part-time. Soon this facility became well-established and thereby enabled more children to enjoy the privilege of nursery education. By 1962 there were 70 full-time and 30 part-timers.

Subscriptions and donations to the Building Fund were maintained.<sup>141</sup>

Due to rising costs the problem of finance was ever present :-

<sup>139</sup> This follows suggestions by H.M.I. Miss Johnson, 5.9.57 (Log Book)

<sup>140</sup> DRO E/Dar2/60DTC (1956/57) Ann. Rep. (87th)

<sup>141</sup> Subscriptions & Donations during 1950s & early 1960s

1952 - £32/3/0d	1956 - £12/10/0d	1960 - £10/18/0d
1953 - £114/3/1d	1957 - £11/11/0d	1961 - £10/18/0d
1954 - £55/16/8d	1958 - £10/8/0d	1962 - £15/13/0d
1955 - £45/12/6d	1959 - £15/8/6d	1963 -
		1964 - £ 9/7/0d

'The annual grant from Darlington Training College to the Nursery School in recognition of the special facilities afforded to the College, was raised, by permission of the Ministry of Education from £200 to £300'.<sup>142</sup>

Meanwhile the day to day routine of the nursery school maintained a very high standard and the long waiting lists for admission were evidence of the sound principles in intellectual and social training available for the pre-school child. The most recent report gave hope for an extension of facilities to more children in the current period of enforced restriction...

'The roll is now 115; 70 children attending part-time and 45 for the full day. This increase and re-organisation was difficult, but now appears satisfactory in every way. Some parents are eager for a longer day, but many appreciated the shorter time, which helps the social development of the children and offers full play facilities. The number of children provided with dinner at school has been reduced, but for those who attend part-time, a family midday meal is now possible.'<sup>143</sup>

Like countless other education establishments which try to retain some measure of independence, continued inflation rendered the financial situation most difficult to solve. During the war years the scheme by the Darlington Education Authority had met with success and was gratefully received, but from 1945 the deficit had accumulated.

By December 1965 a proposal for clearing this debt and for the future financing of the school was submitted and the Education Committee resolved that:-

'...this Committee approves in principle...

- the suggestion that it should make some contribution towards clearing off the deficit
- the proposals for the financing of the school in future, and that these questions be further considered in detail when the views of the Department of Education and Science and of the British and Foreign School Society on these two issues are available'<sup>144</sup>

It was revealed in 1967 that the deficit had grown to £8,000 and the B&FSS

<sup>142</sup> DRO E/Dar2/66 DTC (1963/64) Ann.Rep. (94th)

<sup>143</sup> DRO E/Dar2/68 DTC (1965/66)Ann.Rep.

<sup>144</sup> DRO Darlington Educ. Comm.Q293, 16.12.65

were proposing *to sell the school to the LEA*.<sup>145</sup> A Memorandum from the Principal<sup>146</sup> outlined the huge benefit to the College and School gained from their historic links, and an arrangement of direct payments from LEA, B&FSS and College guaranteed clearance of the deficit. Moreover through a system of grant payments, based on the financial year (1967), a 'balancing of the books' was to be assured at the end of each year.

Thus the GDNS retained its status as a 'Direct Grant' school and in this respect too, was unique in the North East.<sup>147</sup> A large measure of administrative independence was retained with freedom to continue its intended role of serving both the needs of Darlington's children and also the training of nursery/infant teachers, making its contribution nationally.

The social and economic factors involved in the changing fortunes of GDNS therefore span more than half a century during which much progress was made in all branches of the Social Services.

In the first instance, its inception grew out of the *conditions of war* - the need to provide 'nurture' for the children of working mothers, service men and children suffering from the accumulated evils of *over-crowding, slum-dwelling and malnutrition* of which Darlington, like all industrial centres, had its share. In no small measure was the success of the venture due to :-

- the spirit of philanthropy in Darlington and in particular of its Quaker families
- the personalities involved in the establishment of the school and in particular Miss F. Hawtrey, Mr J. M. Dent and Mrs. Lloyd Pease
- the stability of staffing during the difficult years, and in particular Mrs Potts and Miss Wood.

But this school was also *unique* in that its 'other' role was to serve as a

<sup>145</sup> DRO Darlington Educ. Comm.Q446, 2.3.67

<sup>146</sup> See Appendix 8

<sup>147</sup> DRO The 'Direct Grant' was paid in accordance with 'Direct Grant Schools Regulation 1959'. Regulation 5 (1) (a) provides that for nursery schools the grant will not exceed half the net cost of maintaining the school. Regulation 5 (2) provided that the grant shall be payable for each financial year. W. Nuttall, Borough Treasurer, 30.11.65

Demonstration/Practising School for students at Darlington Training College. It was sited near the College and the children were brought to the school from the poorer parts of town by public transport - the tram. This featured widely and uniquely in national correspondence often with threats of withdrawal due to rising costs. There was no other comparative situation in the country.

During the 1920s and 1930s the succession of children who attended were experiencing great hardship due to the national economic situation, and many of the fathers were unemployed for long periods. The war years and after, show the consolidation of ideas on nursery training and nursery schools - the easing of pressure on the school to admit cases recommended by the Medical Officer, due to the expansion in the town's nursery provision, and also by the expansion of the service in taking more children part-time.

National economics which affected the provision of new schools in other areas did not have any direct repercussions on GDNS, although rising costs of food, staffing and maintenance were always to be reckoned with. Nevertheless there always seemed to be a faithful band of workers, regular donors and local philanthropic bodies who gave help in money and in kind. The problems of using an adapted building were a constant financial worry but the Local Authority was probably one of the most advanced in its attitude towards nursery schools and generously supported the school<sup>148</sup> (by various financial arrangements) while allowing it to retain the measure of independence which enabled it to pioneer and experiment in the sphere of the under fives.

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<sup>148</sup> When the College of Education (Darlington Training College) closed in 1978, the administration of the George Dent Nursery School passed into the hands of the Local Authority. 'The George Dent Nursery School continues to be held by the British and Foreign School Society as an investment and is leased to Darlington Local Education Authority for an annual rent of £12,000, which was last reviewed in 2007'. (B&FSS,2010) 205th Report p.3) The ongoing success of the school was evident in its waiting list of over 300 children

The fortunes of Bensham Grove, Gateshead were quite different from GDNS, Darlington as there already existed a 'Settlement' provision for the unemployed which recognised the endemic poverty, poor housing, malnourishment and ill health of this industrial town impinging on all sections of society and particularly the *youngest members*.

## **(2) Bensham Grove Nursery School, Gateshead, 1929**

As early as 1800 the largest concentration of population in the North East was Newcastle/Gateshead. By 1850, according to Byrne, a present day inhabitant,

‘...the people of Gateshead and the surrounding area were industrial proletarians, not peasants....There were 1600 coal miners, 1100 iron makers and more than 1000 workers in each of engine making, construction and marine transport. Most women in this zone of heavy carboniferous capitalism were wives or domestic servants.....Gateshead was a typical industrial hell-hole of the middle 19th century...’<sup>1</sup>

...where the workers lived in the most miserable of dwellings.<sup>2</sup> The largely artisan settlement lay along the south bank of the River Tyne and along the main road approaching the bridge from the south. It had been described as ‘...a dirty lane leading to Newcastle...’<sup>3</sup>, and in the early 20th century, as ‘... an overwhelmingly working-class community ...(which)... suffers considerably by living under the shadow of its larger neighbour...’<sup>4</sup>

Industry continued to flourish during the 19th century and by the 1880’s the population of Tyneside was around the 200,000 figure. The ship yards, coal staithes, chemical and glass works commanded the areas near to the river, but close behind were the houses of the workers...

‘...Superficially, Darlington and Gateshead appear to be much alike. They are similar in size and only thirty miles or so apart from each other. Both are industrial in character. Nevertheless there are many differences, some of which seem to throw light on the development of their respective educational policies...’<sup>5</sup>

By 1914, 750,000 people lived on Tyneside and this huge growth in population was accommodated mainly in ‘low-class’ property that spread over land behind the riverside industrial strip. Dr. Robinson, Medical Officer in the 1880s

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<sup>1</sup> Byrne D. (2001) ‘Understanding the urban’ p.7 (Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at Durham University, 2010)

<sup>2</sup> Newsom J.(1936) ‘Out of the Pit’

<sup>3</sup> Woodhouse R. (1992) ‘Gateshead – a pictorial history’ quoting Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

<sup>4</sup> Mess H. (1928) ‘Industrial Tyneside’

<sup>5</sup> Batley R., O’Brien O., Parvis H. (1970) ‘Going Comprehensive : Educational Policy Making in Two County Boroughs’ Intro. P.16

had commented...

'...It is impossible to rate too highly the importance of good hygienic surroundings in a town so essentially a "Workman's Town" as Gateshead...'<sup>6</sup>

Many of these terraces still exist except where bombing in World War II created open spaces, now filled by high rise flats.

A list of industries in Gateshead indicates the scope for the spread of industrial squalor; engineering - general, mechanical, electrical, and marine and structural; glass making; rivet, nut and bolt manufacture ; iron and steel smelting and forging; nail manufacture; coal distillation with coke manufacturing and recovery of bye-products; furniture manufacturing; printing; jam and preserve making; factory tailoring and factory baking.

The industries were precisely those which were to suffer most in the *economic depression* of inter-war years. Development remained industrial and promoted a predominantly wage-earning, working-class population. When the slump came, Gateshead felt the full force...

'...The whole town seems to have been planned by an enemy of the human race.. ...if anybody ever made money in Gateshead, they must have taken care not to spend any of it in the town...'<sup>7</sup>

Gateshead fully experienced '... the intractable problems of mass unemployment in the depressed areas...'<sup>8</sup>. whilst Mowat claimed that it was the depressed areas which '...were the basis for the myth of the 'hungry thirties''.<sup>9</sup> The area served by the Bensham Grove Nursery School is this type, with narrow streets, often of two storey flats, with minute backyards and back streets (usually of earth) as the only places for children to play. The type of housing and congestion was worst nearest the river, and modern housing estates, both private and local authority, eventually

<sup>6</sup> Manders F.W.D. (1975) . 'A History of Gateshead' p.186

<sup>7</sup> Priestley J.B. (1934) 'English Journey', p.302 : New edition (2009) p.258

<sup>8</sup> Stevenson J. & Cook C. (1994) 'Britain in the Depression, Society and Politics 1929-39' p.12

<sup>9</sup> Mowat C.L. (1968) 'Britain between the Wars 1918-1939' p.463



extended the boundaries of the town in three directions.

Gateshead, like many of the towns in the North East was an ugly place.

'It was plain that the worst concentration of social problems were to be found in those centres which had already seen substantial growth in economic activity and population...'<sup>10</sup>

There was dirt, squalor, poor housing and overcrowding, and nursery provision was badly needed. A philanthropic body in the British Federation of University Women<sup>11</sup> had campaigned for the protection of the young children from 2 - 5 years, and through their efforts, the Bensham Grove Nursery was opened in 1929. At the February meeting (1st Feb. 1929) of the BFUW, (NE Assoc.)<sup>12</sup> the speaker was Miss Jowitt<sup>13</sup> who spoke on 'Some social problems on Tyneside'. The meeting was held in the Bensham Grove Settlement, where Miss Jowitt was Warden.

A discussion followed which had two important sequels. Firstly, compiling a list of members of the N E Association willing to give lectures or talks to Adult Schools, WI's, WEA's, etc. in outlying villages, and secondly, the formation of the TNSA following a public meeting held at Armstrong College, convened by members of the Federation UW to arouse interest in a movement designed to afford some social provision for the child of pre-school age.<sup>14</sup>

Along with Mrs. Elsie Wardley Smith, who became Secretary of the TNSA and Miss Lettice Jowitt, another prominent member of the BFUW who was to play an important part in the provision of Bensham Grove Nursery, was Dr. Hickling

<sup>10</sup> McCord N. (1979) 'North East England : The Region's Development 1760-1960' p.158

<sup>11</sup> The British Federation of University Women (founded 1907) now the British Federation of Women Graduates (BFWG) aimed 1) to promote women's opportunities in education and public life; 2) foster local, national and international friendships; and 3) improve the lives of women and girls worldwide. [www.British Federation of Women Graduates](http://www.BritishFederationofWomenGraduates.org) (BFWG) 7th December 2009

<sup>12</sup> GRL.Com.Min.Book,1929

<sup>13</sup> Miss Lettice Jowitt, Member of the Society of Friends (Quaker) and Warden of Bensham Grove Settlement (1919-1929), Rock House, Seaham (1931-1937)

<sup>14</sup> TWAS BFUW Annual Report,1928/1929, p.32

formerly MOH for nursery schools in Manchester. These women were convinced of the benefits of nursery education and gave unstintingly of their time and efforts for this work.

An outline of the origins and activities of the Bensham Grove 'Settlement' parallels the efforts of those in the nursery school movement.<sup>15</sup> There was a precedent for '*a nursery in a Settlement*' with Quaker origins, (the Cadburys) in the Settlement People's Kindergarten', which opened in Birmingham in 1907, using the large room and garden. After 11 years this was closed down but the Birmingham Education Authority opened a nursery school on the same site.<sup>16</sup> Bensham Grove was a house in its own grounds built in the late 19th century on the slopes which later saw the closely-packed two storey houses of the developing borough.

This was the home of Drs. Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson, also notable Quakers who devoted themselves to public service, especially in education as in the founding of the College of Science (later Armstrong College, then King's College, Durham University and now the University of Newcastle upon Tyne).<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the contemporary Quaker philanthropic work in Darlington where provision for the under-fives was their first priority, Bensham Grove opened in October 1919, as a 'Settlement'<sup>18</sup> following a successful appeal from a small group of Spence Watson relatives who felt that the intellectual and spiritual life

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<sup>15</sup> Brazendale A. (2004) 'Gateshead: History & Guide' p.69

<sup>16</sup> Lloyd, Julia (1932) 'Birmingham's Nursery Schools'

<sup>17</sup> Manders F.W.D. (1975) p 330 ;Brazendale A. (2004) p.105; The part played by Quaker philanthropy in Darlington has already been referred to in Chap.4 (1)

<sup>18</sup> 'Settlements' were set up to provide a wide range of educational, recreational and welfare facilities in areas of extreme hardship. The Resident Warden at Bensham was Miss Lettice Jowitt. A 'settlement' at Spennymoor in another deprived area of the north-east, provided playgroup and welfare facilities for young children, but did not aspire to the formal establishment of a nursery school. For this, Spennymoor had to wait until a war-time nursery opened in an adjacent park in the 1940s.

which had been centred there, might be continued. This mirrored the work of the settlement at Toynbee Hall founded in the east end of London in 1884, which became a powerhouse of social reform.<sup>19</sup> ‘Settlements’ offered the unemployed the possibility of creating their own entertainment, and provided opportunities to follow various subjects, both practical and non-practical.<sup>20</sup> The Bensham Settlement was not endowed, but dependent for its upkeep and development of its work, on annual subscriptions, donations, residents’ and students’ fees, and the small rent charges for the use of its rooms.

Among the hirers of rooms was the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of Gateshead Corporation; Health Visitors were in attendance twice a week from September 1920 to give advice to mothers and to weigh babies, and the School Medical Officer always found ‘a room full of mothers anxious to consult him.’<sup>21</sup>

Eight years later (1929), at the time of the opening of the nursery school, the average attendance of mothers had more than doubled to 54.4 per session.<sup>22</sup> These were the fortunate ones for throughout the northeast conditions were dire.

‘Everywhere we noticed women who looked haggard and ill, who were obviously facing semi-starvation themselves in order that their families might have, not enough (for no one has enough in the coalfield these days), but as much as possible, to eat...’<sup>23</sup>

The large garden was used by the Allotments Association to stimulate the unemployed, and when housing developments extended the local population, the Tenants’ Association used the Settlement extensively for meetings and courses. By this time also, the Settlement had flourished and the Committee had managed

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<sup>19</sup> Run by Samuel Augustus Barnett, a Canon of St. Jude’s church, it numbered among its members Richard Tawney, Clement Attlee, Alfred Milner and William Beveridge

<sup>20</sup> Robinson S. (1976) ‘Regional Underdevelopment and Education: the Case of the North East’. p.47

<sup>21</sup> GRL Bensham Settlement, 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report, 1921

<sup>22</sup> GRL Medical Officer of Health, Gateshead, Annual Report, 1929, p.11

<sup>23</sup> McReady M. (2002) p.115 quoting Ruth Dalton in election campaign (Bishop Auckland)

to have a hall built for large audiences, social gatherings and child welfare work.<sup>24</sup> The first months of the nursery school at Bensham Grove were spent in the hall of the Settlement. This was very inconvenient as the hall was also used by the Child Welfare Clinic and the nursery equipment had to be removed two days a week so that the clinic could be held. It became obvious that a building and out-door play spaces were required which would be for the use of the school in their care of the physical and educational well-being of the children.

A marked improvement in the health of the children was obvious...

'...As unemployment had not abated to any marked degree'...'there are still hardships and deprivations among the people, it seems obvious that the good offices of the local authority in its maternity and child welfare work, its school medical service and the added help of other agencies, *including voluntary ones*, are having a beneficial effect...'25

Meanwhile, the Tyneside Nursery School Association had been inaugurated and it began to raise money for the establishment of nursery schools and in particular for a school building at Bensham Grove. This gave a huge impetus to the project...

'It has been a source of great joy to Settlement members that the Tyneside Nursery School Association set up its first school in Settlement premises. We long to see it housed in its special classrooms built in our spacious garden. Our neighbours are full of admiration for the work. We are glad to have Miss Stewart, the Head of the School, in residence...'26

The original subscribers of the Federation of University Women ear-marked their donations 'for Bensham Grove', as they had been the body responsible for its instigation. But donations also were received from other private individuals and groups, which went into the larger pool of the TNSA. The cost of keeping one child at the nursery school for one year was £11. Of this the Board of Education paid half, and the rest had to be found by public subscription because initially, the

<sup>24</sup> One of the meetings is described in J.B.Priestley, 'English Journey', pp.304-7 new ed.pp.258-9

<sup>25</sup> GRL Report of Gateshead S.M.O.1930

<sup>26</sup> Annual Report BGNS (1929-1930) There were at least 4 other residents, including 2 lecturers and 2 students from Armstrong College, Durham University (now University of Newcastle)

Gateshead Local Authority refused to support nursery education.<sup>27</sup>

Consequently many of the children were 'adopted' and became the individual responsibility of their donors. One such instance was that of a group of senior girls from the Church High School who raised the annual amount required to keep an individual child at the nursery school.

When the philanthropic body of women in the Federation of University Women chose the hall at the Bensham Grove Settlement, they were not only continuing in the public service and idealism which they had known under its original owners, but ensuring a practical connection, for liaison was available through the Borough's medical staff and health visitors for the recommendation of children who would benefit most from the nursery school regime.

Mrs. Wardley Smith (Secretary) writing in the Gateshead Herald describes the work of the school and the nursery movement...

'How the children play.'

Twelve years ago Infant Welfare Centres were being opened in order that babies might have better chances of gaining healthy life. At first these centres were maintained by voluntary workers, but local authorities followed quickly and every town has now got some centres.

The result has been the wonderful decrease in the death rate of infants, and what is even more important, the improved health of those who survive.

Today nursery schools are being opened by voluntary efforts. They aim at filling the gap which exists for children between the days when the Infant Welfare Centre is available for them and the time when they come under the control of the school medical officer...

...there are about 30 nursery schools in the country now, most of them the result of voluntary efforts. When public opinion has been formed the local authorities will take up the responsibility. A few have already done so, but the voluntary work has to come first, and those who realise that great need are endeavouring to open nursery schools in as many of the crowded areas as possible. The Tyneside Nursery School Association was the outcome of a visit of Miss Margaret McMillan to Newcastle, in May, and owing to generous gifts of money from many members the first nursery in the North East of England was opened at Bensham Grove Settlement in July last year.

Fifty children attend the school and it has not been easy to select 50 from the very long list of those whose parents wish to send them. Most of those chosen have

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<sup>27</sup> GRL Gateshead Post 8.1.31

been recommended by the Health Visitors or Infant Welfare Centres, because of their ill-health...

....There is no charge made except for meals. Parents pay 2/- per week to cover the cost of meals. This sum just covers the cost of the food.

The school has been approved by the Board of Education and grant covering half the expenses will be given by the Board but for the other half the school is entirely dependent on voluntary subscriptions.

There are many good causes and many organisations for work amongst children, but the nursery school should stand among the first in importance, because it is laying the foundations of life.

Elsie Wardley Smith, Hon.Sec. (TNSA) <sup>28</sup>

Following a written request for sympathy and assistance the Chairman of the TNSA, Professor Frank Smith<sup>29</sup> personally attended the meeting of the Primary Education Sub-Committee on 23rd July 1929<sup>30</sup> and gave financial particulars, stating that the Association would agree to half the managers being from the Education Committee and suggesting a total of 12 or 14 managers. The Committee decided on 14, of whom seven would be of themselves and these were chosen straightaway, including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Later in the year (15th October), the Director was instructed to inspect the school on behalf of the LEA.<sup>31</sup>

No financial help was voted by Gateshead LEA and no formal request appears to have been made from the nursery voluntary committee. Certainly no proposals had been made by the Education Committee in its Programme of Education Development for the years 1927-30 in response to the Bd. of Ed. Circular 1358.<sup>32</sup>

However, in response to the Bd. of Ed. Circular 1405/Ministry of Health Circular 1054, on 5th December 1929 a Joint Special Committee was set up and it was subsequently received that the Chairman of the Education Committee and the

<sup>28</sup> GRL Gateshead Herald, 1928

<sup>29</sup> Professor of Education at Armstrong College, Newcastle (then Durham University), now the University of Newcastle.

<sup>30</sup> GRL Gateshead Education Committee, Minute 471, 1928-29

<sup>31</sup> GRL G.E.C., Minute 4581

<sup>32</sup> GRL G.E.C. (4.6.26)

Director of Education who were to be in London on other business should visit the Margaret McMillan Nursery School at Deptford and report thereon. This was duly done and the Director was instructed to submit a report on the possibility of providing nursery classes at two existing infants' schools.<sup>33</sup>

Later in the year, a deputation from the TNSA was favourably received and, after being referred, an annual grant of £500 was promised on the new building being completed and providing accommodation for 100 children.<sup>34</sup> On this resolution being put to the Town Council however, it was not confirmed, narrowly it is true, but nevertheless, the school was left with the serious setback of finding its own finances.<sup>35</sup>

The principal objectors were Councillors Burden and Orton,

'... and although the request has been approved in principle it was referred to the Committee for further consultation and finally approved. Meanwhile Miss Ruth Dodds pointed out that for £250 the town was being made the gift of an open air nursery school and it would be a great mistake to turn it down...'<sup>36</sup>

Such phrases from the Moderate opposition as '...the proper place for a child was in his mother's arms' (Coun. Crankshaw). 'Good mothers should not be parted from their children, bad mothers should not be relieved of their responsibilities', led to heated argument as to what was good for the children of the rich, was what Labour Councillors wanted to provide for the children of the poor.

At the same Council Meeting the resolution to explore the possibility of a nursery school in one difficult area of the town (Grant Street) was voted on, and

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<sup>33</sup> GRL G.E.C.Min.303 (7.4.30) & Min.120 (4.12.30)

<sup>34</sup> GRL Report of Educ.Dev.Spec.Com. (5.12.30)

<sup>35</sup> GRL G.E.C. para.447 (7.1.31)

<sup>36</sup> GRL 'Nursery School Subsidy' Gateshead Herald (1929), editor Councillor Miss Ruth Dodds, member of National Union of Women's Suffrage, Independent Labour Party, Society of Friends and Pacifist. Her diary entry on 17th July in Callcott M. (1996) 'A Pilgrimage of Grace : The Diaries of Ruth Dodds 1905-1974' recorded 'Nursery School Committee – all seems to be going well so far'.

only the Mayor's casting vote kept the resolution. Alderman Wardill objected that...

'proposals of this sort simply meant taxing deserving, honest and industrious people for the benefit of the children of the undeserving and thriftless...'

The task of educating the adult populace regarding the needs of young children presented a long and uphill struggle. A hundred Gateshead women of the Independent Labour Party registered their public protest.<sup>37</sup> Their letter was 'received'.<sup>38</sup>

It would seem that consideration of re-organisation and the raising of the school leaving age were weighing heavily against developments of public provision of nursery schools or classes. It was reported that there were 2,321 children between 2 and 5 years of age (750 between 2 and 3 years of age and 1,571 between 3 and 5 years of age) in the Borough, who would benefit most from nursery schools or classes.<sup>39</sup>

During 1930 a scheme of re-organisation on the lines of the Hadow Report was adopted, designed to permit a better classification of the pupils and to provide fuller and better facilities for advanced and practical instruction for senior pupils of 11 years and upwards. The approximate total capital cost was estimated at £104,000. Obviously the time for launching new ventures like nursery schools was hardly opportune, and many schemes were halted with the limitations imposed in Circular 1413. The proposal for a nursery school in the Grant Street area went ahead, and the extra land required was earmarked. However a Board of Education embargo came in a letter stating that the proposal was...

'...not of sufficient urgency to justify progress in the present financial crisis. The strong (and costly) step of a deputation to the Board brought no further result and the nursery school and its site had to be 'not approved'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> GRL I.L.P. (Women) (2.2.31)

<sup>38</sup> GRL G.Educ.Comm.para.458 (4.3.31)

<sup>39</sup> GRL Rep. of M.O.H. to G.E.C. (Min 448, 1932)

<sup>40</sup> GRL G.E.C. (26.05.32)



Meanwhile a gift of £1,000 from Lady Astor and her son the Hon. William Astor had formed the basis of a building fund,<sup>41</sup> and with generous donations and hard work on the part of many of the members of the TNSA in money-making stunts, it became possible to start a more permanent building at Bensham Grove within the first two years.<sup>42</sup> This 'first phase' building, high-lighted in the plan(p.208), was opened by the Hon.William Astor on Wednesday, 11th November 1931 at 3 p.m. The school was able to offer accommodation for 55 children in an area where the pre-school population was 6,000, every one of whom could have benefited from the opportunity of attending a nursery school. This new venture had additional features of side verandahs and utilised the slope of the land to provide grassy banks and easy steps for out-door play.

At the opening an appeal was made for £200 to clear off the debt on the present building and for £70 for furnishings, (linoleum, furniture, apparatus, etc.) and it was hoped that someone would make a gift of a piano. The amount required to complete the second half of the building was £1,000 and there was a further appeal for subscribers towards the cost of maintenance.

The occasion for the opening of the Bensham Grove Nursery was indeed unique as being the first nursery school to be built on Tyneside. Local newspapers devoted considerable space in describing the event and reporting Mr. Astor's Speech :-

'...Although it sounds paradoxical '...'there is no truer economy than expenditure on Nursery Schools'.

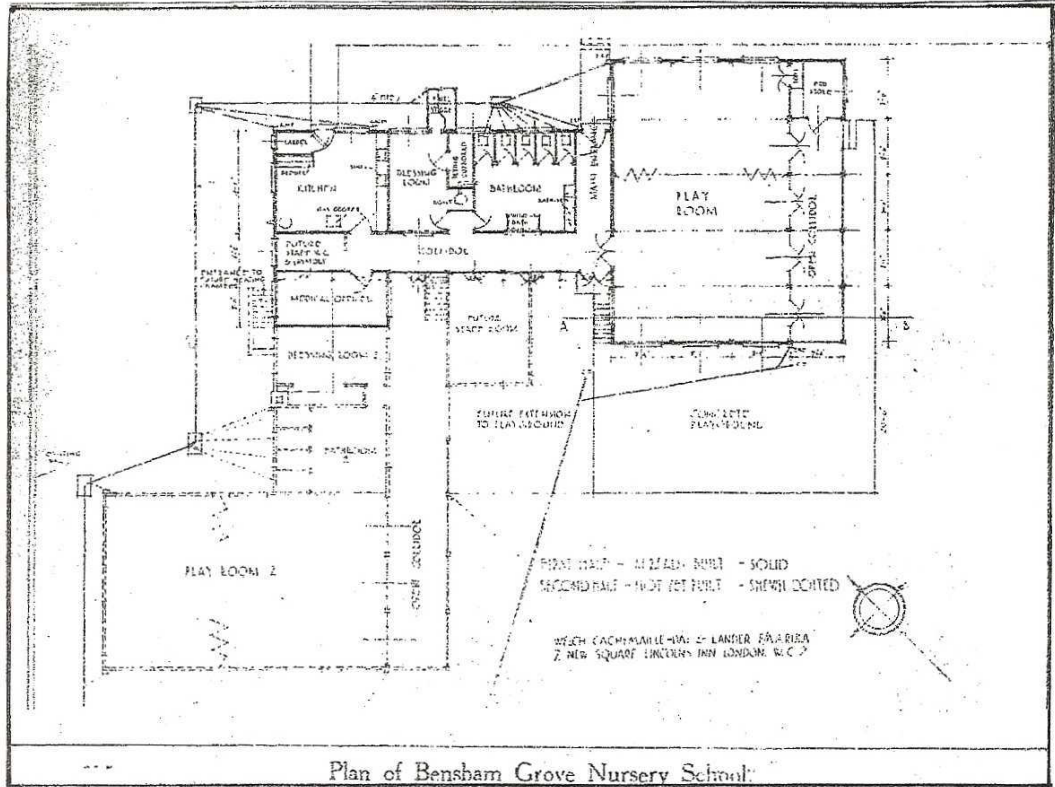
England loses in wages £100,000,000 a year through preventable sickness. That sickness is a charge on industry and increases indirectly the British cost of

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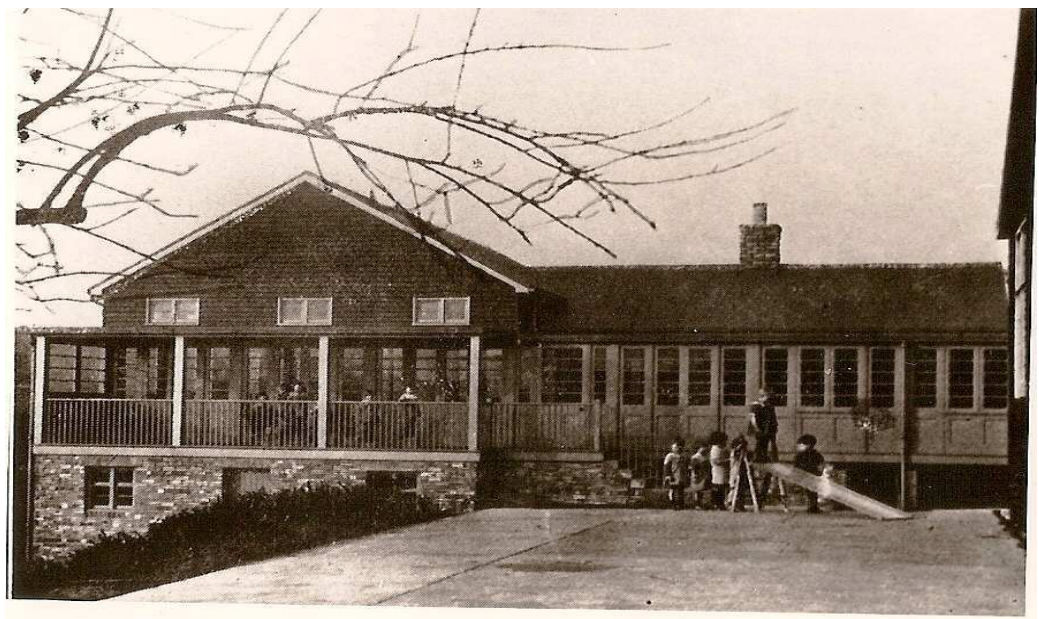
<sup>41</sup> GRL 'Nursery School Extension' report in Gateshead Herald (13.10.31)

<sup>42</sup> GRL B.G.Report and Balance Sheet y/e 31.12.31 'The Bensham Grove Nursery School ceased to occupy the Settlement Hall after Nov.1931 and entered a new tenancy with Settlement for the rental of a piece of land on which the new school was built and which was formerly used as allotment gardens...'

**Bensham Grove Nursery School**  
**(Plan of original building, 1931)**



**Bensham Grove Nursery School Gateshead.**  
**Second phase of the original building opened in December 1937**



production, which makes it difficult for our industry to regain the place it used to have in the world.

A large amount of preventable disease is caused by the fact that between the ages of one and five there is a gap in the medical attention which the ordinary child gets. Between 60% and 70% of the children who go into the elementary schools are suffering from some form of disease or minor ailment, which, if they had been dealt with earlier, could have been prevented.

It means that a large amount of money which we spend on education is wasted. The ratepayer is not getting value for money. Things are allowed to go on which should have been nipped in the bud.

It has been proved conclusively that nursery schools would prevent this enormous waste to the nation.

In the case of nursery schools, less than 10% of the children were susceptible to disease. This shows the immense medical value of these schools.

England will be faced for a long time by bad housing conditions. Nursery schools do not take the place of a parent; they only assist the parent in giving the children a scientific diet, fresh air, rest, proper exercise, medical attention, and expert care. If you meet anyone who doubts the value of a nursery school just ask them to go and see one...<sup>43</sup>

Endorsing this speech Professor Frank Smith sought to allay these doubts.

'The nursery school does not undermine the responsibility of the parents'....'It forges a link between the parents and the child's education...'<sup>44</sup>

The new school was visited on 26th April 1932 by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, on his 'Social Service Campaign' tour of Tyneside. By 1932, the waiting list numbered 65 and there was a growing demand for places. The children were selected for admission by the Superintendent, Miss Stewart, in consultation with the Medical Officer for Infant Welfare Centres, Health Visitors, and the Warden of the Settlement. Some cases were sent by the Children's Hospital and some by the NSPCC. The *health* of the child was the prime consideration but other home conditions were taken into account. Of the children on roll in 1932, thirteen were admitted because their mothers were working; four, because their parents were tubercular (several had invalid or delicate mothers), and 3 were motherless. Thirty three of the children's fathers were unemployed and many of these families lived under deplorable conditions - e.g. 7 in one room; 9 in two rooms.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> GRL Newcastle Journal, 12th November 1931 (Astor's speech)

<sup>44</sup> GRL Newcastle Journal, 12th November 1931 (Prof. Smith)

<sup>45</sup> GRL From Reports of M.O.H. Gateshead 1930/31/32

This sample was representative of the area. The children needed to get away from such appalling home conditions where eating, cooking, washing and drying of clothes, working, playing and sleeping were all going on (often at the same time) in one room. Mothers made heroic efforts to feed and clothe their children and to keep them clean, but many lost heart in despair. The medical care and inspection of the children was most diligently followed and during their period at Bensham Grove, the children gained in height and weight. Massage was given to malformed limbs and breathing exercises improved postural and nasal defects.

Arrangements were made whereby the Medical Inspection cards used at the nursery were to be sent on to the Education Authority as each child attained school age. In this way a complete medical record was established. The staff of the new school consisted of a qualified Superintendent, Miss I. Stewart (lately of the Rachel McMillan Nursery school, Deptford) who was paid on Burnham Scale, an unqualified assistant, Miss Donnelly, three probationers (girls 14-17) who received a training as nursing maids, and a cook who was also caretaker.

Dr. Gertrude Hickling, M.D.,<sup>46</sup> late M.O. for Nursery Schools in Manchester, was the Hon. Medical Officer and gave her time and services most generously. The children attended for 8 to 9 hours a day. Under the leadership of Miss Jowitt, the Settlement Warden, an informal mothers' group met weekly for sewing and discussion. At this group children's garments were made by 'cutting down', and utilising old material of all kinds. Thus a link was forged with the mothers of the children and at the same time much was done to raise hope in such days of despair in the lives of the children.

In 1931-32 the Bensham Grove School was recognised by the Bd. of Ed.

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<sup>46</sup> Dr. Hickling was also one of B.F.U.W. members responsible for founding the nursery school

for 55 children and a grant of £567.6s.0d. from the Board covered approximately one half of the running costs. The charge made to parents was 2/- per week per child to cover the cost of food. £300 had been raised annually by voluntary subscriptions - not an easy task for the promoters in a district where money was scarce. As £11 was recognised as the amount required per annum for each child in nursery school, it was reckoned that £5.10s. per child had to be found voluntarily. Thus an attractive form of social service for an individual or group was the raising annually of £5.10s to maintain a child at a nursery school.

Fourteen children were supported in this way during the year 1931/32 by local colleges and schools e.g.:

Beaconsfield School, Low Fell	1 child
Central High School, Junior School	1 child
Church High School, IVa	1 child
Heaton Girls' Sec. School	1 child
Newcastle Boys' Prep. School	1 child
Whitley Bay High School	1 child
Windsor Terrace Girls' School	2 children
Kenton Lodge Training College	3 children
Northern Counties School of Cookery	1 child
Sunderland Training College	1 child
Jesmond Presbyterian Ladies Guild	1 child

The first phase of the permanent building consisted of playground, play room, bathroom and cloakroom. These were to be duplicated in the second phase, whilst the kitchen, staff room and M.O's. room were to serve the whole school. The first playroom was lofty with floor to ceiling windows as well as clerestory windows above the verandah. An inner ceiling as well as the outer pitched roof, afforded protection from the extremes of heat and cold. The windows opening on to the verandahs ensured that there was maximum light and ventilation at all times. Coke stoves were installed temporarily for heating, but eventually central heating was planned. Gallons of hot water were available for washing, bathing and laundering of towels and face cloths. When Margaret

McMillan first saw the garden at Bensham Grove she said, 'This is an ideal site for a nursery school'. It stood at the top of a steeply sloping garden open to the sun and air, with wide views over the Team Valley. Unfortunately the slope presented difficulties in building, but these were adequately surmounted in the planning. (see photograph p.208)

The cost of the first part of the building was £1,628 and to complete the whole project a further £1,000 was needed. Gifts in the form of service, money and equipment were gratefully received, e.g. a piano was presented by two ladies from Sunderland. Mrs. Towb gave voluntary services as a masseuse; students of Kenton Lodge helped in the school; girls of the Church High School gave the Christmas party, whilst many individuals gave toys and books. The new school began to attract visitors who were all delighted with what they saw.

In the Fourth Annual Report 1932/33 is a reference to the visit of Mr. S.P.B. Mais<sup>47</sup> to the Unemployment Centres on Tyneside who in a subsequent broadcast said:-

'Another urgent problem is the children of the unemployed (three quarters of those on roll at Bensham Grove). By far the best sight at Bensham was that of 55 small infants wrapped in red blankets having their midday sleep in the nursery school. It costs 2/- a week per head to give them three meals a day and each child has its own comb and tooth brush. It is a tremendous achievement to have got even 55 of them away from the squalor of their homes, and to ensure them proper nutrition and fresh air every day'<sup>48</sup>

During the same week Mr. Howard Marshall<sup>49</sup> speaking about housing conditions on Tyneside said:-

'In Gateshead, too, I saw the Bensham Grove Nursery School where carefully planned buildings and under expert supervision tiny children are cared for in every way and it was wonderful to find them playing happily there, and to hear of the improvement in health which had taken place since they were given the chance of

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<sup>47</sup> S.P.B.Mais (1885-1975) – prolific writer and broadcaster - made practical suggestions for helping the unemployed such as allotments, open-air schemes and free postage for job applications

<sup>48</sup> TWAS BGNS 4th Annual Report, 1932-1933

<sup>49</sup> Howard Marshall (1900-1973) Journalist and BBC (outside) broadcaster

escaping from overcrowded, insanitary houses. Bensham Grove School is the sort of venture which deserves the widest recognition and support'<sup>50</sup>

On 16th November 1932, the School was inspected by H.M.I. Miss

Greaves from the Board of Education and Miss Hammond (Local Inspector).

Meanwhile the waiting list continued to grow and difficulty of selection was a perpetual headache. The following cases on the waiting list were typical:-

- Child of two and a half years; very poor and underdeveloped; family of 4 children; father a casual labourer; 2 rooms
- Child of two and a half years; baby nearly one year old; mother an invalid, frequently confined to bed
- Child of three years; losing weight; 2 older and 1 younger children in the family; living in 2 rooms at top of house, situated on a busy thoroughfare.
- Child of 2 years; very delicate; mother a widow; working ; 2 children at school
- Child of 3 years; very delicate; mother a widow; working; 2 children at school
- Child age two and half years; two older children; mother has heart trouble; and has to rest as much as possible.
- Child of 3 years ; very delicate; tubercular tendencies
- Child of three years; unable to walk ; weight under 21 lbs.; one room dwelling<sup>51</sup>

Of these children perhaps 2 or 3 could be accommodated but always first consideration was given to the health of the child and then to the background of home conditions.

In February 1933, a nursery school stall exhibited at the Newcastle Housing Exhibition. The central feature was a model of the Bensham Grove Nursery School made by the Bensham Grove Men's Club. Photographs were taken and presented by the Bambridge Art Studio; Rutherford Girls' School printed the notices and Armstrong College Art Department produced posters. Workers publicised the cause of nursery schools, attracting 3000 visitors to their display.

The work of raising money to pay half the running cost of the school was maintained, and during the year 1932/33 plans for future schools in the North East were publicised. Obviously some of the supporters of Bensham Grove would be

<sup>50</sup> TWAS BGNS 4th Annual Report, 1932-1933

<sup>51</sup> TWAS BGNS 4th Annual Report - Examples of needy (unnamed)children on the waiting list, 1932

interested in the new ventures and renewed efforts were foreseen to maintain their annual voluntary subscription. To add to the list of groups 'adopting' a child at Bensham Grove, the Gateshead Branch of the NUT elected to raise £5.10s. to support a child. Now fifteen places were supported by groups or individuals. One interesting form of help was the work carried out by the Unemployed Men's Club during the year. Under the direction of the Medical Officer, they repaired and altered children's shoes, repaired toys, maintained the garden as well as making the model for the Exhibition.

When the school was first opened in July 1929, the Gateshead Education Committee had agreed to appoint half the managing Committee of the school, thus making it eligible for recognition by the Board of Education, but during the year 1933/4 the constitution of the Managers Committee was amended so as to give a larger representation to Gateshead members. The number of Managers was increased to 20 ; 10 appointed by Gateshead Education Committee, 2 elected by members living in Gateshead; the Chairman and 2 other representatives of the TNSA ; 1 elected by the NE Branch of the Federation of University Women, and 1 to represent the Bensham Grove Settlement.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile the TNSA like its parent body the NSA, never lost an opportunity for pressing for *further expansion of nursery provision*. Reminders were sent to the LEAs following Government proposals.<sup>53</sup> One such letter dealt with the question of reserving sites for nursery schools in connection with slum clearance and re-housing proposals, and a letter from the NSA was sent to the Gateshead Education Committee (along with other LEAs) urging imminent action.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> GRL Gateshead Education Committee 27.6.33

<sup>53</sup> TWAS 1232/2 Letter from TNSA to Local Authorities

<sup>54</sup> TWAS CB/GA Letter from NSA, 11.4.35 to G.E.C (Children's Care Sub.Committee.22)



Certainly Gateshead Local Authority were *interested*, certainly there was a great need for nursery schools, but the heavy drain on the rates of Public Assistance, often amounting to half, meant that public spending had to be very carefully considered.<sup>55</sup>

At Easter 1934, Miss Stewart, the Superintendent, left to be married. She had been at the school for almost five years, having previously served under Margaret McMillan at her own nursery at Deptford. When Bensham Grove School was opened, Margaret McMillan had said, 'This pioneer school on Tyneside must have the best possible Superintendent' and Miss Stewart was appointed; by her personality and enthusiasm the choice had been fully justified.

Her successor was Miss M. Craven from Kay St. Nursery school, Bolton who remained at Bensham Grove until the 1960s. During the year, efforts to publicise the school and its activities continued. Open days were held in Gateshead Social Services Week and exhibitions and posters were seen by many visitors. An exhibition was also staged at Parrish's Stores, Byker, and good coverage was reported in the local newspapers. From the Medical Report we read :-

'The general health of the children has been good. The wonderful summer of 1933 enabled them to spend many hours in the garden, playing about in bathing costumes, and no doubt these prolonged, natural sunbaths produced an increased stamina which helped them to keep fit through the less favourable months. The average attendance has been high, 85%, although there were many absentees in December and January when children had to be excluded from school on account of infection in the home. Scarlet fever, Mumps, Measles, and German Measles have been unusually prevalent on Tyneside this winter, perhaps an index of a general lowering of resistance, the result of inadequate food and clothing, during an epoch of unprecedented depression. Several of our children

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<sup>55</sup> GRL - Tyneside Council of Social Service (Nov,1931);Tyneside Papers (Second Series) No.3. 'The Finance of Public Elementary Education' (Ernest Dyer) : Bensham Settlement's Appeal Booklet, (July1935) Rate levy 15/6 in the £, Public Assistance 8/- i.e. over 50%!!

contracted one or other infection, but almost all of these were from home sources, that is from an elder brother or sister.<sup>156</sup>

After five years the staff could see some reward for their labours. The children were responding to treatment, and an 'awareness' of standards of health and hygiene was being slowly infused into the homes...

'Even so epidemic diseases were still a menace. There was an epidemic of scarlet fever in 1933-35, and 149 children died of diphtheria between 1936 and 1946, whilst tuberculosis mortality remained high...'<sup>157</sup>

Yet it is interesting to note how habits almost amounting to superstition still prevailed at this time...

'... there are however, a few cases of persistently 'dirty' heads, which, though treated and cleansed at school, continually recur; these cases remain a real problem. Home conditions, ailing, overworked mothers account for some, but the foundation of the trouble, in my opinion, lies in the deeply rooted superstition that 'delicate children breed them', and that therefore, it is useless to go against nature and try to eradicate these uninvited guests. A tribute to the carefulness of the staff is that at no time has a complaint been made of a 'clean' head having become infected at school...'<sup>158</sup>

The finances of the year gave cause for further anxiety, but the situation was saved by the Mayor of Gateshead's grant of £100 from the proceeds of the Northern Command Tattoo, and by a special effort 'Holly Day'(22nd December) which raised £45/3s/7d. The fall in subscriptions would be partly accounted for by the opening of new nursery schools on Tyneside. During the year only 9 children were 'supported'. Gifts of jam, fruit, eggs, clothing, and toys from numerous donors all helped to defray expenses of the school.

The waiting list continued to grow as parents and visitors gave evidence of the benefits of the period in the nursery school. In September 1935, children over 4 years of age were removed from the list as they would reach school age before their turn came. The list still contained 102 names. After careful discussion

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<sup>56</sup> GRL BGNS 5th Annual Report, Medical Report 1933/34, Bensham Grove Nursery School Medical Officer, Dr.Hickling

<sup>57</sup> Manders F.W.D. (1975) pp 187-188

<sup>58</sup> GRL Gateshead SMO Annual Report 1933/34

the managers decided that for the next 12 months no child over two years of age should be added to the list except under special circumstances.

'Every week, many parents visit the Superintendent, hoping 'to get their children in'...mothers and fathers with problems arising from lack of knowledge, ill-health, bad housing conditions, poverty and unemployment, or maybe some psychological maladjustment. Most parents are anxious to give their children the best possible chance in life. Unfortunately many lack both means and skill, and all need guidance. The completion of the school (when it is achieved) will provide for another 55 children whose needs cannot be met today'.<sup>59</sup>

The mothers were given instruction in sewing and repairing of clothes and the medical officer reported:-

'That the instruction given is bearing fruit is shown by the improved clothing of the children, though in a few cases it is still necessary to strip off layer after layer from the chest, before bedrock is reached, yet the majority show that the mothers are beginning to realise that clothing must be loose, light, warm and evenly distributed....' . 'Deficient footwear is all too common... sandals although universally condemned for constant wear, remain much in evidence being the only type of shoe obtainable for 1/- ...

Gifts of children's shoes, outgrown but repairable, are urgently needed, and warm socks are in constant demand. It is wrong that the good done by massage and remedial exercise should be undone by the wearing of faulty shoes and shrunken socks.

A considerable proportion of the Superintendent's time each morning is taken up by attending to minor ailments, sore eyes, running ears, cuts, abrasions, chilblains, etc. and the service of a skilled VAD worker for an hour daily would be a great help...<sup>60</sup>

As for the financial side of the venture, during the year 1933/34 there were renewed worries. Contributions fell by £32 and for the first time the year ended with a deficit of £64.5s.7d.<sup>61</sup>

Only 12 children were supported during the year, some of the groups having lapsed. A newcomer was the Gateshead Inner Wheel which undertook to support 1 child. Meanwhile the waiting list continued to grow and always had over 60 names of needy children. Some children in Gateshead were unable to benefit from the nursery school, as the selectors had to choose children whose parents

<sup>59</sup> GRL BGNS 6th Annual Report 1935/36

<sup>60</sup> GRL BGNS Report of Medical Officer 1933/34

<sup>61</sup> GRL BGNS 6th Annual Report p.6

would co-operate and send the children regularly and for a sufficient length of time. It was not unusual for large numbers of 5 year olds in deplorable conditions to be admitted to the neighbouring infants' school - children of shiftless parents, who never remained long at one address and whose standards had sunk so low, that they did not care enough about their young to do something positive. Some problem families, known to every social worker seemed to evade all attempts to help them. However one positive feature was the fact that ...

‘...Gateshead had by 1935 built a total of about 2,300 council houses, and this enabled the borough to eliminate or diminish some of the older slums which had come to possess wide notoriety stretching back for many years...’<sup>62</sup>

During 1934/35 the services of a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD)<sup>63</sup> Worker were gratefully received. Miss Hawthorn, Warden of the University Women's Hostel, formed a rota of helpers, thus relieving the Superintendent of minor medical tasks. A 'Jungle Gym' was provided by an anonymous donor and became the means of highly valuable remedial treatment of physical deformity, as well as a source of joy and delight to every child. The thriving Mothers' Club helped to unite home and school, and to 'educate' the mothers to the needs of the children, as well as providing a cheap form of social gathering. At their meetings the following

lectures were given:-

- Dr. Hickling                      Children's Ailments
- Miss R. Dodds                    Lantern Lecture on 'Nursery schools'
- Mrs. Vaughan                    The Dagenham Nursery School
- Mrs. Hall                            Child Education
- Mrs. Richardson                Bensham Settlement a generation ago
- Miss Morris                        Milk Marketing Board
- Mrs Havelock                    Training to be a Hospital Nurse
- Miss Jowitt                        Child Instinct
- Miss Hand                         Welbeck Nursery School
- Miss Coates                       YWCA work abroad
- Mrs Towb                          Feeding of Young Children<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> McCord N. (1979) p.251 ; Municipal Government Centenary, County Borough of Gateshead, 1935, p.21

<sup>63</sup> VADs were formed in 1909 to provide medical assistance in wartime and were affiliated to work with the Red Cross. One of the most famous VADs was Vera Brittain (mother of Shirley Williams) see 'A Testament of Youth'. In peace time VADs assisted in various charitable initiatives.

<sup>64</sup> GRL BGNS Annual Report 1934/35

.... all very helpful instruction, and relevant directly or indirectly, to the children's well-being. There were also social activities, outings, concerts, visits to other Nursery School Mothers' Clubs, knitting and cake-making competitions, as well as numerous efforts to make money for various items needed in the nursery school (e.g. in this particular year overalls for the children and oilcloth {i.e. linoleum} for the nursery school kitchen)

But money was also needed for the major work of completing the original plan for the school which was to accommodate 110 children in two large playrooms clearly discerned in the photographs on p.208. The first, for 55, had opened in 1931, but funds had never been available to complete the building. With the increasing number of unemployed in the area, and its repercussions throughout the whole of the district, there was very little money to spare anywhere. The waiting list had always been long, and in the mid-thirties movement of population, due to slum clearance, accentuated the demand for more places at the BGNS.

The Medical Officer of Health for Gateshead reported very favourably on behalf of the school:-

'....It would be a good thing if a nursery school could be built with each large housing estate for the transference of people from the slum clearance areas. These schools do a tremendous amount of good and fill a long needed want in the lives of the small children before ordinary school age...'

...and in the introduction to the Mayor, Alderman and Councillors of the Borough of Gateshead, the new MOH, Dr. James Grant, said:-

'... in the first place I must assert my opinion that I am not aware of any areas where the people have been affected more severely by economic distress or have suffered longer. The result is to be seen in both public and private impoverishment of the town.'<sup>65</sup>

The unemployment statistics for Gateshead were among the highest in the

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<sup>65</sup> GRL Report of MOH 1936

country.<sup>66</sup> In April 1936 a Royal Commission on Tyneside met, and among those giving evidence were some of the Councillors: Coun. Fergie Foster reminded the Commissioner (Capt. Euan Wallace)...

'Tyneside is only part of the problem of the distressed areas but there is more than a suspicion that the Royal Commission, like the Commissioner for Special Areas is little more than another Government expedient to keep us quiet and distract our attention, by making a show of doing something while actually postponing effective action indefinitely'.<sup>67</sup>

The Managers of the Nursery School were a little more hopeful and applied to the Commissioner for financial help. In the meantime a generous donation of £262.12s.3d. was given by Mrs. M. M. Douthwaite in memory of her son Robert Hugh. A request for financial help was made to the Education Committee<sup>68</sup> and a grant of £150 per year was to be made from 1st April 1936 and to be increased to £300 when the plans for doubling the accommodation were carried out.<sup>69</sup>

The Treasurer, Mr. H. B. Halford, made special efforts to encourage the custom of 'adopting' a child for annual maintenance at the school by circulating among schools. During the year 1935/36, 18 children were supported in this way. In addition to the regular support previously listed were:-

Blackheath High School for Girls, London	3 children
Hordle House School	1 child
Mill Hill School, London	2 children
Whitley and Monkseaton High school for Girls	1 child

It is interesting to note support from schools in the south of England. A growing concern was discerned beyond the North East, for the great need for

<sup>66</sup> Unemployment Statistics in Gateshead

Wholly unemployed

Dec. 1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
8,091	9,646	10,736	10,137	9,880	9,541	6,028

Short time

Dec. 1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
1,692	1,248	1,745	1,073	1,179	904	676

<sup>67</sup> GRL Gateshead Herald, April, 1936

<sup>68</sup> GRL Gateshead Educ. Comm. 29.11.35, Min.16g

<sup>69</sup> GRL GEC 27.1.36; GTC, 5.2.36 (para.562)

decent food, clothing and environment for children during the depression.

Overcrowding was yet another problem to hamper the lives of young children.

A report published in July 1936 as required by the Housing Act 1935, showed that the total number of families in 2 rooms were 6,190 and of these 2,239 were overcrowded (36.2%). Of the 1,529 families who lived in one room, 508 were overcrowded (35.2%). Of all families in Gateshead (29,511), 3,934 lived in conditions of overcrowding, (13.3%).<sup>70</sup>

Help was sorely needed.

During the following year the Commissioner for Special Areas responded to the request for help by granting 75% towards the extension of the nursery school and so a start was made on the second phase of the building.

Meanwhile the excellent day-to-day work of the nursery school continued. The children were cared for, 'nurtured', fed, bathed and played with, so that those who left at five could hardly be recognised as the delicate, undernourished admissions of two years previously. In the Medical Officer's Report is indication that the mothers were stimulated by the standards of the nursery school to make efforts on behalf of the children:-

'An improvement in personal cleanliness is gladly recorded, dirty heads being rarely met with. Clothing too shows improvement, the mothers readily adopting suggestions made to them. In some cases, however, poverty prevents adequate clothes being provided and footwear still leaves much to be desired. Gifts of out-grown shoes and socks, as well as worn jerseys and knickers, are urgently needed. Year after year this particular appeal is made but the response is never adequate. May we once more beg the mothers of more fortunate toddlers to remember these others.'<sup>71</sup>

Following the withdrawal of restrictions on capital expenditure<sup>72</sup> letters urging further nursery expansion were received from the TNSA and the National

<sup>70</sup> These figures were calculated on a low standard where the kitchen and living room were included in the number of rooms for sleeping. Had the recommendations of Sec.37 (Housing Act, 1930) been adopted where living rooms were not counted as sleeping accommodation, these figures would have been trebled.

<sup>71</sup> GRL BGNS (1937) Report of Medical Officer, Dr. Hickling, 1936/37

<sup>72</sup> TWAS CB/GA Bd.of.Ed. Circ.1413 (1936) Admin.memo135

Council of Women.<sup>73</sup> The LEA were in full agreement with the proposals and advantages of nursery education as outlined in Circ.1444 and it was resolved that the Director and School Medical Officer should prepare and submit a report on the possibilities and estimated cost of provision of nursery classes in schools and of nursery schools.<sup>74</sup>

The Medical Officer of Health again urged the nursery expansion:-

‘ These schools do a great deal of good and the work might be usefully extended in this Borough, so that the children being moved from slum clearance areas to the new estates might be able to attend a nursery school included in the new estate’<sup>75</sup>

In July 1937, H.R.H. Duke of Kent visited the nursery school and in the following December the new extension was declared open by Councillor T. Armstrong, J.P. (Chairman of the Managers’ Committee), supported by the Mayor of Gateshead, Alderman J. Pickering. Unfortunately in spite of overwhelming demand, the Managers did not feel justified in bringing the extension into use straight away, owing to the increasing cost involved (running expenses, e.g. heating, lighting, salaries of extra staff).

It was decided therefore to apply to the LEA for a further special grant for one year, to enable them to admit the other fifty children. This was sanctioned as from 1st April 1938,<sup>76</sup> on condition that the Director of Education be given supervisory powers over the school – a request willingly agreed to!

The work of the school towards improving the lot of the under-fives continued and it became more and more obvious that greater efforts to cover a wider section of the population were needed. Continuous unemployment, or under-employment had cumulative effects on the children attending the nursery;

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<sup>73</sup> GRL G.E.C.(27.1.36)

<sup>74</sup> GRL G.E.C.(2.10.36) (Chdn. Comm.,556)

<sup>75</sup> GRL Report of M.O.H.1938

<sup>76</sup> G.E.C. Min. 285, 1938



75% of their fathers were unemployed or on short time. Of those employed, the wages they earned were very low, and so the children were inadequately fed.<sup>77</sup> There was much to be done, and those employed at Bensham Grove during the pre-war years gave unstinted conscientious service.

However towards the end of 1938, when it was obvious that the finances of the school were insufficient to carry on, the Managers' Committee of the BGNS again approached the LEA to see under what conditions they would be prepared to accept control and management. They suggested that the building, furniture and equipment should be transferred without charge to the latter, and the estimated cost of running the school (which would fall on the rates) would be £650 as against £125 p.a.(i.e. half the present grant made by the Education Authority to the Managers).<sup>78</sup>

The Town Council resolved that they were *prepared to take over* management and maintenance from 1st April 1939, subject to approval of the Government Department concerned, retaining the staff in the same conditions of service, and subject to satisfactory arrangements being made with the lessors of the site, if the freehold was not obtainable. Thus a formal letter was received from the Hon.Treasurer, Mr. H .B. Halford:-<sup>79</sup>

Bensham Grove Nursery School

'At a special meeting of the Management Committee of the above School, held this evening, it was unanimously resolved that an application be made to the LEA to take over the School in its entirety, i.e. Structure, Equipment and Management as from 1st April 1939 as the Committee feel that they cannot continue to function after that date. The first half of the School was completed in 1931 at a cost of £1,840 and the second half was completed in 1937, at £2,145. A grant towards the cost of the second half of the building and equipment was received from the Commissioner for Special Areas amounting to £1,611 and I am

<sup>77</sup> GRL From survey by Dr. James Spence, and Report in Gateshead Herald, Feb.1937

<sup>78</sup> GRL G.T.C., (12.10.38), para.181

<sup>79</sup> GRL G.T.C., para.732, letter dated 12.10.38, para.181

informed by the Commissioners that if the school is transferred to the LEA the Commissioners will require repayment of a sum amounting to £1,500.<sup>80</sup> The Managers Committee have no funds out of which to pay this part of the amount and they trust therefore, having regard to the value of assets, which they are willing to transfer, that your Committee will be willing to pay the amount of the refund.<sup>81</sup>

An interview was granted to the Director, Councillors Flynn and Orton with officers of the Board of Education on 31st January 1939 to discuss proposals and the following was reported:

'The Board of Education has intimated that it is prepared to approve the purchase of the property by the LEA for the sum equivalent to the amount which the Commissioners required from the Voluntary Committee as a refund of its grant and that a report from the District Valuer will not be asked for in this particular case'.<sup>82</sup>

Thus the Town Council resolved:-

- to acquire the Bensham Grove Nursery School and pay the Managers £1,500
- that the capital cost of £1,500 be met out of the revenue subject to the consent of the Town Council and the Board of Education
- that the Education estimates for 1939/40 be amended :-
  - 1) to include £1,500 expenditure and £750 Board of Education grant on capital cost and
  - 2) for maintenance, substitute £1,450 in place of £650 expenditure, add £150 for receipts from parents, and substitute £650 Board of Education grant in place of £325.

The proposed arrangements re tenure and rent were :-

- Tenure – full repairing lease of 21 years and thereafter upon a yearly lease.
- Rent - £25 p.a.

The condition of transfer was, that if at any time, or for any reason, the Education Committee were not in a position or were not prepared to carry on the School as a nursery school, the TNSA or other such body as might be named by the present trustees be given the option of taking back the School and furniture and equipment equal to that at present in the school.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> GRL GTC Chdns. Care Sub Committee, (23.1.39) (137) re letter from Bd. of Ed.(4.1.39)

<sup>81</sup> GRL Letter (12.10.38), Bensham Grove Nursery School Managers to Gateshead Educ. Comm.

<sup>82</sup> GRL Letter from Bd. of Ed., (24.4.39) to BGNS No.1816m 1816/68 'Arrangements approved and will take into account for grant the sum of £1,500 to be refunded to the Nursery School. They have no objection to the Authority's proposal to meet this expenditure out of revenue'. K.W.Elliott

<sup>83</sup> GRL GEC (3.9.38) 516

Thus the nursery school came under the Local Authority from 1st April 1939, but by this time rumours of war were prevalent and schemes of evacuation and its problems were being assessed. As part of the Government Scheme (General Evacuation) the Director of Education reported:

‘ that on investigation it was found that there was an appreciable body of children who were unsuitable (by physical or mental defect) for evacuation to normal households and whose parents have requested their evacuation.’<sup>84</sup>

The Director was instructed to go fully into the question of providing hostel accommodation. In 1939 at the outbreak of war, the school was closed and in 1940, the ‘shadow’ nursery was evacuated to Spennymoor, a small town about five miles south west of Durham City, which was a ‘safe’ area. At the Spennymoor Settlement, Miss Craven was able to establish a nursery group using equipment borrowed from Bensham Grove. However even ‘as early as 1936 the Settlement had played host to a touring exhibition organised partly by the NSA.’<sup>85</sup>

Meanwhile back in Gateshead, the LEA were investigating the possibility of re-opening the nursery school as soon as adequate air raid shelters could be built. Professor Brian Stanley suggested to the MOH that, in view of the suspension of the nursery school at Bensham, a day nursery should be substituted, but the MOH stated that there appeared to be no demand for a day nursery in the Borough.<sup>86</sup> A letter had also been received from the General Secretary of the National Society of Day Nurseries submitting a scheme for consideration by LEAs for the provision of day nurseries for children of mothers engaged in war work,<sup>87</sup> but no action was taken on either of these suggestions.

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<sup>84</sup> GEC June 1939 (para.375)

<sup>85</sup> McManners R. & Wales G. (2008) ‘Way to the Better : the Spennymoor Settlement’ p.29 (the Local Authority had been reluctant to venture into nursery provision at Spennymoor)

<sup>86</sup> GRL GTC Health Com. (12.4.40) para.1606

<sup>87</sup> GRL G.TC.Mand CW Com. (21.5.40) & para.1146 (5.6.40)

Towards the end of 1940, the Borough Surveyor submitted plans for air-raid shelters for 100 children at Bensham Grove.<sup>88</sup> These would have to be placed in the grounds, and difficulties arose as available free space would be severely restricted. The Primary School Emergency Committee pointed out that no request had been received from parents for the re-opening of the school and considered that the question of bringing children of this tender age into school was a matter which called for very careful examination.

As there was some uncertainty, it was resolved that further consideration be given, and the views of the M&CW and the BGNS Committees be sought. In the interim a Mrs. Treloar of 27, Watt Street, Bensham sent a letter to the Education Committee<sup>89</sup> containing a list of children whose parents were willing for them to attend the nursery school and consequently instructions were given for two air-raid shelters to be constructed as soon as possible. One of these was to be fitted with bunks for the younger children and the older children were to have standard equipment.<sup>90</sup>

The Trustees of BGNS were willing to allow the shelters in the grounds of the house on condition that they were to be removed after the war (if asked), they were to pay a token rent of 10/- p.a., and that the agreement was drawn up between the Trustees and the LEA.

The school was re-opened in November 1941. By July 1942, the full number of children had been admitted, and the school was back to its pre-war routine. Among its extra mural activities was the re-instating of the Mothers' club. By the end of the war, the nursery school was always full and there was a waiting list of fifty. The activities of the Mothers' Club included health and educational films, as

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<sup>88</sup> GRL GEC (13.12.40).52a, Air Raid Shelters

<sup>89</sup> GRL GEC (Elementary) 17.1.41 (95)

<sup>90</sup> TWAS CB/GA GEC (Emergency) 132 c

well as practical activities such as toy-making and mending, and special treats, such as sweets and painted eggs for the children - rare in war-time.

The expansion of wartime emergency measures in Gateshead, along with the other case studies, also reflected the national pattern. A report was drawn up<sup>91</sup> and submitted to various departments concerned with a view to providing nursery classes in the following schools, Harlow Green, Wrekenton, Brighton Avenue, Rose Street, St.Joan of Arc, High West Street, Askew Road and Prior Street for not more than 30 pupils each, and applications were made for pre-fabricated huts for this purpose. However in a letter<sup>92</sup> the Regional Officer of the Ministry of Health pointed out that there was a general embargo on all new building work and so matters were delayed. Nursery classes were later started at Prior Street and Brighton Avenue, and the administration and management were controlled by the Primary Education Sub-Committee.<sup>93</sup> The general conditions of nursery classes approximated to the infants' school, including the hours of opening, staffing, salaries etc. and a report by H.M.I. Miss Thomas, was extremely favourable.<sup>94</sup>

At this time however, subject to reduction of playground accommodation, Miss Thomas suggested that the number of children on roll at BGNS should be reduced from 95 to 90. Staffing difficulties (particularly of assistants and ancillaries) was also a great problem but this was common in all nurseries, and the Committee resolved to remedy this as soon as possible.<sup>95</sup>

Meanwhile in 1941, following the receipt of the 'War-time Nurseries Circulars',<sup>96</sup> the MOH had reported on the measures which would have to be taken

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<sup>91</sup> GRL GEC (10.7.41) (391)

<sup>92</sup> GRL GEC (3.5.43) 285

<sup>93</sup> GRL GEC (12.12.43) 117

<sup>94</sup> GRL GEC (5.5.44) 481a

<sup>95</sup> GRL GEC (8.9.44) 533

<sup>96</sup> See Chap.5

to put the recommendations contained in the circulars into effect and a Special Joint (Wartime Nurseries) Sub-Committee was set up composed of members of Health, Education and Public Assistance Committees. The P.A. Officer had reported that there were 30 children under 3 in one of the sick wards at the Hospital and suggested his Committee might obtain suitable buildings to accommodate these children and also to meet the requirements of a war-time nursery. The MOH suggested that at least 4 centres would be necessary in different parts of the Borough and various suitable premises were put forward for consideration.

One of these was Holy Trinity Vicarage, Durham Road. This was surveyed by the Borough Surveyor,<sup>97</sup> and an estimate for adaptation at a cost of £600, was put forward. It was to be used for accommodation for children from Bensham Hospital and High Teams Institution. Forty children were to be admitted and the staff to include Matron, Deputy Matron, Teacher and 2 trained nursery assistants.<sup>98</sup> The nursery became affiliated to the National Society of Day Nurseries so that probationary nurses could receive a certificate on completion of their training.

In December 1942 a Joint Circular<sup>99</sup> stressed that the utmost priority should be given for the provision of war-time nurseries and it was resolved<sup>100</sup> to set up a Joint Committee of 10 members (5 M&CW and 5 Educ.) to deal expeditiously with provision of war-time nurseries or nursery classes. At a special meeting in March 1942,<sup>101</sup> it was resolved to make 40 additional places at Bensham Settlement for

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<sup>97</sup> GRL GTC (24.9.41),143 (6)

<sup>98</sup> GRL GTC (10.11.41) 159 (29)

<sup>99</sup> TWAS Min of Health (2535) & Min. of Ed. (1573) - also Chap.5

<sup>100</sup> GRL GTC (16.12.41). para 34-394

<sup>101</sup> GRL GTC Mat.& Ed. Sub. Committee (para.930)

children of women war-workers, the additional cost to be met by the Ministry of Health. Toys and Occupational Equipment were to be obtained from the Nursery School Association as recommended.<sup>102</sup> Staffing proved a further problem and full-time teachers could not be obtained. A warden was appointed, trained under the Child Care Reserve course and later such persons were put in charge of the new nursery classes at Prior Street and Brighton Avenue.<sup>103</sup>

During 1944, further Circulars<sup>104</sup> urging the establishment of nursery classes in existing schools were received from the Ministries but after the cessation of hostilities, as no further provision had been made, the wartime nursery class buildings at Prior Street and Brighton Avenue were transferred to the Education Committee for nursery school purposes.<sup>105</sup> As in the nursery school, priority for admission was given to children whose mothers were employed or in ill-health, or for delicate children or those who had behavioural problems. Very good work was accomplished in the nursery classes and schools for the under-fives in Gateshead. The MOH reported:

'New generations of children pass constantly through our hands and even if we sometimes have difficulty in obtaining nursery school teachers, there is never a shortage of pupils. Our waiting list is never less than 70 and often considerably more than this, in spite of the fact that we have no children under 2 years of age on the list'.<sup>106</sup>

Her analysis of the reasons for mothers wanting their children to attend were that there were no places to play except the street and back lanes ; there were crowded rooms with five or six children and parents all in one room ; streets were dangerous because of traffic ; there were difficult children and mothers were at work.

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<sup>102</sup> TWAS Min. of Health Circ. (30.9.42) 189 also Chap.5

<sup>103</sup> GRL GTC (7.4.43) para.844

<sup>104</sup> GRL GTC (24.11.44) min.40, re-Min.of Health Circ.166 & Min.of Ed.Circ.16

<sup>105</sup> GRL GEC Memo (29.3.45)

<sup>106</sup> GRL GTC MOH Annual Report (1945)

The improvement in children attending the nursery school and classes was spectacular – especially those at Prior Street which drew on an extremely poor housing area without gardens or parks. Equally remarkable was the mental improvement when children were able to play in the open air with other children of the same age, where before admission, they could not be allowed into the streets for fear of traffic.

With the cessation of hostilities the question of the administration of the ‘war-time’ nurseries had to be settled. The Joint Sub-Committee(M&CW and Educ.) met<sup>107</sup> to consider the Ministry Circular<sup>108</sup> and the Director was able to put forward a proposal to take over the three venues of provision as nursery schools.<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile the nurseries were to remain under the Ministry of Health as war-time nurseries until 31.3.47,<sup>110</sup> whilst estimates for conversion were carried through. In 1947 the Director reported on the Estimates 1946/47 that :-

‘in taking over the Education accounts of the nursery classes at Brighton Avenue and Prior Street, the following charges not provided for in the estimates would accrue against the Education account:-

- Purchase of buildings (figure not yet known)
- Maintenance Costs (est.at £2,000 p.a.)<sup>111</sup>

That Gateshead Education Committee decided to go ahead with the take-over is most praiseworthy. In fact this was the period in the history of the provision of nursery education throughout the country, when many opportunities were lost. Those who pioneered with the NSA saw the chance of wide spread expansion slip through the fingers of the LEAs who spent money on other priorities - and indeed with the urgency of rebuilding of schools lost or damaged by bombing and the

<sup>107</sup> GRL Rep. of M&CW & Ed.Com. (28.2.46)

<sup>108</sup> TWAS Ministry Circ. (4.12.45) - also Chap.5

<sup>109</sup> GRL GTC (5.3.46) min.360

<sup>110</sup> GRL GTC (25.3.46) min.387

<sup>111</sup> GRL GEC (4.7.46) min.554



need looming ahead for more school places for children of statutory school age born in the bulge years of 1946 and 1947, one cannot be too harsh in criticism. Nevertheless, it was very sad that many of the war-time nurseries were literally 'abandoned'.

As well as taking over the nursery school and classes, Gateshead Education Committee also attempted, in 1947, to acquire further land at Dryden Park for a nursery school. One of the conditions of take-over however was that the numbers of children at Prior Street and Brighton Avenue should be reduced to 15 per room.<sup>112</sup> This seemed harsh at a time when the total waiting list for the 3 schools was about 200 names. Priority continued to be given for necessitous cases - children living in cramped conditions and children whose parents were ill, divorced etc. In the meantime, the nursery school daily routine continued to provide for the fortunate few.

However in September 1951, a disaster occurred when the BGNS was destroyed by fire. As far as the school was concerned, no part of the building was serviceable, and accommodation was made for 20 of the most necessitous cases in the Settlement, in two rooms which opened on to the garden. Lavatories and cloakrooms had to be adapted for the children and a hut was erected in the grounds for the rest period. All the apparatus had been destroyed, and gifts were received from surrounding centres. Meals were now delivered from the School Meals Department as there were no kitchen facilities, but in spite of all difficulties the school speedily made its readjustments.<sup>113</sup>

The history of the rebuilding of BGNS is almost as involved as its original foundation. In 1952 the Borough Treasurer received a cheque for £4,700 from

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<sup>112</sup> GRL GEC (12.3.47) min.263 re-min.683, (July 1946)

<sup>113</sup> GRL GTC pp.28,29 (1951) & Rep.of Direc. to GEC (24.8.51)

the Manchester Mutual Insurance Co. in respect of the total loss of the building and contents, and it was resolved that in accordance with provisions of the Development Plan, a three unit nursery school should be erected in the place of the BGNS, and it was agreed to submit proposals to the Ministry of Education for approval.<sup>114</sup>

In 1953, the School Managers were wondering how much longer the school would have to be housed in the Community Centre and instructed the Director to explore the possibility of erecting a pre-fabricated building on the site.<sup>115</sup> Yet again financial restrictions and growing costs of construction delayed the work.

By 1954, the possibility of rebuilding by instalments was being considered.<sup>116</sup> If Ministry approval could be obtained this could be included as a minor works project in view of the limit of £7,000 imposed by the Ministry on the value of any single undertaking. In addition there would be the money from the insurance.

A letter was received from the Ministry giving approval of a single unit nursery school for 40 pupils provided that the cost did not exceed £10,000.<sup>117</sup> By the time the plans were submitted the permission for building was withheld. In 1959, a letter from the Ministry of Education requested details of minor works not exceeding £20,000 to be submitted for the minor works programme 1960-61.<sup>118</sup> BGNS was to be included, and approval was granted.<sup>119</sup>

At a special meeting<sup>120</sup> it was suggested that priority be given to the school.

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<sup>114</sup> GRL GEC 4.1.52, (min.347)

<sup>115</sup> GRL GEC School Managers Sub-Comm.,12.2.53 (min 389)

<sup>116</sup> GRL GEC 20.2.54 (min 382 re-min.389)

<sup>117</sup> GRL GEC 4.4.55 (min.556)

<sup>118</sup> GRL GEC 11.9.58 (min.173)

<sup>119</sup> GRL GEC 11.12.59, (min.310)

<sup>120</sup> GRL GEC 25.1.60 (Special meeting)

**The new Bensham Grove Nursery School built in 1961 following the disastrous fire 10 years previously**



An estimate from the Borough Surveyor for proposed plans was given as £15,000 with the addition of £1,500 for clearing the site and repainting the boundary wall. The lowest tender £16,191.2s.5d. by Middleton & Co. (Sunderland) was accepted.<sup>121</sup> Thus the school was rebuilt during 1961 and officially opened in 1962, *nine* years after the fire, on the site of the original building in the grounds of the Bensham Settlement, with the panoramic view of the Team Valley (by now with its Trading Estate) and industrial developments on the Tyne at Stella and Blaydon - certainly a more prosperous and virile vista, if less sylvan than the day when Margaret McMillan visited in 1929!

By the end of this study the nursery was continuing in the spirit of its founders in the care and nurture of the under-fives of the Bensham District of Gateshead. Social deprivation which had stimulated the Federation of University Women to establish a nursery school in Gateshead was widespread on Tyneside.

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<sup>121</sup> GRL GEC 9.6.61.(min.65)

Gateshead, the industrial town - 'Cinderella' to Newcastle - had its full quota of squalor, due to industrial development, poor housing, overcrowding and ill-health.

That the Settlement became its home was probably due to two factors ; the Warden, Miss Jowitt was a member of the British Federation of University Women and of the Society of Friends ; the Settlement was concerned with pioneering in social work, and was already the home of an Infant Welfare Centre.

Conditions in Gateshead had worsened during the depression and were largely dependent on outside help. Although the first phase building was financed by £1,000 donation from Lady Astor, and the second phase by a grant from the Commissioner for Special Areas, the Managers and Local Committee worked very hard to meet the additional costs. In Gateshead, money was always scarce, but there were always needy under-fives in abundance.

The school finally came under the LEA on 1st April 1939, and with all the interim provision and measures only settled down to normal routines after WW2. Post-war catastrophes added to the difficulties but by the mid-1960s the school was able to resume its full role of care and nurture for the 'forgotten' under-fives!

By contrast the following study demonstrates that the need for nursery school provision was not only in municipal areas, as the establishment of a nursery school during the 1930s 'Depression' in a deprived village of County Durham will illustrate.

### **(3) New Brancepeth Nursery school, Durham County, 1938**

New Brancepeth is a small mining village, situated about four miles west of Durham City. During the decade immediately preceding the Second World War, the village, whose inhabitants were mostly employed at the local colliery, sank to the lowest depths of poverty and despair, due to the social evils which accompanied widespread unemployment. The establishment of a nursery school in the village during the depression of the 1930s marks yet another source of provision quite different from Darlington and Bensham Grove.

As sociological studies of mining villages have shown, there is a distinctive pattern in the mining communities ‘...with ties of kinship, residence and friendship...’<sup>1</sup> which perhaps intensified the problems of unemployment. J. B. Priestley observed...’the mining communities are remote, hidden away, mysterious...’<sup>2</sup> for the only work available in the village was at the local mine and coke ovens and there was no opportunity for work elsewhere. In the mid-thirties the through-road to New Brancepeth was still unmetalled, which tended to add to its isolation, quite different from the areas of congestion in Gateshead and Darlington!

Miners’ wives rarely took work outside the home, as they had to be on hand in case of serious accident to the husband and also to heat water for baths, for even in 1938 most had no hot water or bathrooms. The majority of homes were clean and well furnished, but lacked hygienic facilities and privacy. In fact it was not uncommon for a relative to take over, or for an elder child to be kept away from

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<sup>1</sup> Bulmer M. (1975) ‘Sociological Models of the Mining Community’ in *Sociological Review*, 23, p. 84 and cited in Barron H. (2010) ‘The 1926 Miners’ Lockout : Meanings of Community in the Durham Coalfield’ Intro.p.5

<sup>2</sup> Priestley J.B. (1935) ‘English Journey’ p.321-2: new ed. (2009) p.279

school to 'mind the house', if the woman of the house had to be away. Until 1938 ... 'the whole village had unmade roads and earth closets...'<sup>3</sup> when two streets were improved; a programme then delayed until 1946.

By the 1960s, when many more miners' wives went out to work, the proportion still remained below the national average<sup>4</sup>, so that when the miner was redundant following the closure of the mines, there was no other contribution to the family income.

In New Brancepeth of the 1930s life was stark, but it was stark for everyone! The solidarity of the mining community in work held them together during times of unemployment. The men spent much time at the street corners, discussing the prospects of their jobs, the management, the 'dole' and the current situation. As their jobs had kept them out of their homes for long hours, so during their 'redundancy', they tended to seek each other's company, rather than the company of their wives and the confines of their own poverty-stricken homes. The women also tended to seek each other's company. Informal and frequent contact with neighbours and relatives was their chief relaxation. Few wives and husbands co-operated on any single activity and it was this concern for persuading husbands and wives to pull together in time of stress which persuaded the local curate to promote some activity in which both sexes could take an active part. The despair and sadness in the community had reduced the people to the lowest forms of degradation and depression. It was hoped a common aim would help to give them some purpose. Usually work for 'the bairns' appeals to both men and women... 'to see that the bairns had enough

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<sup>3</sup> Tobin M. (1971) 'New Brancepeth - A Mining Village in the Deerness Valley' in Durham County Local History Society, Journal Vol.p30

<sup>4</sup> See Chap.2

to eat, blossomed into a social concern...'.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of mobilising this concern for their children began in the mind of the Rev. George Lamb, curate-in-charge of the village church of St. Catherine, New Brancepeth, from 1933 to 1937.

The first public notice of the proposal appears to be in the Durham local newspaper<sup>6</sup>, when Ernest Hardy writes of the plan.

But the *real* beginnings are given in a letter from Mr. John Newsom<sup>7</sup> to the Director of the National Council of Social Service at Bedford Square in London, where it is pointed out that a scheme could be started and financed at a relatively small cost and would give an opportunity to the local unemployed to *do something for themselves*.<sup>8</sup> The building, adapted from a disused cinema, (see photograph p.249) was ear-marked, but some urgency was expressed a month later when there was the possibility of this timber building and site being acquired by another body. The NCSS headquarters however showed interest, and referred the matter to the body which could best help - the Emergency Open-air Nurseries Committee (EOAN) of the Save the Children Fund, who were already actively helping among others up and down the country, the nursery schools at North Shields, Jarrow and Hebburn. General encouragement came, together with practical suggestions in the form of a sketch plan showing possible lay-out for 40 children and, looking ahead to even bigger things - a double unit for eighty children. The Travelling Organiser would...

'...love to see a Nursery school in one of the mining villages as the need seems to me so great and usually there is nobody to take on the initiative in such a venture'<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Hitchin G. (1962) 'Pit -Yacker' p35

<sup>6</sup> DCL Durham County Advertiser, (12.2.37), p.16

<sup>7</sup> DRO D/DRDC John Newsom to NCSS (8.2.36).

<sup>8</sup> The Durham CSS was a strong element in the NBNS saga. One report gives its origins as coming from another stalwart of County Durham- 'Kiddy-Catcher Smith' – see Appendix 9

<sup>9</sup> DRO D/DRDC Miss Livingstone (Travelling Organiser S.C.F.) to Rev.G.Lamb (17.3.36)

Grants from the National Council for Social Service were believed to be available, but in fact were included only for tools and material for nurseries to be erected by unemployed men. Miss Livingstone reported that she had visited a nursery school in Leeds made from a hut on to which extensions had been built. Thus she would be able to give advice.( see first NBNS photograph p.249)

On 26th March 1937, the Rev. G. Lamb had lunch with the Bishop of Durham, Dr. Henson, with whom he discussed his scheme. The bishop made a 'contingent promise' i.e. he was willing to supply money, £75, to purchase the hall if the EOAN promised to support the scheme. He wanted to be sure that it would proceed and not fail. The Durham Clergy '...stood for something important to society :reconciliation; community; mutual help; bearing one another's burdens; the protection of the weak...' <sup>10</sup>

In April, Miss Livingstone again visited New Brancepeth along with the Architect of the NCSS Occupational Centres. Sketch plans were made for the nursery school while Mrs. Wardley Smith, Secretary of the TNSA indicated that a small regular financial subscription could be given by their local association but that all possible economies should be made to lessen the running costs.<sup>11</sup> For instance she had received letters from women with nursery school experience who said they would be willing to help voluntarily, or for expenses only - say 30/-per week.

The proposals for the nursery school were on the agenda for the April meeting of the EOAN Committee, but as they were low on the agenda they had to be deferred. As the promoters were impatient to get things moving, such

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<sup>10</sup> Chadwick O. (1983) 'Hensley Henson and the Durham Miners 1920-1939' p.6

<sup>11</sup> This generosity was maintained with subscriptions /grant adjusted according to circumstances TWAS TNSA 1232 Annual Reports (Accs.1938-1944)



disappointments seemed to push the possible opening further away, and the need for the school was urgent.

In an advisory capacity the TNSA stressed the need to be assured of upkeep income when starting a nursery school. Money was more easily raised for buildings themselves than for maintaining them. Mrs. Wardley Smith (secretary) also advised that a Committee be formed to deal with the planning, and perhaps several representatives from the LEA could be elected, so ensuring their interest from the start.<sup>12</sup>

In a village of the type of New Brancepeth, any new venture was entirely dependent on outside help and unless someone was willing to take the initiative nothing of any consequence could ever happen in the social life of the inhabitants.

J. Longland<sup>13</sup> wrote to the EOAN Committee pointing out that if a single successful school was running in the county, the principle could perhaps be applied on a very much larger scale. Mr. Tilley, Director of Education, Durham County Council<sup>14</sup> referred to the request for LEA representation saying that this would be deferred until the school was recognised by the Board, and representation by the Authority would be provided according to the Special Services regulations.<sup>15</sup> J. Longland<sup>16</sup> wrote asking Mr. Tilley to serve on the Committee in a private capacity but he replied that he was unable to do so. However the help of Lady Gainford was enlisted and Dr. Lilian Wilson, Medical Officer to the Board of Education inspected the building and plans for the proposed conversion, to assess its possibilities. On her request, she was shown

<sup>12</sup> DRO Mrs. Wardley Smith (Sec.TNSA) to Rev. G. Lamb 14.4.36

<sup>13</sup> Jack Longland – Education Officer to Community Service Council for Durham County, later Director, and subsequently Director of Education for Derbyshire, and broadcaster.

<sup>14</sup> DRDC Durham Director of Education, Mr. Tilley, to John Newsom (7.5.36)

<sup>15</sup> LSE Lib. Special Services Regulations (1925) stated that if a Nursery School is not provided by LEA, it could nominate one third of the managers. They would wait for recognition by the Board, which would involve payment of grant and then DCED would nominate.

<sup>16</sup> DRO DRDC Longland to Tilley (15.5.36)

over some of the homes of the under-fives and also the Infants' School. Following Circular 1444, a letter<sup>17</sup> was sent to all LEAs to 'survey the needs of the under-fives in their area'. As there was no provision made in the area it seemed that the New Brancepeth Nursery School would receive the Board's blessing. In August the EOAN Committee approved the school in principle, and Mrs Hare<sup>18</sup> suggested to the organisers that they should try to get members of the Co-operative Guild on to the Committee, as members could influence their husbands who may be local councillors. The LEA had decided that they could not afford to support nursery schools in the county, but they would be willing to give their blessing to voluntary experiments!

During the thirties certain of the Civil Service Departments had 'adopted' projects in the North East,<sup>19</sup> and the Home Office Social Service Association (HOSSA) was the particular body which had helped to alleviate social distress in the New Brancepeth/Ushaw Moor area of County Durham. The purpose of this particular adoption was that the bodies concerned could be personally linked, and by distribution of magazines, pamphlets, photographs, etc., the white collar workers in the South could learn of the plight of the unemployed in Durham<sup>20</sup>, and give help to specific cases. The HOSSA was already helping via the Community Service Council and when approached now declared its interest in the possibility of establishing a nursery school.

Among those approached in the early stages to be on the Committee for the

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<sup>17</sup> LSE Lib. Letter to all LEAs following Circular 1444, (25.5.36)

<sup>18</sup> DRO DRDC Secretary, Emergency Open-Air Nurseries (EOAN)

<sup>19</sup> Newsom J. (1936) 'Out of the Pit', Ch. XI, tells of the origin of these schemes. Ministry of Health Social Service Association's help to the Crook (West Durham County) areas is described in the Pilgrim Trust's 'Men Without Work' (1938) pp.316-7

<sup>20</sup> Newsom J. (1936) 'Out of the Pit' with significant sub-title 'A Challenge to the Comfortable' - title page

nursery school were Lady Gainford of Headlam Hall<sup>21</sup>, Chairman of the Women's Committee of Community Service Council (Durham), the Hon. Mrs. Alington (wife of the Dean of Durham) and Miss Jowitt now at the Rock Settlement, Seaham Harbour.<sup>22</sup> The Rev. Lamb applied to Mrs. Wardley Smith for membership of the TNSA.<sup>23</sup>

In June the Director of Education wrote to Rev. G. Lamb asking for details of the proposed school at New Brancepeth following the Board's enquiry. The following questions were put:-

- '(1) The number for which it is proposed to provide accommodation
- (2) The type of accommodation to be provided. (If it is proposed to use a building already in existence, I shall be glad to have details of the source, together with, if possible, the size of the rooms and sanitary and other conveniences provided.)
- (3) The type of staff proposed
- (4) Details with regard to finance
- (5) Proposed method of management'<sup>24</sup>

By July there was still no definite 'go-ahead' so J. Newsom wrote to EOAN:-

'Both the local Committee and those people whom we had managed to get interested in the project are beginning to lose hope and a more practical point, there is some danger of losing the only possible premises unless some decision is made fairly shortly.'<sup>25</sup>

On 4th August, the Board approved the nursery school at New Brancepeth in principle and requested a revised plan following the recommendations of Dr. Lilian Wilson. The EOAN also wanted estimates for the cost of conversion and A. K. Tasker (Architect for Bensham Grove) was asked to draw up plans. In October a new secretary of EOAN wrote to Mr. Longland asking for plans which were to be put before the Commissioner for Special Areas before work could begin.

After three months delay Mr. Longland wrote to the architect on 20th

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<sup>21</sup> Lady Gainford was a member of the Pease family and involved in the George Dent Nursery School in Darlington see Chap.4 (1)

<sup>22</sup> Miss Jowitt was Warden of the Bensham Grove Settlement at the time of the inception of B.G.N.S. and was one of the originators of the scheme, see Chap.4 (2).

<sup>23</sup> DRO DRDC Rev.G. Lamb to Mrs. E. Wardley Smith (16.2.37)

<sup>24</sup> DRO DRDC Mr. Tilley to Rev.G. Lamb, June 1936

<sup>25</sup> DRO DRDC J. Newsom to Miss Jones, Emergency Open-air Nurseries (3.7.36)

November asking if it would be easier for the plans to go to a contracting firm for estimates as '...we are extremely anxious to get the scheme started as soon as possible...'

Meanwhile suggestions for incorporating interested bodies on the Committee were followed up and at the first meeting, 30th November 1936, the following were elected:-

Lady Gainford (Chairman),  
 Hon. Mrs. Alington (Vice-Chairman, wife of Dean of Durham)  
 Mrs Manly (Health Visitor),  
 Mrs Griffiths and Miss Munro (D.C.S.C.Women's staff),  
 Rev.and Mrs. Lamb (Secretary and Treasurer),  
 Mrs Greenfield, wife of Vicar of Brandon,  
 Mrs.Tillard (social worker in the North East),  
 Dr. Hickling (Representing TNSA)

Lady Gainford meanwhile replied to Mr. Longland that the HOSSA were getting restless because matters were not progressing. His reply seemed to suggest that everything was hingeing on the Architect :-

'I am afraid that it must have seemed very slow getting the nursery school started at New Brancepeth, but the matter is tied up with so many difficulties that it has not been possible to get through them in a hurry. We have to rely on the work of a specially experienced Hon. Architect to prepare plans and estimates for the alteration of the existing hut and as you know architects may be pushed but cannot be driven. He had promised completed plans and estimates by the end of the week for Monday. As soon as plans and estimates are through Mrs Hare has promised to accelerate their progress through the Commissioners Office and Board of Education. All other details are complete including purchase price of the hut. Mr. Lamb has been working extremely hard over the whole project. He is naturally as cross about the various delays as we are in this office'.<sup>26</sup>

Mr Tasker was invited to attend the first committee meeting and to *bring* plans! Thus the committee forming the guiding body for NBNS now began to pool their experience and ideas. Mr. Longland discussed with Lady Gainford the scheme whereby Lady Astor, in her generosity, helped the voluntary nurseries over their teething troubles by paying the first year's salary of the Superintendent,

<sup>26</sup> DRO DRDC Longland to Lady Gainford (23.11.36)

but unfortunately for New Brancepeth, the scheme had come to an end. The NSA offered advice on equipment, toys, sleeping arrangements etc.

Mr. Longland wrote to the secretary of HOSSA, Mr. L Clayton,<sup>27</sup> giving the original estimates and outlay. For the building this was £850, the Commissioner providing 90%. £100 was needed to be raised voluntarily. It was suggested that the salary of the Superintendent should be in the region of £170 - £180 p.a., but after one year the Board of Education would make a retrospective grant of half of the Superintendent's salary, if they were satisfied. Thus a further £90 - £100 was required for salary purposes. Mr. Longland explained that a strong local committee had been formed and had drawn up a list of possible guarantors to meet any unforeseen deficits. He also suggested that the Home Office should nominate a member.

Regarding the application for approval, the Chairman, Lady Gainford received a letter from R. Howlett,<sup>28</sup> Private Secretary to Sir Henry Pelham referring to the letter of 4.8.36 when the proposals for NBNS had been approved in principle and the Board had suggested that they should submit revised plans. These had been sent to the Commissioner for Special Areas<sup>29</sup>, who had sent his decision to the Board of Education.<sup>30</sup> The latter had approved the plans and returned them to the EOAN Committee.<sup>31</sup>

So the NBNS Committee now had the green light. But had they? Like all voluntary undertakings, (and in particular this is exemplified in the histories of

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<sup>27</sup> Mr. L. Clayton, Secretary of the Home Office Social Service Association (HOSSA) was an agnostic, member of the Fabian Society and an ardent social worker who had the care of New Brancepeth Nursery School very much in mind

<sup>28</sup> DRO DRDC R. Howlett (Private Secretary to Sir Henry Pelham, Board of Education) to Lady Gainford (26.2.37)

<sup>29</sup> DRO DRDC Plans to Commissioner for Special Areas. (11.12.36)

<sup>30</sup> DRO DRDC Decision to Board of Education (10.2.37)

<sup>31</sup> DRO DRDC Approved plans returned to EOAN Committee (18.2.37)

GDNS and BGNS)<sup>32</sup>, the raising of money and the assurance of financial security in the first years was the most serious obstacle.

When Mr. Longland had laid proposals for financing the nursery before Mr. Clayton, the latter had promptly replied that the HOSSA had ‘ ...never contemplated helping capital expenditure...’.<sup>33</sup> Mr Longland therefore went on to point out that it was very difficult to suggest an annual running cost for the nursery - perhaps somewhere between £150 and £200 but that ...

‘ ... only a very small proportion is likely to be raised locally and that we shall have to rely very largely on money raised through the generosity of people in other parts of England....’<sup>34</sup>

A draft constitution was drawn up and a House Sub-Committee was formed to deal with the day to day running of the school. The members included

Hon. Mrs. Alington,	Miss Cowie,	Dr. Hickling,	Mrs Griffiths,
Dr. Derry,	J. Spraggon,	Rev. H. Cave,	Mrs. Barrett,
Mrs Blakey,	Mrs Watson,	Dr.O’Flaherty,	the Superintendent,
Mr. S. J.T.Eacott,	Mrs. Royston,	Mrs. Gordon,	Rev. Lamb,
Mr. N. Foster,	Mrs. Lucas,	Professor Duff,	Mrs. Cave,
Mrs.Naylor,	Mrs. Ross,	Mrs. Houston,	Mrs.O’Flaherty.

Ironically the first letter written on the headed notepaper of the New Brancepeth Nursery School Committee was sent from the Rev.G. Lamb to Lady Gainford saying that he was leaving New Brancepeth on 19th March 1937.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile tenders were invited for the alterations and additions to the building, and Mrs. Hare suggested that in the interim, the men could be digging out the boiler house site as well as levelling and cutting back the bank. The lowest figure of £980 was accepted from John Jackson and Sons, of Newcastle upon Tyne, and within this figure were all alterations as shown on the plan, heating and

<sup>32</sup> Chap.4 (1) & (2)

<sup>33</sup> DRO DRDC Clayton to Longland re-capital expenditure (25.2.37)

<sup>34</sup> DRO DRDC Reply Longland to Clayton (27.2.37)

<sup>35</sup> Although the Rev. G. Lamb now became Vicar of St Cuthbert’s Bensham. Gateshead , he continued for sometime as Secretary of NBNS Committee

domestic hot water supply, sanitary fittings and allowance for repairs to the roof, cooking range and flue pipe, alterations to electric lighting system, cement paths, sand pit, crocks cupboard in the kitchen, kitchen table with sycamore top and six cupboards in the playroom.

Mr. Longland also requested Mrs. Hare to :-

‘...please inform the Commissioner that work on the site started in April, as during that month men from the Social Service Centre, excavated the paths and made various necessary alterations on the site under Mr.Tasker’s directions. We have therefore I think, already fulfilled the Commissioner’s condition that work should be started within 6 months of his offering the grant...  
Please include in the letter to the Commissioner, estimates for the standard full equipment for a school of 40 places...’<sup>36</sup>

The source of financial help still hung precariously in the balance. It was hoped that HOSSA which helped the Centre at New Brancepeth would be willing to adopt the nursery school, but Mr. Clayton, the secretary, wanted further details. In conversation with J.B.Twemlow <sup>37</sup> of the Community Service Council several points were aired:-

- 1) that the HOSSA might produce £100 towards the first year’s running expenses
- 2) had the matter of voluntary cleaning been settled with the centre?
- 3) will the nursery school have to have a paid cook?
- 4) have the women’s section of the club undertaken to make soft goods?
- 5) that the HOSSA cannot touch capital expenditure and so cannot help with the debit balance of £150
- 6) regarding money that Rev.G.Lamb got from the Bishop, could not this be used for running expenses or towards clearing off debt
- 7) could the Commissioner be asked to put a similar sum to Lamb’s?
- 8) the salary for Superintendent to be £180, not £200.

The points were then explained to the HOSSA Committee and Mr. Clayton was able to write to J. Longland :-

‘...committee met last week and provisionally decided to contribute £100 towards first year’s running costs on the understanding that...  
(a) the school is conducted in accordance with Board of Education requirements so that the Government grants may be assumed in due course, and  
(b) that close contact is maintained with our centre....’

<sup>36</sup> DRO DRDC Letter Mr.Longland to Mrs. Hare

<sup>37</sup> DRO DRDC J.B.Twemlow, Education Officer, Community Service Council (report of conversation with Mr.Clayton)

We understand that both men and women members will be assisting in the work of preparation of the building and equipment and we hope this interest will be maintained. It might also be means of keeping down expenses especially if the women will form a rota of volunteers for the cleaning and laundry and attend to repairs and renewals. I take it that the school garden will be used in the usual way by the children but would it be possible for a group of men to be formed and could a piece of land be used on which to raise the necessary garden produce?

The grant is for one year only and we shall of course be prepared to consider the matter again towards the end of the first year and shall naturally wish to retain a close connection with the school. But we would not, for many reasons, commit ourselves to a permanent contribution of that size.

We have decided to nominate our Warden, Mr. Norman Foster as our representative on the Nursery School Committee. I have not approached Dr. Derry<sup>38</sup> as we feel that Mr. Foster will be able to give more time to the work and should prove a strong link between us, the school and the centre. He would, I think, be particularly useful if you felt able to broaden the basis of the local committee. I have in mind particularly the inclusion of people from the villages and I venture to suggest that a tactful approach might be made to the Miners Lodge, the NUT, the Women's Co-operative Guild (if there is one) and perhaps a Local Nonconformist or two - Mr. Lamb's successor? - only suggestions - neither I nor my committee have any desire to interfere in the local committee's own affairs....<sup>39</sup>

At such good news Mr. Longland replied to Mr. Clayton<sup>40</sup> saying that the two conditions stipulated by the HOSSA Committee could certainly be observed:-

'...if it had not been for Mr. Lamb's efforts and for his skill at enlisting support of members of the centre, the scheme would never have gone through. We certainly regard the school as primarily for the benefit of the families who are members of the Centre, and it is a school which could not possibly run unless it were warmly supported by these members...

... regarding representatives - we have felt throughout that it is more important to have people who are individually interested in the scheme than those who were elected as representatives of several bodies who might not themselves be interested...'

Mr. Longland wrote to Lady Gainford explaining the promised help in finances but adding :-

'... we want to be able to guarantee something like £160 of the initial building and equipment costs in order to set the school properly on its feet...'<sup>41</sup>

Lady Gainford decided to make a national appeal by writing a letter to the Times.<sup>42</sup> Invitations were sent to Gipsy Hill, Darlington and Froebel Colleges for applications for the post of Superintendent. Meanwhile, Miss Clark of the

<sup>38</sup> Dr. Derry, Medical Officer at H.M. Prison, Durham

<sup>39</sup> DRO DRDC Letter Clayton to Longland, (4.6.37)

<sup>40</sup> DRO DRDC Reply Longland to Clayton (7.6.37)

<sup>41</sup> DRO DRDC J. Longland to Lady Gainford (22.6.37)

<sup>42</sup> DUL Lady Gainford's letter to the 'Times', (27th August 1937) p.8 (b) - see Appendix 10



Community Service Council made out a list of equipment required, from a catalogue, which came to £167. With Mrs. Manly she shopped for this at Parrish's in Newcastle.<sup>43</sup> The cheque from the Commissioner was received and handed over to Mr. Eacott (Manager of Lloyds Bank and Treasurer NBNS in succession to Mrs. Lamb). From Lady Gainford's appeal £54.11s was quickly raised, whilst from the advertisement for Superintendent, three persons were selected for the short list; Miss McNab, Miss Harland and Miss Grant. The committee were obviously in a great dilemma regarding this appointment as they had already decided that the salary should be in the range of £170-£180 p.a. Several very good applicants were already earning higher salaries than this and would obviously be lost if the Committee could not pay more.

A query from Mrs. Hare to the Board of Education received the Board's ruling:

'... I am directed to state that, while the Board regard it is reasonable that the salary for the Superintendent of a Nursery School (who shall usually be a certificated teacher with special nursery school training) should be at a level comparable with that for a Certificated teacher in a Public Elementary School, no special scales of salary were prescribed for nursery school teachers either by the Burnham Scales or by regulations of the Board...'<sup>44</sup>

Miss Harland was appointed and took up duties as from 1.11.37. By this time the response to the 'Times' appeal had reached £125. Also the Commissioner for Special Areas had agreed to pay 90% of the cost of equipment. The situation

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<sup>43</sup> DRO DRDC Letter Miss Clark to Mrs. Medsforth 1.11.37

<sup>44</sup> DRO DRCC Board of Education to Mrs. Hare 28.9.37

was beginning to look more healthy.<sup>45</sup>

The charge per week for the children was to be 1/3d. per child and for two children from one family, 2/-.

The men from the centre were requested to tidy the garden so that bulbs could be planted and Miss Clark, Hallgarth House, Durham wrote to the Director of Education, Shire Hall, Durham :

'... I am directed to inform you that the Nursery school building in New Brancepeth is now occupied and we are hoping to open the school by the end of the month'.<sup>46</sup>

Mrs Hare advised that all bills be sent to the Commissioner and that the Community Service Council appoint auditors. Thus the school was finally opened by the end of the year, 1937. To start the new term in January 1938 there were 7 new children and a further 6 on the following Monday.

'People of the village, after being suspicious are now delighted with the school and proud of being a centre of interest'.<sup>47</sup>

In April the school was *recognised* by the Board of Education for grant,<sup>48</sup> which was payable for the period ending 31.3.38 and thereafter annually as provided in the Special Services Regulations 1925 (19).

Thus after all the financial hurdles and social difficulties involved in establishing the nursery school in New Brancepeth things were really under way.

<sup>45</sup> DRO DRCC Estimated statement from Treasurer (Mr. Eacott) at the opening of the Nursery School (1.11.37)

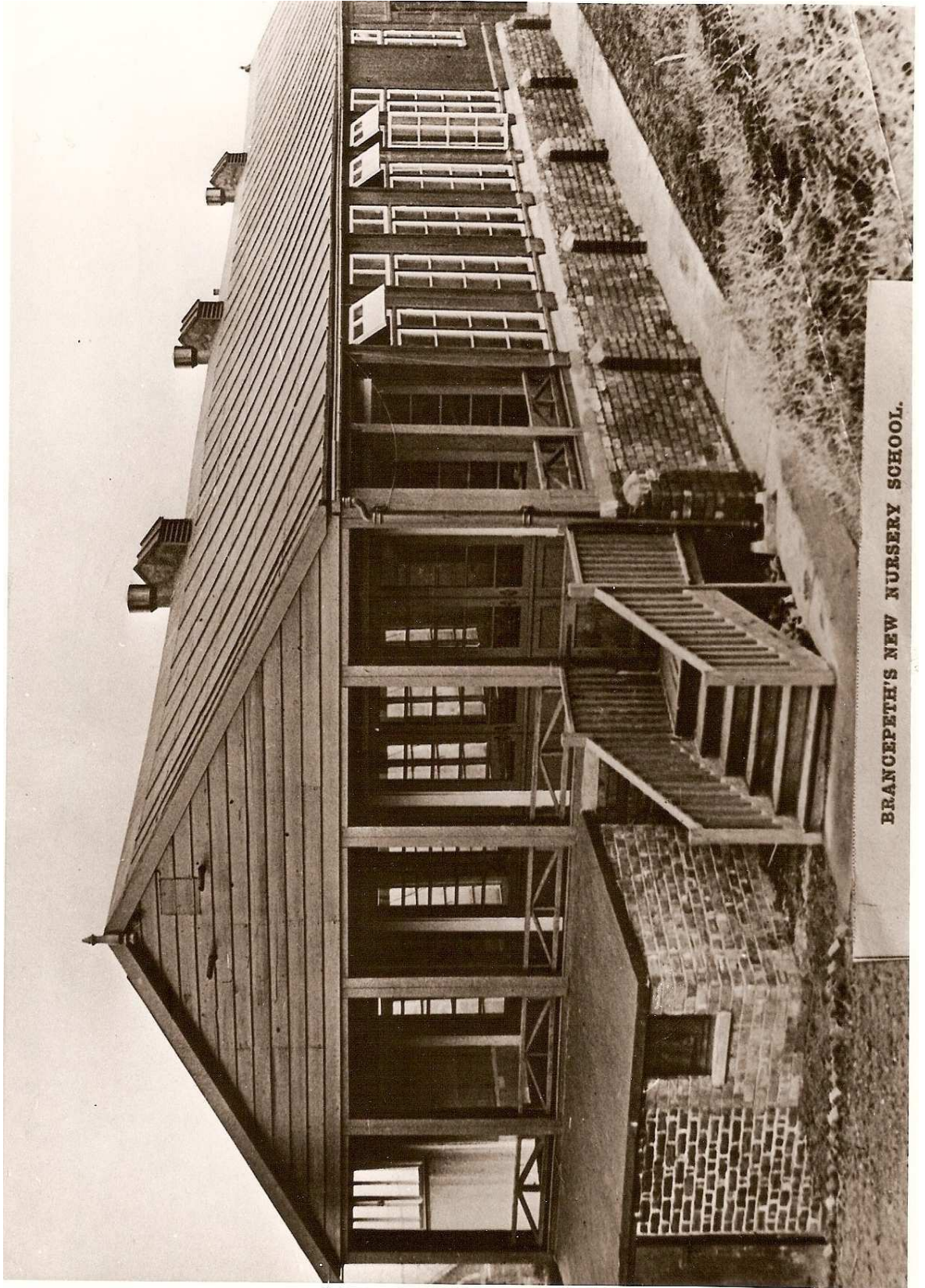
<u>Capital Expenditure</u>		<u>Receipts</u>	
Builder's estimate	£980	Commissioners grant (90%)	£882
Architects fees	£ 60	Grant for equipment	£160
Equipment	£160	To raise	£158
	£1200		£1200
<u>Estimate of expenditure for running school</u>		<u>Receipts</u>	
Superintendent	£168	Home Office S.S.A.	£100
Probationers	£ 26	Donations (to 30th Oct.)	£128
Cook/Caretaker	£ 65		
Heating/Lighting/Food ?			

<sup>46</sup> DRO DRDC Miss Clark, Hallgarth House, Durham, to Director of Education, Shire Hall, Durham (22.11.37)

<sup>47</sup> DRO DRDC Miss Clark to Mrs Medsforth (24.1.38)

<sup>48</sup> PRO. M1953/18 - New Brancepeth (from 11.1.38)

New Brancepeth Nursery School - original building, 1937



BRANCEPETH'S NEW NURSERY SCHOOL.

The effusive report and photographs of the official opening in May by Lord Eustace Percy, appeared in the local press.<sup>49</sup>

Apart from the usual teething troubles, the nursery ran smoothly, carrying out its work of training the pre-school child, ensuring nourishing meals, frequent medical inspections, undisturbed rest and an interesting, relaxed environment in which to develop.

But soon the war clouds appeared on the horizon. Although New Brancepeth was not situated in a danger area, it was obvious that the repercussions of war-time conditions would affect the day-to-day running of the nursery.

However the crises which first beset the school were domestic rather than national. In 1940, the school was closed from 24th January to 1st March because of frozen pipes and plumbing repairs. The Mothers' Club expressed real concern at the delay as they feared that people would lose interest in the school. To add to this, Miss Sharman, the new Superintendent, had been ill and absent from school for some time. Financial troubles, though always at the background, did not give rise to immediate anxiety at this time. The Board of Education grant, supplemented by voluntary subscriptions, fees, HOSSA grant, covered outgoing expenses.

At this time the first fully illustrated yearly journal appeared from the DCSC edited by its Director. It gave the case for voluntary co-operation and ensuing activities across the County.<sup>50</sup>

By May 1940 however, it became obvious that the health of the

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<sup>49</sup> DCityL Durham County Advertiser, (11.5.38) p.15 See Appendix 11 ; also DUL (QCL) The Northern Echo (12.5.38) ;Kitching J.(1997), 'Memories of New Brancepeth', p.44

<sup>50</sup> DRO DRDC DCSC Spring 1940 'Co-operation' No1

Superintendent was precarious and an emergency committee meeting was called<sup>51</sup> to decide what action should be taken. The school was closed pending arrangements, but a temporary appointment was soon made and the school was re-opened. Meanwhile the secretary of the Nursery School Committee was asked to contact the Council Surveyor with reference to adequate Air Raid Protection and an estimate of £64.18s.5d. was quoted for air raid shelters. A permanent Superintendent, Miss Crowson was appointed from the first of September. A long waiting list was reported including some children from blitzed cities.<sup>52</sup>

Towards the end of the year the financial situation was again reviewed. The final cost of the Air Raid Shelters was £84/4/2d. Income included £50 from the GPO Association, £62.10s. from HOSSA, £50 from SCF (as result of a letter to J.B. Priestley of SCF) and subscriptions of £5/5s.

Commenting on the financial statement, Lady Gainford pointed out that, unfortunately, it was unlikely all of these contributions would recur, and although the present financial position was satisfactory, the future security of the school, would continue to need careful consideration.<sup>53</sup>

In September 1941, the fees were raised to 1/9d. per child per week, and 1/6d from each child, if there were two from one family. This had become imperative in view of the increased costs of all materials, food and equipment.

Mr. Twemlow, now Director of the Community Service Council, was to ask the Minister of Health if financial help could be given under the new powers granted.<sup>54</sup> The balance sheet for the year ended 31.3.41 showed that there was a balance in hand of only £22/0/8d., even though the income had included

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<sup>51</sup> DRO NBNS Committee Meeting, (17.5.40)

<sup>52</sup> TWAS 1232/17 12th Annual Report TNSA1940-41 (15.7.41)

<sup>53</sup> DRO DRDC Lady Gainford commenting on financial situation (13.12.40)

<sup>54</sup> Circs. 2388 and 1553 (1941).

voluntary contributions of £27/5/7d.HOSSA, £125 SCF, £50 TNSA, £80 GPO Assoc. and Jumble Sale £30/1/0d., as well as the Board of Education grant and parents' contributions.

Mr. Twemlow's query to the Ministry of Health received the reply that under the present conditions they were unable to class the school as a war-time nursery but the committee should seek the advice of HMI Miss Thomas who said that this would be possible if the mothers were absorbed in employment, and so the position could be re-considered.

By the death of Lady Gainford towards the end of the year, the school lost a devoted friend. Her place was filled by Mrs. Alington, wife of the Dean of Durham. At the beginning of 1942 it was decided to try again for recognition as a wartime nursery for grant, but the Ministries of Health and Labour replied<sup>55</sup> that it was felt by them that there were not sufficient women from the area employed in munitions work to justify this. The Committee felt that it was unlikely that some of the financial contributions would be repeated and that there would be an increasing deficit in the future.

The Secretary was to ask the HOSSA about the possibility of an increased grant and also to try the SCF for help. Meanwhile Miss Crowson resigned from the end of the school year in August 1942 and was succeeded by Miss Morley. The school fees were increased to 2/6d. per week for one child, to 4/- for two children, and 5/- for three children of the same family. Also to help meet rising costs, the HOSSA increased the grant for the year to £150, and £50 was received from the SCF and £25 from the TNSA.

During the following year it became obvious that a large amount would have

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<sup>55</sup> DRO DRDC Application for recognition as a war time nursery, 13.3.42

to be spent on repairs to roof and foundations. In fact the building, which had been an adaptation and not a *new* building, began to reveal all its faults. The General Purposes Committee was of the opinion that unless the difficulties at present being experienced with regard to staff, equipment, and premises could be solved, they would be compelled to recommend the closing of the school. The building, which was an old one, required certain urgent repairs and the whole of the interior needed re-decorating.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the floor boards and floor coverings needed over-hauling and certain fencing was required for the outside of the school. The Hon. Sec. also stated that the whole of the equipment of the school needed replenishing. Over 18 months the staff had dwindled, from the Superintendent, cook, boilerman, two paid probationers of 18, and two voluntary workers, to a Superintendent, temporary cook, boilerman and two probationers of 14 years.

Also, if the school was to continue, there should be set aside, over and above the normal running expenses, a sum of money which could enable them to pay for small repairs and regular renewals, so that a reasonable standard of appearance and equipment might be maintained.

From the report of the General Purposes Committee the Board of Managers were in unanimous agreement that the school was an essential part of the village and that every endeavour should be made to carry on. They suggested that the managers should seek the help of the villagers in running the school - perhaps some method could be devised which would call the attention of the villagers to the present emergency.<sup>57</sup> In order to reduce expenditure they recommended alterations to the existing scale of wages paid to staff and appointed a cleaner with

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<sup>56</sup>TWAS 1232/20, 14th Annual Report TNSA, 1943. This was carried out by the mothers at their own expense.

<sup>57</sup>TWAS 1232/1 Report of Secretary of General Purposes Committee (Mr. Twemlow) to Board of Managers NBNS 11.2.44 to TNSA

the wage of £1 per week and a cook to provide meals and keep the kitchen clean. The probationers were to receive 10/- per week, rising from 12/6 to 15/-. It would also be necessary to raise a large sum of money for the additional necessary expenditure, but probably part of this would rank for grant from the Board of Education. It was decided that a statement be put in the Press and in addition all organisations and individuals who had subscribed or showed interest in the past should again be approached, together with other individuals suggested by the Board of Managers. Meanwhile students from Durham University and St.Hild's College Durham continued to use the nursery school for observation and teaching practice purposes.<sup>58</sup>

It was now agreed that the area catered for by the School should be extended to the adjoining village of Ushaw Moor (1943) and that the General Purposes Committee should get out a local appeal to cover the two villages. By June 1944, £14/3/2d. had been raised from the Village Appeal, £20 from the Mother's Club, for the purchase of blankets, £50 from the Post Office Money Order Department, and a donation of £100 from a Trust Fund which wished to remain anonymous. In all, a total of about £260 had been raised. The SCF contributed £100, i.e. £50 for the year ended 31.3.44, and £50 for the year ended 31.3.45.

An architect was requested to make a survey of the building and give a report and it was suggested that a letter be written to the Director of Education asking for a grant and including an appeal letter. The Pilgrim Trust had granted £100 towards new equipment and in his report the Architect had estimated for a total expenditure of £350, comprising £120 to make the roof safe and routine maintenance of £230. Interior and exterior decoration was estimated to cost about

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<sup>58</sup> TWAS 1232/21 Annual Report TNSA 1943



£150, but it was thought that in view of the poor condition of the wood work, to leave the painting in abeyance. One hundred pounds were needed for equipment thus making a total expenditure of £600, of which £360 was in hand. The Education Committee had been asked to make a grant of £240 or a percentage of this amount. The proposed expenditure would rank for 50% grant from the Ministry of Education. Help was promised from DCEC with a grant of up to £240 towards repairs.

A new Superintendent was appointed from 1.1.45 when at that time the school had the full complement of 40 children and a waiting list of 14. A devoted friend of the school, Mr. J. Spraggon died at the beginning of 1945. He had been associated with the school since its inception and for many years was the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee. In lieu of floral tributes it was requested that money be sent to the nursery school and it was decided that a scroll should be hung in the school bearing his name.<sup>59</sup>

In connection with further repairs, there were letters from Cordingley and Macintyre, Architects, giving estimates for the cost of additional repairs to verandah and fencing as £117, and for interior and exterior decorating £146, (McFee) and £223 (P.L.Smith).

On the question of a Sinking Fund for future repairs it was agreed that the Hon. Sec. should get out a report to those people who had been kind enough to help in the past, showing how the money subscribed had been expended and also what was going on in the school. It was felt that such a report would also act as an appeal for the future.

The Superintendent said that the mothers and staff very much appreciated

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<sup>59</sup> Memorandum to Mr. Spraggon (cp. George Dent)

the improvements to the school which she felt had enhanced the prestige of the school in the village.<sup>60</sup> But the Treasurer made it quite clear to the Managers at the General Purpose Committee meeting,<sup>61</sup> that at the present rate of grant aid and expenditure an amount of not less than £250 voluntary money must be found each year.

Miss Nicholls HMI, visited the school during the Autumn and reported that there was a great need for more equipment and staff. The General Purposes Committee<sup>62</sup> therefore authorised the Superintendent to spend a further £50 for additional equipment and the Secretary was asked to write to Mrs. Kramer to see if she was willing to act as assistant Superintendent temporarily at £150 per annum. A financial statement up to 1st April 1945 showed income as £1108/0/8d. and expenditure £841/10/4d. Of the balance of £266/10/4d., £70 was earmarked for equipment. Through Mrs. Gordon, the WVS promised 60 overalls for use in the school. The Housecraft Organiser of the Community Service Council looked over the kitchen equipment and found it below standard. It was hoped to make up some of the deficiencies from the Ministry of Works pool, equipment for school meals being obtainable through the Education Authority School Meals Service.

Miss Pountney, HMI for Nursery Schools, visited the school in April and returned again in September accompanied by the HMI for War Nurseries in the North East.

Following her first visit<sup>63</sup> she suggested that the ideal area for a nursery school was 25 square feet per child and the minimum 15 square feet, so that under the first conditions the number admitted to New Brancepeth should be 28

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<sup>60</sup> DRO DRDC Report of Superintendent, 15.6.42

<sup>61</sup> DRO DRDC Meeting of General Purposes Committee, Treasurer's Report, 19.12.45

<sup>62</sup> DRO DRDC Meeting GPC 19.12.45

<sup>63</sup> DRO DRDC Visit of H.M.I. Miss Pountney, 27.4.46

children and under the minimum conditions it could be 48. However, the bathroom facilities were rather limited and adequate only for 20-25 children. Although not reported, obviously a reduction in numbers would reduce income and community support. The air raid shelter needed to be removed but as this was estimated to cost £35, the committee could not afford it at the moment.

Following her second visit Miss Pountney made the recommendations:

- 1) that the cleaner should be employed full-time - in the morning as kitchen assistant.
- 2) that staff wages needed to be doubled according to current scales – National Insurance Contributions doubled from 1.10.46
- 3) that there should be better arrangements for laundry as the present facilities were inadequate
- 4) that the lower half of the kitchen wall should be painted.
- 5) that the sandpit should be emptied and refilled with clean sand and a washable cover fitted.
- 6) that the entrance to the air raid shelters should be filled in
- 7) that higher fences were needed round the garden which also needed to be extended
- 8) that the telephone should be installed
- 9) that sums should be set aside for equipment twice a year.
- 10) that new towels, sheets and table cloths were needed

Miss Pountney however, while making the suggestions took the common sense view that owing to the difficult financial situation their implementation would take time.

Finances continued to give cause for concern and in the year 1945/46 there was a total deficit of £138/17/0d. During July 1945, a gift of £64/12/11d. was received from the canteen funds of the recently 'paid off', H.M.S. Glenroy, on the recommendation of a sailor whose home was at New Brancepeth. Again an appeal was sent out by the General Purposes Committee to individuals and organisations in the locality.<sup>64</sup>

In response to the difficulties in which the Nursery School Committee now found itself, advice was sought from Professor Brian Stanley and Miss Atkinson

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<sup>64</sup> DRO DRDC Meeting of General Purposes Committee 17.9.46

(TNSA) with regard to various steps in administration of a nursery school:-

- a) A nursery school sponsored by a voluntary body, entirely maintained by them and governed by its Committee of Managers.
- b) A nursery school sponsored by a voluntary body maintained by them with grants in aid by their respective LEAs and governed by a voluntary bodies' committee of managers.
- c) A nursery school sponsored and entirely maintained by the LEA and governed by their committee.

The last stage should only occur when the committee appointed by a voluntary body had found themselves unable to continue sponsoring and maintaining the nursery school. Then they should apply on their own accord for the local LEA to take over duties. In this case, by a voluntary agreement of the two negotiating parties, a valuer must be appointed and the voluntary body must be compensated for all assets of the nursery school.

Acting on this information the General Purposes Committee recommended that the Board of Managers approach the Director of Education to discuss the taking over of the school by the LEA. They felt that in the history of the school they had reached this stage.<sup>65</sup>

The work of the voluntary committee had been to prove the *need* for such a school and it had in fact carried on for much longer than had originally been visualised. They had raised a great deal of money and done a great deal of work and the school was now in a good state and well-equipped. New standards had been laid down and expenditure had risen to *three times* the original. No voluntary body could possibly carry on at this rate. Now perhaps was the best time to hand over to the local authority.

Mr. Twemlow proposed and Mr. Foster seconded:-

'...That the Board of Managers receives the recommendation put forward by the General Purposes Committee and agrees that a deputation should call on the Director of Education to ascertain whether the LEA would be prepared to accept

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<sup>65</sup> DRO DRDC Recommendation of GPC for handing over school to LEA, 24.9.46

responsibility for the New Brancepeth Nursery School and, if so, whether the local committee would continue to act as a Committee of Managers'.<sup>66</sup>

If the school were handed over from the Committee in the near future, it would be as a going concern. When the half-yearly instalment of the grant from the Ministry of Education was received, all outstanding debts would be cleared off and expenses paid for the next few months.

The Board of Managers realised that even if the Director were approached immediately there would be a certain time-lag before the school could be taken over and during this time the present committee would have to be responsible for running the school.

The proposed deputation was to consist of the Chairman (Mrs. Alington), the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer. Meanwhile to add to the worries of the Committee, an appeal against the rating assessment of the school proved unsuccessful. The Rating Authorities had treated the school as leniently as they possibly could, as it was an 'unprovided' school and had rated it at 50% of what they were rating schools run by the LEA, and they felt that they could make no further concession.<sup>67</sup>

The first of January 1947 saw the Nationalisation of the Coal Industry and as the New Brancepeth Colliery Company had always provided free electricity and coke to the school, there was some doubt as to whether this could continue under the National Coal Board. A broadcast was planned for the 2nd March 1947. The deputation to the Director of Education was very sympathetically received and the managers were advised to make further application to the Ministry of Education.<sup>68</sup> Yet another door seemed to be closing when the HOSSA gave notice of its final

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<sup>66</sup> DRO DRDC Meeting of General Purposes Committee, 17.9.46

<sup>67</sup> DCC Rates had increased from £3 to £15. Brandon and Byshottles Urban District Council Rating Authority were now assessing school at £27

<sup>68</sup> DRO NBNS Deputation to Director of Education, 7.11.47

meeting at the beginning of 1947, to decide on the allocation of the remaining funds. Good wishes were sent to Durham!

Miss Wood, Durham County Inspector for Infant and Nursery Schools visited the school on 16th March 1947 and said that the most likely date for take over would be 1.4.48. Meanwhile the free coke and electricity would continue from the NCB after Nationalisation in the interim period. The LEA and the Ministry of Education opened up negotiations, and until the final handing over, ways and means of keeping the school going had to be explored. Collections were taken in the cinema in Ushaw Moor, and in New Brancepeth Workmens' Club (£6/10s) and from the Broadcast Appeal (£27/14/6d.)<sup>69</sup> The Superintendent reported that the appeal had re-awakened interest in the village and people had become aware of the good work done by the school. The weekly fees were raised to 5/- (from 2/6 for one child) to 8/-(from 4/- for 2 children) and to 10/- (from 5/- for three children).

The Financial Statement as at 10.3.47 was:-

Income £796/16/6d

Expenditure £887/3/10d

(including a balance owing from last year)

By 1st April the balance deficit was £90/6s/7d.with outstanding accounts which would make the total deficit approximately £150.

The question arose at this stage as to the arrangements when the school was taken over by the LEA. Would they transfer the children to the infants' school and run the unit as a nursery class? Miss Kelly pointed out that the LEA's policy was nursery schools rather than nursery classes and Miss Wood (County Inspector) informed Miss Pountney (H.M.I.)that the building and equipment of the nursery school compared very favourably with the LEA's schools.

By June1947 the Broadcast Appeal had now brought in £57/18/6d., the

<sup>69</sup> DRO NBNS Efforts to meet financial crisis

cinema collections at Ushaw Moor (£8) and the New Brancepeth Womens' Institute (£6/16/6d). It was feared that parents might react unfavourably to the increase of fees, but, on the contrary, the response was magnificent - there were only three withdrawals, and three appeals were considered as cases of real need.<sup>70</sup>

Also following on from the visit of Miss Pountney, HMI and Miss Slight, Ministry of Health Inspector, were the comments:-

- 1) that the school was seriously understaffed
- 2) that the distribution of health food should cease forthwith and all stocks should be removed and returned to the Ministry of Food. (This was quickly and easily accomplished)
- 3) that there should be fencing round the verandah to prevent the children from getting on the boiler house
- 4) that no more children under the age of 2 years 9 months should be accepted. (This was indeed a blow)

As suggestions for reorganisation were put on the one hand, negotiations or new administration were taking place on the other. A letter was received by the managers from the LEA saying that they were willing to take over the nursery as a Controlled School, subject to the Ministry's approval.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile money was still urgently needed to keep the school going. A donation of £50 was received from the staff of Aycliffe School (an 'Approved' School under the Home Office) but Mr. Foster said that it would be difficult to continue to make requests to such bodies as the HOSSA, when the take-over was imminent.

The financial statement at 10.9.47 was:-

<u>Income</u> to date	<u>Expenditure</u>
£279/17/2d	£470/18/6d
	(includes balance owing from last half year of £126/10/6d)
Total <u>deficit</u> to date £191/1/4d	

<sup>70</sup> DRO NBNS One child was supported by a grand parent; another was the child of a widow, and the third appeal was made by the mother of twins whose husband was an invalid and unable to work

<sup>71</sup> DRO DCEC Letter from LEA saying they were willing to take over the nursery as a Controlled School, 16.7.47

Further outstanding accounts would bring the deficit to £214/1/11d., but there was a grant of £372 due from the Ministry of Education for the year ended 31.3.47. The salaries were upgraded from 1.9.47, to be paid retrospectively when the Ministry grant arrived. The Senior Assistants were to receive 25/- per week each, the cleaner 30/- per week, and the cook £2 per week.

The number on roll was 29, the average attendance 24 and there was a waiting list of 43 at the beginning of the school year. Very few mothers in New Brancepeth went out to work and therefore at this time it was not usual to give anyone priority of admission but cases of definite need were always given careful consideration. At the request of the H.M.I., Mrs. O'Connor<sup>72</sup> was appointed as assistant to the Superintendent from 28th October 1947, in order that the school might be accepted as a training school by the Ministry. Other improvements were that the room used as a store should become the cloakroom. In this way the school could be once more opened to 2 year olds.

The school was duly taken over on 1st April 1948 and the New Brancepeth Board of Managers' General Purposes Committee had intimated that any outstanding liabilities at that time should be settled when the grant-in-aid due for the year ending 31.3.48 was received from the Ministry. The Education Committee would appoint its own managers - 2 from Brandon and Byshottles UDC, and 4 from the Divisional Executive. It was decided that as a link between the old Board of Managers and the new, Dr. O'Flaherty and Mrs. Ross be appointed.

In actual fact the deficit at the end of the financial year 31.3.48 was £450 and the amount of grant due was £496 so that there was a small balance in hand.

At the time of the handing over the number on roll was 30, the average

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<sup>72</sup> DRO E/C/104 NBNS Mrs. O'Connor had been giving voluntary assistance 2 days per week and if she was appointed full-time, she might take the Supplementary Child Care certificate



attendance was 20 and the waiting list was 37. Miss Wood said that henceforth parents would pay 2/1d per week (cost of school meals) and that for the time being no two children would be admitted from one family unless the mother was working. Thus the voluntary New Brancepeth Nursery School closed on 19th March and reopened 5th April as an LEA nursery school.

The final meeting of the old Board of Managers took place at Hallgarth House on 21st April 1948 and the members present were Dr.O'Flaherty, Mrs. Barrett, Mrs. Ross, Mrs. Houston, Mrs. Blakey, Mr. F. Wallace, Mr. J. B. Twemlow, the Superintendent and Miss Lawson (Secretary), with apologies for absence from Miss Graham.

So the chapter closes and New Brancepeth became merged with the 20 or so other nursery schools in the administrative county of Durham, whose histories had been less stormy and less spectacular. New Brancepeth however remains a most interesting study.

The spirit of self-help did not die, and in 1949 the Superintendent supported by her Assistant decided to make the room previously used as a cloakroom into an additional playroom for the 'two year olds'. After the work was completed it was decided to keep the room for 'quiet activities'.<sup>73</sup> This arrangement received the approval of Miss Wood (County Inspector for N & I)<sup>74</sup> and later by Miss Wertheimer H.M.I., who suggested 'a few small adjustments'.<sup>75</sup>

The next twenty years saw few changes which would ear-mark its history as different from any other nursery school. However one great change was to come and this was in the building. Occasion for the change came when an enquiry from

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<sup>73</sup> DRO E/C/104 NBNS Log book 14.2.49

<sup>74</sup> DRO NBNS Log Book 14.11.49

<sup>75</sup> DRO NBNS Log Book 6.2.50

**New Brancepeth Nursery School in 1967**



**When the original building proved to be unsustainable, the nursery school benefited from the re-organisation of primary/secondary education under the LEA and moved into this substantial building formerly occupied by the New Brancepeth Infants' School in 1961**



the landowners, the Brancepeth Estate, asked whether the Authority would be interested in buying the freehold of the nursery school site which was then held on lease until December 1962<sup>76</sup>. A sub-committee decided that on the opening of the new Ushaw Moor Secondary Modern School, and the consequent reorganisation of schools in the area, the New Brancepeth County Infants School would become available for conversion into a nursery school.<sup>77</sup> This was eventually done with Ministry of Education approval as a Minor Works project and the school moved to the new premises on 19th May 1961.<sup>78</sup> A traditional single-storey building of red brick, it became, after adaptation to suit the pre-school child, one of the most spacious nursery schools with extensive grounds for out-door play and lofty well-lit playrooms. The original timber building was demolished having suffered partial destruction by fire.

So in this case, 'reorganisation' which had for thirty five years since the Hadow Report helped to *delay* provision of nursery schools and classes, now served to ensure continuance of the only pre-war nursery school in this large county authority area, by creating an empty school. This contrasts well with the Director of Education's statement in October 1938:-

'Lack of suitable accommodation has so far delayed the introduction of nursery classes in the area of the Authority. Moreover, the Committee has taken the view that the adequate provision of post primary school should have priority of consideration. With progress in this latter work, together with a reduced number of children in the schools, an opportunity will be offered for making a beginning in the work of nursery classes'.<sup>79</sup>

Large scale, long term proposals were given in this report to the School Buildings Committee. The choice had been made for nursery classes rather than schools, although no reference is made to the New Brancepeth Voluntary School

<sup>76</sup> DRO SB11.17 12.3.58 Proposed sale of freehold to DCEC

<sup>77</sup> DRO DCEC,SB 15,9.4.58 Possible opportunity for re-location

<sup>78</sup> DRO NBNS Log Book, 19.5.1961

<sup>79</sup> DRO DCEC SB 409 (1) 26.10.38

or other nursery schools in the areas of neighbouring authorities. A 50% provision for the four year old age group was projected in the first instance, but provision for the whole county area was impossible. Two long lists were compiled however of:-

- a) 146 council schools where extra classroom accommodation would be needed to make nursery class provision and
- b) 102 schools where nursery class accommodation could be provided by means of alterations to existing premises. Sixty seven schools, or about 27% could only be utilised after 'reorganisation' so depending on priority.<sup>80</sup>

Most urgent still in the building programmes were projects for senior school reorganisation which would qualify for a special building grant and so accommodate the 'extra year' in school following the Education Act 1936.

Eight schools only were therefore listed as being suitable for early years development and half of these were selected for action in the following financial year 1939/40. The other four were to be dealt with in the next year 1940/41. These were to be the 'experiment', 20 years after a previous Director's suggestion that one or two schools might be tried.<sup>81</sup>

Thus New Brancepeth Nursery School may also be regarded as another pioneer among these case studies of nursery provision. It was the *first* 'village' nursery school in the country, and the only nursery school in a *mining village*<sup>82</sup> suffering the social handicaps brought about by the economic conditions of the '1930s Depression'. That a school was established must be attributed to the driving force of the persons involved, as envisaged by the Pilgrim Trust:-

'... someone with a sympathetic and also a forceful personality who will use the whole of it in the effort to help them. It does not so much matter what bee he has in his bonnet, as long as the bee is big enough. He must have enthusiasm, conviction and devotion. Given such a personality the thing can be done...'<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> DRO DCEC 1938 proposals following Circ.1444 & Educ.Act 1936

<sup>81</sup> See Chap.3 post 1918 Act

<sup>82</sup> Kitching J. (1997) 'Memories of New Brancepeth' p.44

<sup>83</sup> The Pilgrim Trust (1938) 'Men without work', pp.384-5

Such a *driving force* also emerged in Tynemouth prompted by the serious social and economic conditions in an area of diverse industrial development. The '1930s Depression' brought huge problems, not least the housing of workers, and it was this issue which prompted the initial philanthropic efforts of a local church group. Nursery provision, encouraged by the TNSA, came secondary to the drive to provide better housing.

#### **4) Howdon Road, North Shields, (1934) and the Sir James Knott Memorial, Tynemouth, (1937) Nursery Schools**

A combined study of two adjacent nursery schools arises from the fact that they had a *joint providing body*, with the same group of dedicated, altruistic, local individuals with commitment to provide a better social environment in their neighbourhood. Nursery provision was *not* their original aim but this was included in their major housing schemes. Both schools were *voluntary* and recognised by the Board of Education for grant purposes from the outset.

The county and parliamentary borough of Tynemouth is situated at the South-east corner of Northumberland, and, as the name implies, at the mouth of the River Tyne. The Borough is unusual in having within its boundaries not only the industrial township of North Shields, which is the administrative centre, but also the sea-side resorts of Tynemouth and Cullercoats. During the greater part of its history the principal industries were derived from the geographical position of Tyneside and its extensive river frontage, which supported 'heavy' industries, including coal mining, (the last coal-mine in North Shields closed in 1925), ship building and ship repairs, engineering, fishing and the associated trades of kippering, canning, trawler repair and supply. North Shields was the largest fishing port between the Humber and Aberdeen and claimed the largest ship-repairing firm in the world in the Smith's Dock Company.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of nursery schools in North Shields and Tynemouth was a direct outcome of the appalling *social conditions* in the borough, and was associated with the work of the Square Building Trust Ltd.

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<sup>1</sup> River Tyne Official Handbook, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (1934) p.124

### **Howdon Road Nursery School (1934)**

Meeting jointly one Sunday afternoon in March 1929, the Men's and Women's Bible Classes of the Northumberland Square Presbyterian Church, North Shields, listened to an address on the housing problem given by Dr. H. A. Mess of the Tyneside Council of Social Service, and author of 'Industrial Tyneside' and other papers dealing with social problems in the area.<sup>2</sup>

His remarks, and a realisation of the local conditions of slums, said to be among the *worst in the country*, led later to serious discussion by the Bible Classes, and soon to a determination to take immediate action towards alleviating them. Briefly, 40% of the people lived in homes of two rooms or less. Sometimes there were 7 or 8 people to one room and life and death, washing and cooking, sleeping and eating, all took place in an unhappy sequence. Perhaps the most telling statistic is the percentage of births taking place in one-roomed apartments, rising from 15.7% in 1918 to 'peaks' of 33.6% and 33.2% in 1924 and 1925.

'...It just does not seem possible that 15 years ago, in Tynemouth especially, one baby in three was born in a one-roomed apartment. Since a great part of Tynemouth is a prosperous health resort, the figures can only mean that the other part has sunk to a level which would have been low even for 19th century slums...'<sup>3</sup>

The death rate from tuberculosis was almost half as high again as the national average. The sad thing was that there appeared to be no way in which the occupants could help themselves. Homes for renting at low rents were practically unattainable.

Thus without a penny in hand, and none even in sight, except in the eye of faith, this body of young church people, many themselves unemployed owing to

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<sup>2</sup> See GDNS Chap4.(1)

<sup>3</sup> Goodfellow D.M. (1940) 'Tyneside: the Social Facts', p.32

depression in local industry, purchased 2 acres of ground, ordered plans to be prepared for 24 houses and conceived a lightning campaign for raising £2,000 in one week as a financial basis for their project.

On Sunday, 2nd June 1929, the leader of the Men's class, Mr. Rowland Lishman<sup>4</sup>, inaugurated the campaign by explaining its aims and methods and proposed a Dedication and Thanksgiving Service for the following Sunday on the proposed site.<sup>5</sup>

Divided into groups named 'Joiners', 'Masons', 'Plumbers', 'Plasterers', 'Housewives', and 'Hod-carriers', the members entered into the competitive fund-raising efforts, and a huge red thermometer displayed the daily takings. The local press, by unstinting publicity fanned the flames and the £2,000 was exceeded by the Saturday evening with £100 in excess.<sup>6</sup>

The erection of the houses proceeded very satisfactorily, the men entering into the spirit of the enterprise and all working together with such enthusiasm, goodwill and harmony that the ten houses were completed and ready for occupation in time to qualify for the lump subsidy of £50 per house.

During the following year the remaining 14 houses were completed and in November 1930, these too were tenanted. The selection of tenants was in the hands of a Committee of Management, representative of the Bible Classes who, after interviewing prospective tenants gave preference to the most deserving couples with not less than 3 and not more than 6 children.<sup>7</sup> The rents of 12/- per week were to be paid into the local bank, and the Committee held the right of

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<sup>4</sup> Rowland Lishman, chief cashier, Prince Line Shipping which was owned by James Knott

<sup>5</sup> Northumberland Square Presbyterian Church, Bible Class Magazine, June 1929, Vol.5, No.7 and the Monthly Messenger, June 1929 (Private loan/Robinson)

<sup>6</sup> NShLSC Evening World 8th June 1929

NShLSC The Shields Daily News, Saturday, 8th June 1929

<sup>7</sup> Admitting families with more than 6 children would have led to immediate overcrowding



inspection and insisted upon proper care of the property.<sup>8</sup>

Two years later it was decided to embark on a second scheme for 24 smaller houses to be let at a lower rent. The week preceding Christmas 1932, was set aside for raising £2,000 of the £8,000 needed for this scheme, and this was characterised by even greater enthusiasm and the 'goal' was passed on the fifth night. In February 1933, a start was made on the houses. Appeals were constantly made for gifts of money, loans free of, or at a low rate of interest, or purchase of some of the un-issued shares.

Apart from their efforts to grapple with the problems of housing and unemployment, and financial support for the Building Trust, the Members of the Bible Class made other notable contributions to the amenities of the borough. They had rented a sports field which was laid by 70 unemployed members of the class with tennis courts, putting greens, and flower borders, in which a number of rambler roses and apple trees were planted, hence giving it the name of Apple Tree Park. They worked at fencing, draining and planting the grounds of the Tyneside Jubilee Infirmary which was fast becoming a wilderness due to lack of funds. The class also raised funds to take some hundreds of the poorest children of the borough on a day's outing, thus indicating an early interest in provision for children.

With this second money-raising effort, it was planned to build 24 houses upon the old Horsley Foundry site in Coach Lane, and land was purchased for the purpose. However this site was adjacent to the Messrs. Smith's Dock Company's Bull Ring Docks, and any housing development would have prevented further extension to Smith's works. In a town where so many of the men were

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<sup>8</sup> Newcastle Ref.Lib. Reports were given in Evening World, Shields Daily News, South Shields Gazette, Journal and North Star, Daily Express, North Mail., Newcastle Journal, & Evening Chronicle-see Apps.10&11

engaged in ship building and repair work (i.e. when they were *in* employment) it was felt that no situation should arise, which might, at some future date, curtail the expansion of any company offering work. A representation from Smith's Dock Limited proposed to the Square Building Trust an exchange of land and instead of the Bull Ring, the Trust was offered a piece of land facing Howdon Road adjoining Smith's Recreation Park. This site was almost twice as large as the Bull Ring; the Smith's Dock Company paid £1,000 compensation for extra expenses incurred and subsequently, although the scheme was delayed, new plans were soon underway. It was agreed as far as possible to use local labour and materials, so that a maximum number of persons received benefit from the scheme either directly or indirectly.

Thus during 1933, the Trust was able to offer accommodation to a further 24 families in two blocks of flats, and each block had ten 2-bedroomed and two one-bedroom homes. There were over 200 applications for these houses.

During 1935 it was decided to build a further 24 flats in two similar blocks of 12 adjoining the nursery school (which had opened in 1934) so that the whole represented a symmetrical unit. Money for the third stage of housing by the Square Building Trust was borrowed from the Newcastle and Gateshead Gas Company at 2.5 %, whilst appeals for individual subscribers were constantly made.

The first of the flats were let at a rent of 9/- per week (incl. of rates) which was in many cases comparable with the rents paid for their former slum homes. The 2 blocks were named Lancaster and York House. The following two blocks were named Kent and Gloucester House, and due to the receipt of a Government subsidy under the 1930-35 Housing Acts it was possible to let a flat at an inclusive

rent of 6/7d. per week for the 2 bed-roomed type and 5/10d. for the one bed-room type, provided that the families came from slum clearance areas. The one-bedroom flats were strictly for aged-couples. The four blocks of flats and the nursery school were described by the Rt. Hon. Sir Kingsley Wood, M.P., Minister of Health, as a 'unique scheme in social development'. At the official opening he went on to say ...

... 'We are getting on well with our slum clearance in this country; much has been done but there is still much to be done. One of the most gratifying features of housing progress is the increase in provision that is being made for houses to let for low rents.

I am glad to say they are being erected at an increasing rate and more than at any time in our history, and families from slum areas are now being housed in new homes at the rate of nearly 5,000 a month.

More than 350,000 people have already been given better and healthier accommodation and more than 78,000 slum dwellings have either been closed or demolished. 74,000 have been built and a further 42,000 are under construction....

There are proposals for the erection of 142,000 houses which have been approved. In addition, 117,864 have been modernised or made fit for habitation and to those encouraging figures must be added the remarkable achievement of the erection of nearly 3,000,000 new houses since the war....

Having recounted these remarkable figures, I would say in a programme of the magnitude which still confronts us, there is room for more and not less co-operation between the local authorities and voluntary bodies such as this with which we are associated this afternoon...'<sup>9</sup>

Thus by 1936 with 72 houses and assets around £30,000 the Committee of the Square Building Trust decided to pause a while and concentrate on persuading more people to take an interest in the scheme.

Being unable to raise further large amounts of capital the Trust concentrated on management, and by the time any further expansion could be considered the country was plunged into war.

In describing the work of this philanthropic body, it must be stressed that the local authority was also deeply involved in the mammoth task of slum clearance. When we consider the inter-war years, there was an insurmountable back-

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<sup>9</sup> NShLSC The Shields News, Friday, 20th March, (1936)

log of housing to be tackled. The soldiers returning from the 1914-1918 war had been promised 'Homes fit for Heroes'<sup>10</sup>. By 1929, not one such home had been built on Tyneside. This Bible Class of the Northumberland Square Presbyterian Church first decided to build ONE house, just to draw attention to the appalling slums of the borough. That the trust finally provided 72 homes to help eradicate slums, was in no small way due to the personal qualities of the class leader, Mr Rowland Lishman, a man of supreme faith and courage.

At its inception, the Trust were fortunate in having the voluntary help of very experienced members of the Presbyterian Congregation – the Mayoress, Dame Maude Burnett, Mr. Alfred Robinson, J.P., Mr. Ralph Wheldon and Mr. Hastie Burton, who were also prominent in local affairs as well as experienced business men. To keep expenses at a minimum and thereby enable the lower rents to be charged, all the work of the Square Building Trust was, and is, done voluntarily, and some of the founder members were actively involved for the rest of their lives. The role of the Housing Association was perhaps unique, certainly it became a model throughout the country. Two films were made of its activities and the remarkable fact is that side by side with the Local Authority, it was able to make some contribution towards slum clearance.

The work of this remarkable group of volunteers, however, *did not stop here!* The early 1930s were times of great hardship and distress in the areas of heavy industry and, as has been described,<sup>11</sup> the TNSA were also working very hard to give decent standards for the under fives, many of whose fathers were unemployed.<sup>12</sup> Mrs. Wardley Smith, the Hon. Sec of the TNSA, had spoken of the

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<sup>10</sup> Attributed to Prime Minister, Lloyd George

<sup>11</sup> See Chap. 3 - TNSA founded 1928

<sup>12</sup> Chap.4 (2)

need for nursery provision to the 'Square' Bible Class at one of their meetings. She requested that the Management Committee of the Square Building Trust should convene a meeting and invite Mrs Wintringham, an ex M.P.,<sup>13</sup> to speak. At a subsequent meeting this lady made an offer:-

'If you can find without cost, a suitable site, an Hon. Architect, men without payment of wages to voluntarily prepare the site and erect the building, and someone to volunteer to supervise their work, the Save the Children Fund will donate £300 towards the cost.'<sup>14</sup>

A further £100 was promised by the Tyneside Council of Social Services.

Again the challenge laid down was accepted by the members of the Bible Class, many long-term unemployed, who volunteered to build the nursery under the direction of a skilled overseer. "Was it chance that, responsive to the appeal, we should find the piece of land just adequate for the size of school required?"<sup>15</sup>

When Mrs. Wintringham returned on 19th September to 'cut the first sod', work was already in progress.

The Howdon Road Nursery, a semi-permanent timber building, was designed to accommodate 40 children from 2 to 5, with provision for a similar number if and when the results of the venture and funds justified such a step. It occupied a site in the centre of the four blocks of flats of the Square Building Trust, although when the nursery school was commenced only the first two blocks of flats were completed. Immediately behind the school lay the Smith's Dock Recreation Park and in front i.e. on the south side, was Howdon Road. For an area of industrial congestion, the site was remarkably suitable for a nursery school. The first phase of the school included a large and lofty playroom of area

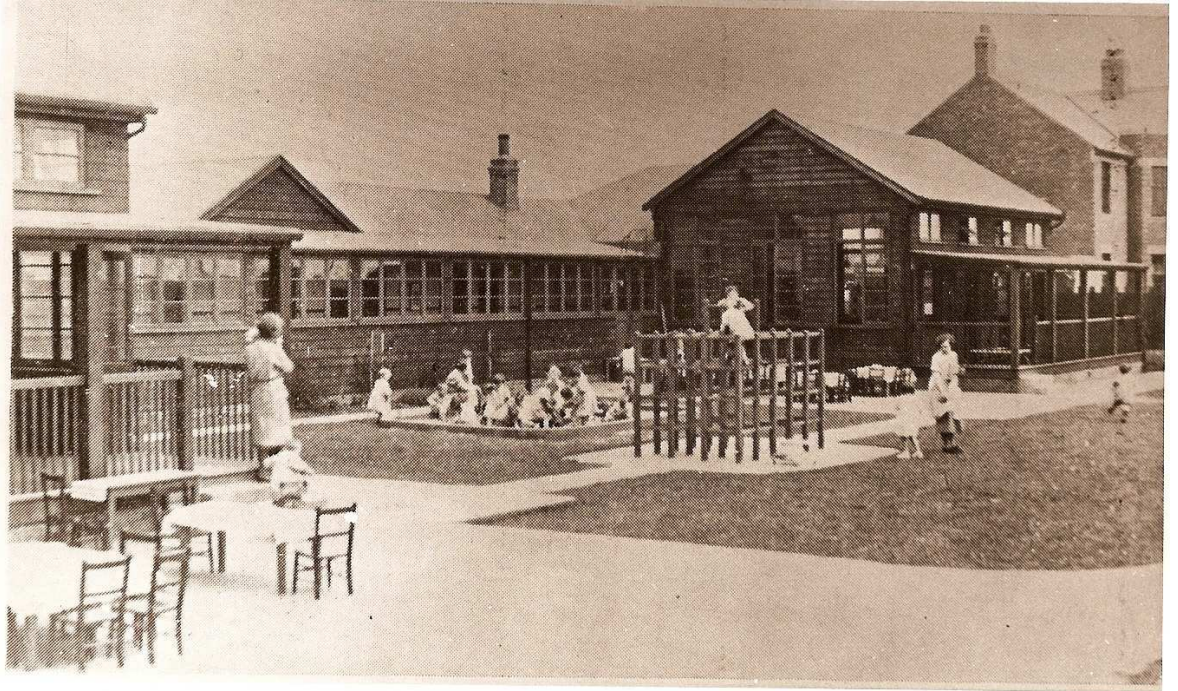
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<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Wintringham a member of the NSA had given support to nursery projects all over the country – see also Chap. 4 (1 & 2)

<sup>14</sup> Report Northumberland Square Presbyterian Church (1933) Bible Class Mag. Vol.10, no.9 (private loan/Robinson)

<sup>15</sup> Rowland Lishman class leader, (1933) Bible Class Magazine as above

## Howdon Road Nursery School



**The aerial photograph below shows the first development of the housing project of the Square Building Trust Limited at Howdon Road with the central situation of the Nursery School.**



600 sq.ft. with windows on three sides ensuring maximum light and air at all times.

On the south side there was to be a wide covered verandah with direct access from the playroom and used for sleeping accommodation, a separate room for storing the beds when not in use, and an outside shed for prams.

Also included in the plans was a dressing room with drying cupboard and blanket racks, a large bathroom with fixed wash basin and bath, all supplied with both warm and cold water, and toilets, a medical and staff room, and a kitchen which was large enough to serve the whole project, even when the extension was added at a future date. The kitchen occupied a central position. All rooms were joined by a corridor along the south side and the main entrance door opened into it.<sup>16</sup> (see photographs of nursery and flats pp.276 & 282)

The local press gave good coverage to the project and many columns were devoted to explaining to 'non-believers' the benefits which could be derived from nursery education. A national criticism was that nursery schools would relieve the parents of their proper responsibility. It was forever a task of the Nursery School Committee to dispel this theory.

In many cases the mothers of children admitted to the Howdon Nursery School had to go out to work because the fathers were unemployed. The economic situation enforced this mother/child separation because the family had to eat and be clothed, and the rent had to be paid.

A further criticism (often levelled at the Emergency Open-air Nursery Schools) was the fact that they were built by voluntary labour. An article in a local newspaper justifies this:-

'There are two facts to be considered here...

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<sup>16</sup> A.K.Tasker, Architect of Nursery in N.S.P.C.(1933) Vol. 10, no. 9

Firstly, that were it (the nursery school), not so built, it would probably not be built at all.

Secondly that the work involved keeps the unemployed workers 'in touch' with their tools.

In effect it serves very much the same purpose as many of the unemployed training centres which are being formed in various parts of the country with the additional advantage that it is not a charge upon the ratepayers of the borough. The question of whether voluntary labour should, or should not be permitted must not be allowed to obscure the real issue which is that these men, without any hope of personal reward are giving their labour in a cause which they believe to be for the welfare of their fellows and their town.

Such unselfish effort is to be commended, and the Borough of Tynemouth may, with some justification, congratulate itself on the spirit which actuates a section of its young people'.<sup>17</sup>...

The girls of the Northumberland Square Bible Class undertook to provide equipment for the nursery school making many of the articles themselves and raising money to purchase others. Another member of the class undertook to make a film of the progress and this was later used in illustrated lectures all over the country (along with the film of the Housing Association).

On Thursday, 28th September 1933, a letter appeared in the Shields Daily News from the Mayor of Tynemouth – Alderman J.W. Fitzhugh and the Joint Treasurers of the Nursery School Committee, Miss M. A. Peacock and Mr. R. Lishman, appealing for donations or subscriptions.

The cost of the whole project was estimated at £1,000. Save the Children Fund gave £300, and £100 came from the Tyneside Council for Social Service. A further £600 was needed, plus the running costs. An anonymous donor agreed to pay the salary of the Superintendent for one year (this was later revealed to be Lady Astor).<sup>18</sup>

Although the Square Building Trust were experts in the management of houses, the running of nursery schools was a direction where experience was completely lacking, therefore a separate committee was formed under the name of

<sup>17</sup> NShLSC Shields Daily News, Saturday, 23rd September 1933.

<sup>18</sup> Lady Astor (and her son) had supported every nursery school in the NE in various ways. (Chaps.3 & 4 passim)



the North Shields Nursery School Committee.

The Officers were:-

Chairman	W.E.Matheson
Vice-Chairman	Miss A.L.Rieve
Joint Treasurers	Miss M.A.Peacock - Head Mistress of the Open Air School <sup>19</sup> Rowland Lishman Esq.J.P.
Joint Secretaries	Miss W. Johnson & Mr. David Robinson
Hon. Architect	Mr. A.R.Tasker F.R.I.B.A.

Committee members were :-

Alderman J.W.Fitzhugh, J.P. (Mayor of Tynemouth)  
Mr. S. Oldroyd (Secretary of Education, Tynemouth)  
Mr. H. J. Hope Scott (Presbyterian Minister)  
Miss A. Forbes  
Mrs. E. Wardley Smith, M.Sc.(TNSA)

On 18th October, Lady Astor entertained a large audience in the Northumberland Square Church in an inspiring address on the value of nursery schools, a cause so close to her heart.<sup>20</sup> She promised to return for the official opening of the Howdon Road School.

On 19th February 1934, the school was opened with 8 children, a salaried Superintendent in charge, and a cook who also cleaned the building. The rest of the helpers - men and women - were unpaid volunteers. The women worked on a rota system with the children; did sewing, and helped on 'open' days; the men looked after the maintenance of the building and cultivated the garden. As the financial position of the school was fragile, many persons with allotments and gardens were able to contribute vegetables towards meals, and thus help defray expenses. The numbers of children on roll grew to the full quota of 40. The parents were asked to contribute 2/- per week towards the cost of three meals per day for each child.

<sup>19</sup> [www.localstudies@northtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.localstudies@northtyneside.gov.uk) (29.11.09) The Open Air School originated in 1923 with plans exhibited at Wembley Stadium. Accommodation for 'delicate' children recommended by Health Committee.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 12 - Lady Astor , 'We can't afford not to have them'

The school was officially opened on 4th May (1934) by Lady Astor. On the same visit to the North East she opened Byker Nursery School and 'cut the first sod' at the site for Sunderland Nursery School. In the evening she addressed a large meeting in the Connaught Hall, Newcastle...

'The best way to cure class consciousness and create a real democracy is to put all British Children between two and five years, irrespective of the wealth and poverty of their parents, into nursery schools.

'I would put my children among them', she said,

'No Authority starts things going,' she added, referring to the need for nursery schools. 'Our social services were never started by the State. It is individual effort and enterprise, and then the State takes up.

We must build nursery schools first, and then force them upon the Government.

The public conscience is aroused and I think people are beginning to see something has to be done.

I congratulate Newcastle on its great body of social workers. I do not think you are so class-conscious as they are down south'.<sup>21</sup>

During the first year application was made for the official recognition of Howdon Nursery School. Following a visit of Dr. Lilian Wilson the Board of Education's Medical Inspector<sup>22</sup>, the school received grant-aid as from April 1st, 1935. As well as this grant more had to be raised by private generosity. The scheme of 'adopting' a child, was launched. This scheme, which was normal practice in voluntary nursery schools<sup>23</sup>, invited individuals or groups to contribute towards the £10 annually, which was required to maintain one child in the nursery for one year. Those interested, who were uninformed of the benefits of nursery education were invited to visit the schools to see what really happened. On these occasions teas were given by friends of the school. Another fund-raising effort was a Bring and Buy Sale.

Meanwhile the local and national press continued to 'educate the public'.<sup>24</sup>

At first the North Shields Nursery had not had its full quota of children, but as soon

<sup>21</sup> Lady Astor, (Newcastle & Sunderland) May 1934

<sup>22</sup> Dr.Lilian Wilson M.O., (24th Sept. 1934) Bd. of Educ. approved

<sup>23</sup> See Chap. 4 (2) Bensham Grove

<sup>24</sup> See also letters from local newspapers December 1934 , Appendix 13, & Grace Owen (9.3.35) 'The Case for Nursery Schools' Appendix 14

as parents realised the benefits, its waiting list grew.

On Friday, 31st May 1935, Miss Ishbel MacDonald, daughter of the Prime Minister, visited the school and was speaker at a meeting of the TNSA. From 17th-19th July, two models were displayed at the store of George Fairburn and Sons (boot and shoe sales), 38-39 Bedford Street, North Shields. The models were of the North Shields Nursery School and Square Building Trust Houses and had been made for exhibition at the Royal Agricultural Show in Newcastle, by Mr. William Guthrie, an employee of the Mayor of Tynemouth (Coun. Hastie D. Burton) who was a builder. The models were made on the scale of half an inch to the foot and were reproduced to the last detail.<sup>25</sup> Many people visited the exhibition and asked questions about the school and houses.

So the work of raising money to provide a better start in life for children, and educating the public to an awareness of this great need, went on. Soon there was a demand for additional accommodation, to double the intake to 80 children, which the Committee had had in mind at the inception of the scheme, and assistance was applied for, through the Commissioner for Special Areas. A grant of 75% of the cost of extensions was promised in February 1936 and work was begun immediately. Actual cost of buildings etc. was £1,088, and of furniture and equipment £160, for which the Commissioner paid £936 and 'Save the Children Fund' granted £225. At the end of the year 1936, there was a healthy balance of £59/4/2d.

On 20th March 1936, Sir Kingsley Wood, MP, Minister of Health, visited the nursery school and expressed great approval.<sup>26</sup> Also during the year there was a

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<sup>25</sup> The model can still be viewed at NShLSC (2010)

<sup>26</sup> TWAS 1232/7 2nd Annual Report North Shields Nursery School, April 1935-March 1936

**Nursery Schools in North Tyneside**  
**(built during the Depression)**



**Howdon Road Nursery School, North Shields, 1934**



**Sir James Knott Memorial Nursery School Tynemouth, 1937**  
**with adjoining flats**

visit from HM Inspectors (Education) and on 11th May 1936, the first children to occupy the newly completed extension were admitted.

In formally declaring the extension open, Lord Eustace Percy<sup>27</sup> said the surroundings of the school were admirable and he congratulated all concerned with it...

'I don't think there is any need for me to emphasise the need for nursery schools in various parts of this country and in this area in particular. We all know what housing conditions still remain in many parts of the country in spite of the new building of the last 15 or 16 years. Generally speaking defective housing, and especially when unemployment comes on top, means a danger of defective nutrition – inadequate food and inadequate provision for the health of those children born, and who grow up in the houses.

One of the greatest evils in the country is the fact that, although on the whole, our standard of living here is better than in any other country, yet the health of our population generally, owing to the survival of these conditions does not correspond to the high level of our standards of living. We need a great deal of intensive work if we are to establish healthy standards and this nursery school is the greatest agency for carrying out that work.<sup>28</sup>

Lord Eustace ended his address by saying that he hoped this successful experiment would not be the last in the Borough....

### **Sir James Knott Memorial Nursery, Tynemouth 1937**

Lord Eustace Percy did not have long to wait. His hopes were soon to be fulfilled, as in the annual report published April 1937, the Committee of the North Shields Nursery School announced its plan to build a new school at the east end of the town in Percy Square, Tynemouth to accommodate 80 children. This project was made possible *without any financial drain* on the Howdon Road School, by a grant from the Commissioner for Special Areas, and the balance was to be provided by the Trustees of the late Sir James Knott, provided that priority be given to children residing in the adjoining 'Sir James Knott' flats. These buildings, housing 135 families had combined good houses at a reasonable price with the

<sup>27</sup> TWAS 1232/9 Lord Eustace Percy, former President of Board of Education, on opening 12.6.36

<sup>28</sup> TWAS 1232/9 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report of North Shields Nursery School (April 1936-March 1937) Shields Daily News, Saturday, 13th June 1936

provision of work for the unemployed utilising a derelict site overlooking the Tyne.<sup>29</sup> The photograph p.282 shows the purpose-built nursery and the Sir James Knott Flats. Again Rowland Lishman was prominent in the concept of the flats. As one of the Trustees of the Knott Memorial Trust his vision resulted in one of the most outstanding buildings of the 1930s in the North East.<sup>30</sup>

Sir James Knott was a local ship owner and after his death money was left in trust to be used for various *philanthropic undertakings*, both large and small. The local infirmary benefited continuously. The Howdon Road Nursery School received a Christmas gift of £50 in 1936 and the money was used to buy each child a pair of shoes and two pairs of socks.<sup>31</sup>

On 12th July 1937, the Howdon Road School was visited by the Duke of Kent who was making a tour of depressed areas on Tyneside, and on Monday, 16th August, fourteen American students from New College, Columbia University, New York, paid an informal visit to the nursery as part of their study of social problems.

Although the money for the construction of the new school was forthcoming, it was still required for the everyday running costs. One amusing fund-raising effort was a football match, between the clergy/doctors and the police, held at Appleby Park on Thursday, 2nd September. About 4,000 supported the match and proceeds from the sale of tickets plus a collection on the field, amounted to £120/1s/11d.

The new nursery school, named the 'Sir James Knott Memorial Nursery School' was opened on 6th September 1937. It was constructed by a building firm,

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<sup>29</sup> TWAS 1232/9 North Shields Nursery School 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report (1937)

<sup>30</sup> NShLSC – Biographical notes on R..Lishman

<sup>31</sup> See Chap.3 'Boots for Bairns'

as by this time, troubles had emerged regarding the use of unemployed labour, e.g. liability for accident, etc. From the outset the school was provisionally recognised by the Board of Education for grant purposes, and the balance of the annual cost of maintenance was met by the Trustees of the Sir James Knott Memorial Fund.<sup>32</sup> Like Howdon Road it was soon full to its capacity of 80, and there was a long waiting list.

Up to this time, the nursery school at Howdon Road had been conducted very successfully with voluntary probationers. However, when the new school opened, the Committee decided to appoint four paid probationers to each nursery. The parents of children in the nursery paid 1/6d (those who could afford it - 2/-) towards the cost of meals. The Committee realised that the most deserving cases were not coming into the nursery school, because their parents either would not, or could not, afford to pay this weekly amount, but they were not in a satisfactory financial position to waive payment altogether, but all agreed that 'the very bottom of the barrel was not being scraped'.

Although the Sir James Knott Nursery School was in a comparatively secure financial position, money was still required for Howdon Road and a Bring and Buy Sale was held at the Sir James Knott School on Saturday, 14th May 1938, for this purpose. The Mothers' Clubs of both nursery schools made special efforts throughout the year, including a Jumble Sale, and a second football match on Wednesday, 31st August 1938, between Clergy/Doctors and Police raised £95/4s/6d.

Nevertheless rising costs began to catch up at Howdon causing subsequent deficits. It is not difficult to analyse the reasons, but the two most expensive

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<sup>32</sup> NShLSC 'The Knott Family' file (2002) The massive charitable contributions had grown by 2002 to £1M each year with benefits for the many and varied undertakings in his native North East including the Universities of Durham, Newcastle and Sunderland

outgoings are worth examining :-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Deficit</u>	<u>Parents' Contributions</u>	<u>Salaries and wages</u>
1937	£178	£197	£282
1938	£181	£207	£455
1939	£244	£234	£533

Food and provisions stayed at around £310 p.a. but salaries and wages almost doubled, whilst the grant from the LEA remained at £25.

In the Autumn Lady Astor, accompanied by Mrs Wintringham, again visited both schools.<sup>33</sup> However with the outbreak of the war in 1939, the two nursery schools were closed, being in declared dangerous areas.

Between 20 and 25 children from each school were evacuated to the Haydon Bridge Holiday Nursery and lived there with the staff. They were recognised as a residential nursery by the Board of Education and as the children reached five, they returned home to be evacuated with their local infants' schools and more under-fives were brought out to fill their places.

The North Shields Howdon Road premises were taken over by the ARP and later used as a Naval Hospital. The staff at Haydon Bridge worked hard to maintain the nursery school routine although in time many of the children were referred to them by the Local Authority, and the true cross-section of parents was not maintained. In 1943 a wartime nursery was opened for 36 children and was utilised to full capacity throughout the war. Premises at 12, Louvain Place were rented for this purpose and were later purchased from the owner (1949) so that the work carried out by this 'day nursery' could continue. However from the report of the Medical Officer of Health (September 1954) we see what happened to this venture...

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<sup>33</sup> TWAS 1232/12 22.11.38 : 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report NSNS, June 1939



'As anticipated, Louvain Day Nursery closed on 28th February 1953, largely as a result of the introduction of a full economic charge in place of the charge hitherto made for meals only. It is worthy of note that there has not been a single request from the public for Day Nursery accommodation since this particular nursery ceased to function'<sup>34</sup>

By a recommendation from the Minister of Health the number of children at Haydon Park was reduced from 42 to 30 and finally in December 1944, all the children returned home. By March 1945, the Sir James Knott Memorial Nursery School was re-opened. Eighteen children on the first day soon built up to 80, with a waiting list of 70.

The nursery school at Howdon Road was de-requisitioned by the Navy, but much work faced the Committee in the form of alterations and re-decoration. This proved longer than had been anticipated and it was a full year, Easter 1946, before children could be admitted. The school soon had its full complement and a long waiting list. The general routine of the school was maintained and many children in the Borough continued to gain great benefit from the opportunities of nursery education.

The two schools however were 'voluntary' and each year a financial deficit, which mounted with rising costs, gave cause for concern. Both schools were recognised for substantial grants from the LEA, but these were insufficient.

Difficulties were heightened two years after re-opening when the Joint Voluntary Schools' Committee applied for recognition as training centres so that their students could qualify for the new NNEB Certificate. After visits by the Ministry of Education and Health Inspectors, extensions were deemed to be required and/or reduction in numbers together with additional certificated teachers and assistants. It was in fact impossible to acquire further land for Howdon Road and the Committee felt that extensions of rooms would not be practical. As both

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<sup>34</sup> TWAS MOH Tynemouth (1954, September) Annual Report of Medical Officer of Health p.14

schools had huge waiting lists and the children admitted were all in very special need of nursery facilities the Committee did not feel that they would be justified in reducing numbers even though they were very sympathetic towards the probationers who wished to become nursery students.

After allowing for direct Ministry of Education grants, deficits of £1,000 on each nursery school were expected in the years 1945/46 and 1946/47.<sup>35</sup> The LEA responded with a contribution of £2,375 for 1946/47 over-coming the fact that only the usual £25 grant to the schools was in the estimates for the year.<sup>36</sup>

The question of nursery provision was of course constantly under consideration and in the Tynemouth Development Plan nursery *classes* were projected along with ownership of the two nursery schools. As early as Spring 1943 no further land was being ear-marked by the Authority for nursery schools in view of the spare accommodation at some of the Borough's elementary schools.<sup>37</sup> By the Spring 1948, this was reaffirmed<sup>38</sup> and confirmed again two years later when the Ministry indicated that they favoured nursery classes.<sup>39</sup> The Authority had to defer provision of nursery classes, however, 'for at least twelve months in view of the considerable expenditure involved.'<sup>40</sup>

The Joint School Committee continued to have financial difficulties also, particularly at Howdon Road. Although large LEA grants were received ranging from £1,500 to £3,000, these were not allowing the implementation of HMI's recommendations following inspection in 1951, especially for additional qualified

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<sup>35</sup> TWAS Tynemouth Ed.Com. Min.203, 8.2.46

<sup>36</sup> TWAS Tynemouth Ed.Com. Min.342, 5.4.46. £3000 was voted annually thereafter but even this had to be increased to £4000 by 1964

<sup>37</sup> TWAS Tynemouth Ed.Com. Min.205, 7.5.43

<sup>38</sup> TWAS Tynemouth Ed. Com. Min.640, 26.4.48

<sup>39</sup> TWAS Tynemouth Ed. Com. Min.646, 17.2.50

<sup>40</sup> TWAS Tynemouth Ed. Com. Min.330, 18.10.49

teachers and assistants and an increasing inadequacy was felt. The real charge had to be raised to 5/- in 1957/58. Requests had to be made to the Ministry for 'payments on account' in order to mitigate the charges for overdraft interest. An estimate (such as the following example) would be submitted :

Howdon Road Nursery school, North Shields, 1961/62

<u>Estimated Expenditure</u>		<u>Estimated Income</u>	
Salaries and Wages	£3,860	Ministry Grant	£1,340
Food	£750	LEA Grant	£2,500
General Expenses	£950	Parents	£700
		Donations	£900
		Deficit	£120
	£5,560		£5,560

Thus complete control by the LEA was inevitable, and take-over finally came in September 1964 with expanded provision on a half-time basis for more children.

These two nurseries in Tynemouth were started as a direct response to the appalling social conditions of the 1930s. The town was not alone in its considerable numbers of ill-housed, under-fed, unemployed persons, but the situation was *unique* on two counts:-

- a young people's religious group and the prominent philanthropic citizens who inspired them, initially set about the problem of alleviating the deploring housing conditions in the borough, as their priority.
- the fact that *nursery* provision was conceived as an integral part of their project may be attributed to the members of the TNSA who were working in other areas of Tyneside and who saw opportunities for promoting the cause of the youngest children.

The conditions of social deprivation were a direct outcome of the national economic situation and its effects throughout the North East industrial areas. The ship repair yards were idle, the demand for coal had slumped and the despair of unemployment affected most homes. The nursery schools were started to help the children living in such conditions to give them adequate sleep, good food and a

carefree environment in which to play. The Commissioner for Special Areas and the Save the Children Fund gave generous support in the early years, whilst in the war-time and post-war periods the Local Authority gave additional grant support which enabled the schools to stay open. Although finance was an ever present concern, they were fortunate in also having the support of an enlightened LEA and the advice of the TNSA. That they were able to carry on so long on their own is most praiseworthy, but with the rising costs in post-war years, the only viable outcome was that the LEA should eventually assume *full control*.

Full control of nursery schools however, came unexpectedly in most cases, when wartime nurseries were established under the Ministry of Health/Board of Education.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Measures for Nursery Provision during WW2 nationally and in the North East**

#### **Two war-time case studies – Gilesgate and Framwellgate, Durham City**

The chronological sequence of the development of provision from the late 1930s and throughout WW2 is addressed nationally, and specifically, with reference to the North East. The crucial work of the TNSA in times of crisis and uncertainty is highlighted. Two local case studies of wartime nurseries, Gilesgate and Framwellgate are examples of provision to meet the needs of mothers in war work.

Nursery provision during the 1930s<sup>1</sup> revealed a period of growth as a direct result of the deplorable social and economic conditions of the Depression. The last annual report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education before the outbreak of WW2 is that for 1939. It showed the number of nursery schools in the country, actually recognised, as being 118, of which 63 were LEA and 55 Voluntary, with total accommodation for 9,504 children. Proposals were in hand for 47 new nursery schools.<sup>2</sup>

But a great upheaval was now to take place with the outbreak of WW2. Change however was not *solely* due to war-time conditions, although these did influence their pace and direction. Three themes which had been at the basis of provision now appeared to be partially addressed. Many nursery schools had been

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<sup>1</sup> See Chap.3

<sup>2</sup> Bd of Ed. (1940) Health of the School Child,1939

taken over by their respective LEAs (George Dent, Darlington excepted of course, in the North East). The part played by individuals was subsumed by philanthropic groups and the crucial element of financial support which had been a controlling factor was somewhat alleviated by state support.

Also, though less documented, is the fact that the state, as part of its wartime measures introduced a 'one-size fits all situation' which stifled individuality, but ensured maximum standards of health and education in all of its nursery schools.

Initially all proposals for new nursery schools were shelved on the outbreak of war, as alarming concerns were perceived to affect the continuance of nursery schools and classes. This was due to the anticipated threat of large-scale bombing. However some action was needed partly in order to save the lives of helpless mothers and children, and partly in order to prevent panic and the consequent hampering of military operations in national defence, and to lessen the problems of the distribution of food and essential services in a major crisis.

The Ministry of Health had divided the country into areas according to three grades of vulnerability; evacuation areas from which persons were to be moved; reception areas to which they were to be taken; and neutral areas which, though not to be evacuated, were considered unfit to serve as reception areas. The evacuation of children under five was arranged in three categories; those accompanied by their mothers, those evacuated with their infant schools; and those who went in parties from their existing nursery schools and day nurseries.<sup>3</sup> During September 1938 in the Munich Crisis week, 1,200 children attending

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<sup>3</sup> Ferguson S. & Fitzgerald H. (1954) 'Studies in the Social Services : History of the Second World War' pp.148-149

London nursery schools had been transported to safe areas as a trial evacuation.<sup>4</sup>

In a memorandum to the London County Council from an informal committee of the NSA, the need for careful selection of houses was stressed and the training of volunteers through classes in child care organised in the country districts. It was pointed out that the establishment of centres in the country and the offers of voluntary help might be utilised to provide holidays for small groups of children, thus making a useful nucleus easily expanded in a time of national emergency.<sup>5</sup>

On 4th September 1939, the first school day of the war, many nursery schools were in session, but were closed until further notice. At Hebburn-on-Tyne 28 children, a teacher and three probationers were away on holiday in the country, at Haydon Park Holiday House. They returned home the next day. Limited evacuation was undertaken from schools which were considered to be vulnerable areas. About half the children of Tynemouth and North Shields nursery schools were combined as a joint school at Haydon Park.<sup>6</sup>

The nursery schools and day nurseries from other evacuating areas were converted into similar residential institutions. It became clearer than ever before that many children under school age were subject to ignorance and neglect. Places were found for some of these children in need of special care and attention. It was obvious however that the need was not being met. Voluntary effort in one or two local authorities (notably St. Albans and Dorking) set out to make further provision.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Titmuss E.M (1950) 'Problems of Social Policy', p.29 (footnote 4); this achievement despite apparent indifference of the 'Board', recounted by Lowndes GAN (1969) 'The Silent Social Revolution' (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) pp.198-99 - himself an LCC Officer involved in the planning.

<sup>5</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 22/4 ;N.S.A. (1938) also TWAS 1232/11 (TNSA) 15th Annual Rep., Haydon Park, Northumberland

<sup>6</sup> TWAS 1752 TNSA (10.11.39)

<sup>7</sup> Dent H.C. (1944) 'Education in Transition : a sociological study of the impact of war on English Education 1939-1943' p.83

It was seen that *something must be done*. Following a joint circular in January 1940 from the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education,<sup>8</sup> the NSA was pressing Local Authorities for a widespread organisation of nursery *centres* in reception areas for evacuated children, which are described as ‘something between a day nursery and a nursery school’. Two alternatives were possible which included a large group of more than 20 children in a house under qualified or partly-qualified supervision, or, quite small groups under a warden, supervisor or teacher, accommodated in a large room.

Alternative two was considered the more practical. The centres were to be for children between 2 and 5 only, and open both morning and afternoon sessions. Unless communal meals were provided near at hand, the children were to return to their billets for midday meal. Nationally, however, the scheme did not operate as it should. By the end of 1940, nearly 12 months after the circular, only six nursery centres in reception areas had been opened, and perhaps 10 more were in preparation. Delay seems to have been due to several causes:-

First, there was dual control at the head (Ministry of Health *and* Board of Education) and suggested local administration was too cumbersome as it included a committee representing the Education Authority, the Welfare Authority and Women’s Voluntary Services. There was also difficulty in obtaining premises and equipment, offset by the steady return of evacuated children to their homes. By the time the circular was issued, 88% of mothers had returned home taking with them 86% of the children!<sup>9</sup> Experience of the NSA was, that a high percentage of children evacuated en bloc in the care of staff in whom parents had real

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<sup>8</sup> TWAS 1232/18 Ministry of Health Circular 1936 ; Board of Education Circular 1495 (9.1.40)

<sup>9</sup> Ferguson S.M. & Fitzgerald H. (1954) p.180. It is not clear whether Ferguson & Fitzgerald took evidence from Home Intelligence Reports which show desire of London mothers for nursery provision in city or country, Addison P.& Crang J.A.eds. (2010) ‘Listening to Britain’ *passim*



confidence, remained in the country.<sup>10</sup> There was also local dissatisfaction at the restriction of the scheme to the children of evacuated mothers.<sup>11</sup>

With the start of the heavy bombing of London and other congested areas, and during the Battle of Britain, the need to remove children from unsafe and unhealthy conditions became more imperative. If nursery centres *had* been available in the reception areas it seems many more young children would have come from the danger areas and used them. However, as they still had to be accompanied by a parent or guardian on evacuation many remained in danger areas. Also house-holders in reception areas were refusing to offer spare accommodation to house nursery centres.

The Ministry of Health acted locally in response to Ministry of Labour requests to satisfy this special need. Again finance was the obstacle. Under the existing block grant arrangements, local welfare authorities found it difficult to see their way to supporting such expensive departures. The Ministry of Health soon realised that the Treasury would have to share more of the financial burden if any progress was to be made.

The welcome release came in middle of 1940 when the Government began to look favourably on welfare projects including promotion of industrial welfare as an aid to production. In June a new Factory and Welfare Department of the Ministry of Labour was set up.<sup>12</sup> But the focus changed, and the drive came from a general increase in nursery provision in order to free mothers for war work.

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<sup>10</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 22/5 N.S.A. (1939)16th Annual Report. GDNS children were evacuated with staff to Hurworth the home of Mrs.Lloyd Pease Chap 4 (1) & Howdon and James Knott at Haydon Bridge. Chap 4(4)

<sup>11</sup> Ferguson & Fitzgerald (1954) lay first blame for delay on the Treasury who withheld financial approval from fears that the many enthusiastic supporters of the nursery movement might use the scheme as a lever to push for nursery extensions on a much larger scale than would ever have been approved in peace-time.

<sup>12</sup> Officers in every region to deal with the expansion of industrial welfare including play centres and day nurseries for children of female workers.

'Woman Power', rather than the success of evacuation became the important factor and thus, with women in this new role, the need for nursery provision was spot-lighted. However even these plans were received with some reluctance as authoritative individuals in the Ministry of Health argued with Ministry of Labour proposals citing that...'... a mother's place is in the home where she should look after her own children.'<sup>13</sup> This did not become a factor of major significance until 1941 and therefore no great general advance was made in welfare or nursery provision as..

'...even at the height of the war there were places for only about one quarter of the children aged under five of women war workers.'<sup>14</sup>

Treasury approval soon came for what were to be known as War Time Nurseries. These could be started by a Voluntary agency if a Local Authority wished. The local Medical Officer of Health, however, was to be responsible for general supervision. There were few standards in premises, equipment or staffing - 25 square feet per child and facilities for play and for sleep out of doors, together with provision for air raid shelters. Staffing was to be on the scale - Matron in charge, plus trained helper and one other (where more than 40 children), probationers and assistants, one to every five children.

It was in the second year of the war, that the National Government<sup>15</sup> acted. The Shakespeare Committee<sup>16</sup>, in charge of billeting arrangements, also reported in March 1941, on the need for nursery and play centres for evacuated children and more social clubs for their mothers.<sup>17</sup>

Outside London, where in some of the boroughs a demand revealed itself,

<sup>13</sup> Summerfield P. (1984) 'Women Workers' p.94

<sup>14</sup> Purvis J. (1995) 'Women's History : Britain, 1850-1945'; Summerfield P. (1984) p.84

<sup>15</sup> TWAS 1232/18 Min. of Health (June 1940)

<sup>16</sup> TWAS 1232/18 'Report on Conditions in Reception Areas' (1941) Chairman Mr. Geoffrey Shakespeare M.P.

<sup>17</sup> Ferguson & Fitzgerald (1954) p.55

the great need was in the districts surrounding the Ordnance Factories. A Ministry of Labour Investigation at R.O.F. Chorley showed a 16% demand for creche provision from its married workers who were mothers of young children.<sup>18</sup>

Responses of Local Authorities to this new call from the Ministry of Health were as diverse as Local Government achievements and efficiency in so many other fields, but fell broadly into three categories:-

- 1) Those well advanced in Maternity and Child Welfare services and eager to increase their nursery provision, e.g. Birmingham
- 2) Those previously deterred by financial considerations and glad of this new opportunity to develop a needed service,
- 3) Those strongly opposed to providing nurseries on the terms proposed, e.g. Chorley R.D.C. were not convinced that a nursery could be successful and were somewhat overwhelmed at the problems of welfare created by the vast ordnance factory in their midst.

There was certainly some justification in the plea of unfairness to authorities having to find extra money simply because factories needing large numbers of women happened to have been planted in their areas. Many councillors were unwilling to allocate funds for a *potential* need, but wished to see an *existing* need first, which in turn began a vicious circle, for many mothers were reluctant to begin work until there was somewhere to leave their children. Unfortunately the position was complicated by the fact of some nurseries remaining only part full after opening. Even where mothers went to work, there was often diffidence to deposit children at the new institutions and they continued to make their own arrangements. In certain parts of the country, child minding or 'putting out', was an industry in itself and the need for Day Nurseries was not readily admitted. Gradually, however, the nurseries filled up until there were long waiting lists.

By January 1941, the Ministry of Labour had foreseen that the supply of single women would soon be used up and employment of married women would

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<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Labour Gazette (June 1940) Royal Ordnance Factory, Chorley, Lancs. Survey of working mothers who would use a crèche if provided. DUL Off. Pub. S/Min

fast become essential. A decision was now reached to increase state aid for welfare and to organise nurseries in such a way as to make them meet present needs. The picture of provision for under-fives was confused. The three pre-war strands of nursery provision still existed; nursery schools, day nurseries and nursery classes, and now added to this was the growing number of nursery centres. In addition, the minder scheme of the Ministry of Health and a number of play rooms and crèches increased the diversity. As always, Professor Stanley of Newcastle(TNSA) was persistently active locally and nationally. In his letter to the weekly 'Education : Journal of the Association of Education Committees' he challenged '....the *strange* word "minding" ...'

Children under two years old of munition workers would attend day nurseries with care from nurses and VADs (Ministry of Health), whilst the over twos would be the responsibility of the Board of Education via LEAs, also receiving 100% grant. The slogan would then be 'EDUCATIONAL CARE FOR CHILDREN OVER TWO'. At two and a half years of age they want to 'adventure into the business of educating themselves'. The final jibe (in Stanley style) ... 'Let the President of the Board, if he is still breathing, say so, and let the Board implement the policy in a circular.'<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile there were the different *interests* of three separate Government departments, the Board of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Labour. The old divisions were still there - the day nursery versus the school; the nursery school versus the nursery class, and the Ministry of Health versus the Board of Education. From the outset the Ministry of Health considered that the needs of war demanded day nurseries, staffed by nurses and open for long

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<sup>19</sup> 'Education' (18th April 1941) 'Nursery Schools and Classes : Minding' p.299

hours. The Board of Education had to admit that Local Authorities could not deal with children under two, and day nursery provision won the day. Decisions were taken jointly to set up wartime nurseries under Ministry of Health control whilst Maternity and Child Welfare provision continued as usual for children 0 - 5 years.

The plan went out in May.<sup>20</sup> Two types of nursery were to be provided:-

1) Whole time nursery schools under a matron providing full daytime care for children from a few months old up to school age. It would cater for the children of women in full-time employment and be open for twelve to fifteen hours a day, providing meals and milk and the chance of regular sleep and baths. A nursery school teacher or Child Care Reservist was to be appointed to supervise the activities of the older infants

2) Part time nursery schools open during normal school hours under a teacher and catering chiefly for two to five year olds. This type was roughly a development from the Nursery Centre and was especially suitable for evacuated children and children whose mothers had part-time jobs.

The Ministry's Explanatory Memorandum showed that :-

'...the provision of nurseries to be known as war-time nurseries both of evacuated children and for the children of women in employment (whether evacuees or local residents) should be regarded as war provision, and the net approved capital expenditure of the Authority, after taking account of payments made by the mothers will be repaid by the Ministry. The M.& C.W. Authority would be responsible for the carrying out of the necessary arrangements'<sup>21</sup>

Charges to parents were to be one shilling for a full day including meals in the whole-time nursery, and 3d. per day (no meals) and 6d per day (with lunch) in the part-time nursery. The regulation of the nursery centre was continued however, in that evacuated mothers not in employment were not required to pay.<sup>22</sup>

Progress was swift in response to the 100% grant. Within 6 months of the Circulars (by the end of November 1941), 194 War-Time Nurseries were open, 209 were approved but not yet ready, and another 264 were in active preparation,

<sup>20</sup> TWAS 1232/19 TNSA 13th Annual Report (1941-42) Min.of Hlth. Circular 2388, Bd of Ed.Circ.1553 (31st May 1941)

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Health Memo. 239/3a

<sup>22</sup> Trades Union Congress 'Industrial News letter for Women' No.5 of June-July 1941 claimed that '...owing largely to the efforts of the General Council' the joint circular had emerged. It proceeded to outline the main features of the provision including 'Shilling a Day' and exemptions.

a total of 667.<sup>23</sup> As war-time events unfolded needing more women workers in key-factories, H.M.Forces needs and promised aid to Russia, a more speedy and economical extension of war-time nursery provision was announced on 5th December 1941.<sup>24</sup> This temporary war-time measure included a lowering of the age of admission to war-time nursery classes in public elementary schools from three to two. Hours were to be extended and eating and washing facilities were to be organised. The same scale of fees was charged as for war-time nurseries and though these classes were run by Local Education Authorities, any extra expense they incurred was recoverable from the Ministry of Health.

Private, voluntary-organised provision took the form of nurseries in factories. One such nursery, supervised by a paid nurse, assisted by WVS volunteers was working at Darlaston, Staffs.<sup>25</sup> There were also several advantages in nurseries run by employers. There was no extra journey for mothers so that in the event of illness, the mother was immediately at hand. Children also experienced an added sense of security when the mother was near by. But there were also disadvantages such as the possibility of low standards by less scrupulous employers and greater risks of infection. There was possibly a longer and more tiring journey for the child with added pressure on public transport, and most importantly there was the risk of air attack on the plant.

On balance the Ministry of Health disfavoured the on-site industrial nursery. It was however prepared to pay grants-in-aid if none of these adverse factors seemed relevant. It was thought better to site the war-time nurseries near the

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<sup>23</sup> H.L.Deb. (09 Dec.1941) Vol.121,Col.223-33, Note Lord Nathan's observation '...to consider the matter to-day not from the standpoint mainly of child welfare but as an economic problem, as a problem related to the better utilisation of our woman-power.' (my emphasis)

<sup>24</sup> TWAS 1232/19 TNSA 13th Annual Rep. Ministry of Health Circular 2535, Board of Education Circular 1573, (Dec.1941)

<sup>25</sup> P.E.P.,No.185, Vol.9, p.14

homes of workers rather than near the factories, though of course in many or even in most industrial areas, the distinction was hard to make.

The position by September 1944 at the peak of development showed that more than 106,000 young children in England and Wales were in various types of nursery. At the same time more children under five were in ordinary reception classes at public elementary schools.<sup>26</sup>

While the Ministry of Health held central control, the interests of the Board of Education in the wartime Day Nurseries was recognised. A new division of the Ministry for 'Care of the Under Fives' was established and a few senior officials of the Board were seconded to it. Later an H.M. Inspector and a Medical Officer of the Board of Education were detailed to work under the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health to deal particularly with the educational side of the wartime nurseries.

The initiative in any area was taken by local officers of the Ministry of Labour. In consultation with them were the Maternity and Child Welfare Authorities, the Local Education Authority, the Ministry of Health's regional staff, the Board of Education and local voluntary bodies. All collaborated to work out a local plan.<sup>27</sup> War-time Nurseries were to be under the charge of a qualified nurse known as 'Matron', and other trained and qualified nurses would help her with the under two's and attend to the general health of the nursery.<sup>28</sup>

Teachers or other persons qualified to organise the training and activities of the older children were required. Next came the nursery helpers and assistants and finally the domestic staff.

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<sup>26</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 2/8 & PRO Ed..138 (drafts etc.) Bd. of Ed. (1945) Memorandum on Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes for the Histories of the Second World War.

<sup>27</sup> P.E.P., No.203, p.4

<sup>28</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 2/4 Circular 2388 (May 1941)

All the above categories were in short supply. A need had arisen on the establishment of the nursery centre scheme; a memorandum to the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education from the National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare then put forward the idea of establishing an organisation for training in various types of nursery work.

The principle of establishing a Child Care Reserve for nursery workers was accepted by the Ministry of Health and Board of Education.<sup>29</sup> Certificate courses were run, successful completion of which qualified participants for nursery and child welfare work.<sup>30</sup> With the announcement of the War-Time Nursery Scheme in 1941, the need for Child Care Reservists became urgent, and expansion of courses was required. Two types of courses were now held, that for those wishing to work with the under 2's, and with the 3's to 5's. In order to cater for those of the latter group who wished to qualify for Deputy Charge of the older children, the pro-nursery school teacher category of Warden was formulated.

Local authorities were encouraged to find suitable buildings or such premises that could be easily adapted for the purposes of a war-time nursery. Many of these were private houses,<sup>31</sup> annexes to other buildings such as hospitals, and first aid posts, and had to be requisitioned. Special adaptations were required. In view of the necessity of the return of the buildings to their owners after the war, authorities were often restrained in adapting buildings. Where there was a particular need, the Ministry of Health frequently provided and financed pre-fabricated, fully-equipped, 'Maycrete' huts, four of which were at Birtley, Bishop Auckland, Shildon and Spennymoor with further proposals for Stanley, Chester-le-Street, Washington, Wingate, Billingham, Darlington(4), West Hartlepool,

<sup>29</sup> Courses were set up in 1940 to alleviate shortage of trained 'nursery personnel'

<sup>30</sup> Ferguson & Fitzgerald (1954) p.200

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Louvain Terrace, Tynemouth, see Chap.4 (4)



Hartlepool, Crook, Durham and South Bank.<sup>32</sup>

In fact in Durham County (which by the 1960s had 21 nursery schools), all but three were of this structure. These were not ideal, although improvements were made during the war years. The NSA were always ready to advise, and submitted suitable plans for nurseries which were not only economical to construct but also fulfilled the minimum requirements for the under fives. Even by the 1960s many were still in use and most lasted far longer than was ever intended.

The designing of the first model experimental nursery commissioned by the NSA and opened by Mr. Herbert Morrison<sup>33</sup> at Guildford on 26th April 1942 was made possible by money from the British War Relief Society of America.<sup>34</sup>

Standard furniture, tables, chairs, cots etc. of good 'utility'<sup>35</sup> style were provided, but the equipment in toys, play material for muscular activity, sense training and development of skills was often inadequate. The Ministry allowed an expenditure of ten shillings per head and an allowance of 2/6d per head annually for replacement, but at war-time prices this allowance was inadequate. Much voluntary effort in toy making was necessary. Fire Service and Civil Defence workers spent their 'watch' making toys. Again the NSA advised in this work and on the best use of scrap and waste materials.

In assessing the factors involved in the provision of war-time nurseries one is forced to look at their declared purpose - to allow more *women to work*. As in all things however finance must not be forgotten and the cost is to be counted. It was found that there was no evidence of a serious balancing between the labour

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<sup>32</sup> TWAS TC765. TNSA. Letter from Miss Box Min, of Hlth. (10.12.41) - note N.E. 'extent'

<sup>33</sup> Home Secretary (Lab.) & grandfather of Lord Mandelson (Lab.2010), in National Government led by Winston Churchill

<sup>34</sup> A generous 'contributing' society whose money enabled Lady Gunston to continue support for nurseries in Plymouth long after aid ceased when America entered the war in December 1941.

<sup>35</sup> Adequate 'no frills' furniture manufactured during WW2

needed to provide nurseries and the labour that would be free as a result, before the policy of expansion was accepted.<sup>36</sup> It seems to have been assumed that nurseries would release woman-power, and should therefore be provided. So the emphasis shifts from altruism to economics. When the Ministry of Health later examined the position in July 1943 it found that approximately 90 women were released for every 100 daily attendances of children at the nurseries. On this basis the nurseries released approximately 34,500 women for industry, but the 11,567 staff in the nurseries offset these figures. So the net release was about 23,000.<sup>37</sup> Of these many may not have been involved in war work but from May 1941, under the terms of the circulars it was possible for the children of *any* women who were in employment (not only those in *essential* work) to use nurseries. Women with young children had no liability under the Registration of Employment Order and they could therefore do any work without reference to the Ministry of Labour. Unfortunately no adequate records of the mothers' employment seem to have been kept by Local Authorities or individual nurseries. A wartime survey of Birmingham nurseries showed that one-third of the total mothers were in categories which seemed of less importance - 'shop assistants, domestic and other work'.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, their indirect contribution to the war effort may well have been very great - releasing more mobile women for the factories.

The low net release of *women for employment* was also brought about by the high staff ratio in the nursery itself. The ratio was as high as 1 to 4, or 1 to 5 staff to children in nurseries taking children from 0 to 5 years old. As was argued strongly by Lady Astor and other supporters of the NSA, if war-time nurseries

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<sup>36</sup> Ferguson & Fitzgerald (1954) p.204

<sup>37</sup> Committee of Public Accounts, (October 1944) 2nd Report

<sup>38</sup> Ferguson & Fitzgerald (1954) pp.206-207

had been restricted to children of 2 to 5 years old, as in the established nursery school, the ratio would increase to 1 to 8 or 10. Costs could be reduced correspondingly, with capital costs of £24 instead of £65, and maintenance of £12 per head instead of £27.<sup>39</sup>

On the question of costing, the ‘public watch dogs’ of spending were critical. They found the costs ‘disproportionate’ to the labour released by the Committee of Public Accounts.<sup>40</sup> In fact, (as from past experience) daily costs varied from one nursery school to another, e.g. in seven war-time nurseries in one Metropolitan Borough, the expenditure varied from 1/11d to 3/9d per place per day from April to December. It is significant of the rising costs in wartime that the average weekly cost per child in attendance estimated by the Ministry of Health a year later, was 25s or at least 4/6 per day on a five and a half day week.

From the *health* point of view, again some division arose over the question of ‘below two or not’ and the medical evidence against the public nursery for children below the age of two seemed strong in the factors of infection rates and separation anxiety. The truth was however that the choice of home or nursery was not possible for many mothers. Some of them were faced with a dilemma - either work, and to that extent ‘neglect’ her child, or stay at home and rear her child in poverty. Other women attracted by war-time jobs and high wages, *would* work, even to the detriment of home and family. From the point of view of the working mother, the nursery was clearly the most satisfactory place to leave her young child.

In the final balance sheet, some intangibles of a net release of women power

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<sup>39</sup> HC Deb, 381, 5s, Cols.82-87, 30.6.42

<sup>40</sup> Select Committee on National Expenditure, Seventh Report (1942) criticised high costs ‘...in the present emergency this standard, even though otherwise desirable must be lowered’.... ‘if expenditure of public money on these new facilities is to be justified...’

for the nurseries can be looked at as an expression of the *right* of mothers willing to contribute to the war effort, an expression of the good intention of the community towards them and their children, and an appreciation of the difficulties they had to face.

'The nursery was more than a mere device to get a maximum number of women on to the assembly line or into the weaving shed; it was a contribution towards the feeling of mutual responsibility between Government and the Family'.<sup>41</sup>

The confidential Green Book 'Education After The War' circulated privately, (mid 1941), confirmed the nursery movement as of 1936.<sup>42</sup> Gosden suggests the book was issued by '...traditionalists who were, above all, anxious to preserve what they believed to be essentially sound...'and... '...others who saw a need - and an opportunity for radical change...'<sup>43</sup> There was inevitable Treasury opposition on proposals it did not like. The feelings of one official were typical. '...day nurseries etc. may be very necessary in wartime but is it old fashioned to hope that after the war family life may begin again? It may be that many mothers are incompetent as mothers, but universal nursery schools are a confession of defeat...'<sup>44</sup>

The subsequent White Paper of July 1943<sup>45</sup> pointed out that nursery schools were needed in all districts, as even when children come from good homes they could derive much benefit, both educational and physical, from attendance at a nursery school. It was however, in the poorer parts of the large cities that nursery schools were especially necessary. There was no obligation on

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<sup>41</sup> Ferguson & Fitzgerald (1954) p.205

<sup>42</sup> Bd. of Ed. (1941) 'Education after the War'

<sup>43</sup> Gosden P.H.J.H. (1976) 'Education in the Second World War' p.239;The Office Committee evacuated to Bournemouth in November 1940 formulated post-war policy; R.G.Wallace (1981) 'The origins and authorship of the 1944 Education Act' in Hist.of Educ.10,4, has suggested they were the real authors of the 1944 'Butler' Act well before Butler became President of the Board: compare 'Office Committee' pre-1918 Act. See Chap.3

<sup>44</sup>PRO T161/193/S48249/2:E Hale,1 June 1943 cited in Land A, Lowe R. & Whiteside N (1992) 'Development of the Welfare State 1939-1951'

<sup>45</sup> Bd of Ed. (1943) 'Educational Reconstruction' Cmd.6458, para. 25

the authority to provide such schools for the whole of the area, though there was an obligation on them to satisfy the Minister that their provision was sufficient to meet the needs of their area. Thus their obligation was to depend largely on the estimate of the needs of the different parts of their area, and on the demands made by the parents of young children for this provision. It was not written into the Act or White Paper, but perhaps authorities were wise to remember that demand is often created by supply!!

There was considerable controversy still as to whether the needs of children under five should be supplied in separate self-contained nursery schools or in nursery classes attached to infants' schools. The argument against such classes had been that they were less generous in the amenities necessary for the proper physical and mental care of very young children. It was also argued that nursery schools would be smaller than infant schools with nursery classes, providing a more suitable environment and being more likely to be nearer the children's homes and less likely to give opportunity for the spread of infectious diseases.<sup>46</sup> The law now decided that nursery schools should be provided except where the authority considered the provision of nursery classes to be more expedient.

In 1944, with Butler Act, new legislation came for nursery schools *twenty six years* after the permissive legislation of the Fisher Act (1918).

The Local Education Authority had an explicit *duty* to provide for pupils who had not attained the age of five years by the provision of nursery schools, or, where they considered the provision of such schools to be inexpedient, by the provision of nursery classes in other schools.<sup>47</sup> So the *duty* of an authority began

<sup>46</sup> Bd.of Ed.White paper 1943, para.25

<sup>47</sup> Education Act 1944 (Section 8 (2) (b))

with children at the age of two. Previous to the passage of this act, LEAs had the *power*, but not the *duty*, of supplying or aiding the supply of nursery schools.<sup>48</sup>

With this new legislation it looked as if there would be a large scale movement towards the establishment of nursery schools as soon as war time conditions improved. However this was not to be the case...

Fortunately, the TNSA had remained the driving force during the whole period. In 1935 while the nursery schools in the area were increasing in number, it was felt that the relationship between the TNSA and the individual nursery schools demanded formal definition. Therefore, the Committee had laid before the Annual Meeting of members the following resolutions:-

- 1) 'That the TNSA invite the affiliation of every nursery school in the area, - affiliation to be 2/6d per annum
- 2) That every school so affiliated, appoint two representatives annually to serve on the TNSA Committee
- 3) That the TNSA while disclaiming any financial responsibility for their maintenance, undertake to help the affiliated school in every way possible by advice, publicity, work and general propaganda.
- 4) That so far as funds permit, the TNSA consider applications for special grants.
- 5) That all subscribers to the individual nursery school be regarded as, ipso facto, members of the TNSA'<sup>49</sup>

These proposals were accepted.

During the Autumn and Spring of 1935/36, a joint class for probationers from all nursery schools was held monthly. Talks followed by discussion were on health matters (led by Mrs. Wardley Smith).<sup>50</sup> These had proved so successful that they were repeated each year with more varied subjects and speakers.

By 1938, it was decided that as the number of probationers had increased so rapidly with the building of new nursery schools and extensions, the Association felt that a more definite course of instruction was needed to

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<sup>48</sup> Education Act 1921, section 20

<sup>49</sup> TWAS 1232/6 T.N.S.A., 1935, Annual Report,

<sup>50</sup> TWAS 1232/7 Wardley Smith E. (Feb.1935) in 'Mother & Child' rep.TNSA

supplement the practical training in the schools. The courses arranged were as follows:-

Dr.G.H.Hickling M.D.,Ch.B.,B.Sc.,D.P.H.  
Health Rules for Toddlers  
Nutrition  
Prevention of infection in Nursery Schools

Mrs. Vaughan, some time Lecturer at Swansea Training College  
Individual Occupations  
Group Occupation (a) Dramatic Work and Singing Games  
Group Occupation (b) Rhythmic Work

Miss Nobbs, Lecturer at Sunderland Training College  
Instinct and Emotion  
Development of Conduct and Character  
Play and its significance in the Child's development.

Thus for the first years in its life the TNSA encouraged progress and development, but the outbreak of war in September 1939 certainly changed its course of action.

The 11th Annual Report 1939/40 is largely a record of adaptation to war-time conditions.<sup>51</sup> The declaration of war in September 1939 came just as the nursery schools were reopening after the summer holiday and, in anticipation of the blitz, some schools were closed and others partly evacuated. As the anticipated air-raids did not develop during the autumn and winter, further arrangements were made to increase the number of children under nursery school supervision either in reception areas or in their home districts...

A closer look at the individual schools during 1939/40 will show how they fared in the difficult days. The small school at Welbeck Road remained open with the full number of 20 children attending for mornings only. An air raid shelter was provided, but, the staff pointed out that it would present great difficulties if an air raid took place during the afternoon rest period, so that the decision was taken for mornings only. In the afternoons, play centres were held for

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<sup>51</sup> TWAS 1232/14 TNSA (1940)11th Annual Report

older children. The Mothers' Club concentrated its activities on knitting for men at the 'Front', but plans for a summer holiday in the country were made in good faith. Ashfield was closed by Newcastle Education Committee and even though the Newcastle Health Committee subsequently had great difficulty in securing premises, it '*scandalously*' remained closed.<sup>52</sup>

North Shields and Tynemouth<sup>53</sup> presented a different scenario. These two schools, being near the river and coast were both closed immediately war started, and the buildings taken over by the ARP. Between 20 and 25 children from each school were evacuated to Haydon Bridge and lived there with the staff. This residential school, approved by the Board of Education, soon settled down to normal nursery routine, and the children improved considerably in health and physique. As they reached five, they returned home to be re-evacuated with their local infant schools and more younger children were brought out. Parents could visit the children once a month.<sup>54</sup>

The children from Hebburn Nursery School were already at Haydon Bridge on *their* summer holiday when war broke out. Their Committee decided that the Hebburn School should be closed and that the children should return home either to be evacuated with their mothers, or until some alternative scheme could be arranged.<sup>55</sup> As soon as possible, the Superintendent, Miss Todd, and her assistant, organised group work for about 50% of the children in their own homes, and even managed through the worst weather of the severe winter(1941) to carry round and distribute fresh milk and cod liver oil twice a week to those children who

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<sup>52</sup> TWAS 1232/3 Informal discussion held in Professor Stanley's room at King's College on War Nurseries and related problems. (Scandalous - his interpretation.)

<sup>53</sup> TWAS 1232/14 T.N.S.A. (1940)11th Annual Rep.

<sup>54</sup> See Chap 3

<sup>55</sup> TWAS TC 765 - Letter Hebburn Educ.Com. (E.Foxall) to Prof. Brian Stanley 4.10.39



could be reached. The nursery school was re-opened with approval of the Board of Education on 12th February. Forty children were re-admitted the first week, and the school was soon running normally with its full complement of 80, and 144 on the waiting list. An adequate underground brick shelter was provided, and the Mothers' Club was re-started.

At Sunderland a number of the children with the Superintendent, Miss Byrne, some of the staff, and some mothers as helpers, were evacuated in September 1939 to a large house, Hawthorn Towers, at Seaham Harbour. As the house was not equipped for nursery school children, the staff had many extra difficulties to contend with. The daily routine of the nursery took place in a large wooden hut in the grounds but the staff and children slept in the house.

New Brancepeth Nursery, being in a reception area carried on its normal routine.

Jarrow, Tyneside's newest nursery was due to open in September 1939, but the opening had to be postponed.<sup>56</sup> The commencement of Blaydon Nursery was deferred, although the grant from the Commissioner for Special Areas towards the building was already earmarked for the work. However, it was promised that it should still be available after the war.

Claremont Nursery School, Newcastle, the only fee-paying nursery school under the TNSA was started in February 1939. With the outbreak of war most of the children were privately evacuated by their parents, but later, in response to a request from parents still in Newcastle, the school was re-opened. Then in January 1940, the expiration of the lease of the school premises, led to new difficulties. Until Easter, the school for 7 children was carried on in Fenham at the

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<sup>56</sup> TWAS TC765 Letter Edward J. Brown, Hon. Sec. Jarrow N.S. Vol. (Com) to TNSA (1.10.39)

home of the Rev. and Mrs. Foster and then at 27, Eldon Place (an annexe of King's College, now Newcastle University).

Byker and Bensham Grove Nursery Schools were closed at the outbreak of the war by their respective LEAs. The parents at Byker repeatedly asked for something to be done for their children and in February 1940, the old Voluntary Committee met and decided that a play centre should be started for 30 children as soon as possible. Rooms in the Byker Parish Hall were lent by the Vicar and Church Council ; an air raid shelter was installed and the Byker Nursery Play Centre opened on Monday, 20th May 1940. The children attended either morning or afternoon. The TNSA granted £60 towards funds needed for the play centre.

Early in the Autumn of 1940, the Committee of the TNSA met to discuss their policy during the war. It was decided that they could best further nursery work by:-

'1) Encouraging the establishment of nursery play centres in districts where the nursery schools were closed and the children not evacuated. Byker Nursery Play Centre was the direct outcome of this decision.

2) Offering to Local Education Committees, Billeting Officers, and Committees responsible for the welfare of young children from Tyneside in reception areas, the advice and services of the Association in forming nursery classes and play centres for the evacuated children already present in their areas, or in making plans for such classes and centres in readiness for a second evacuation should it become necessary.

A letter to this effect was sent to all the committee and billeting officers in question and the experienced members of the association were called upon to give their help and services when an emergency arose.<sup>57</sup>

By 1941, things were continuing as well as possible under wartime conditions. Some of the children at Haydon Bridge (i.e. children from North Shields and Tynemouth) on reaching the age of five were found billets in the village and admitted to the local infants' school.

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<sup>57</sup> TWAS 1232 /14 T.N.S.A. 11th Annual Report, (1940)

Sunderland Nursery School (evacuated to Hawthorn House) had to be re-evacuated to Croft, North Yorkshire, when the buildings at Seaham were taken over by the Ministry of Health.

Otherwise there was little change in the positions of nursery schools on Tyneside. In Byker the nursery playroom continued to provide in some small measure for under fives.

Miss Jennings, of the Housing Improvement Trust, opened three nursery play rooms during 1940/41 in the West End of Newcastle. These were open all day, and mid-day meals were provided. The play rooms were staffed by voluntary helpers. The Claremont Nursery School continued a rather precarious existence in the premises of the Junior department of the Central High School for Girls, Jesmond Road until February 1941, when it had to close down due to lack of pupils. Meanwhile the parent association pursued its policy in encouraging the provision of nursery play centres for children not evacuated.

In reception areas (where the TNSA had hoped for nursery classes and play centres) little encouragement was given to the scheme (which was similar in effect to that laid down by the Board of Education and Ministry of Health)<sup>58</sup> by Local Education Committees and Billeting Officers, and the help of services of the members of the association were not requested.

However, during 1940, when heavy air-raids on industrial areas developed, the Association again worked hard, in the face of much discouragement, to forward the opening of nursery schools and playrooms, or the preparation of shadow schemes for young evacuees in Reception Areas.

Miss Atkinson visited Billeting Officers in Carlisle, (Urban and Rural

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<sup>58</sup> TWAS 1232/14 Board of Education Circular 1495, Ministry of Health Circular 1936, 9.1.40

Districts) Whitehaven, Workington, Maryport and Wigton and made contact by letter with Kendal Town UDC and South Westmorland RDC. Miss Jennings visited Billeting Officers in Hexham RD and Professor Stanley met Hexham UDC.

The plan which these representatives spoke for was a shadow plan. Knowing that there were in most towns not enough children of the appropriate age to justify the Reception Authorities in opening nursery centres under Circular 1495<sup>59</sup>, and fearing that emergency evacuation from Tyneside, such as the Home Counties had experienced, might find reception areas without the means of coping with young children, the TNSA urged that plans be drawn up and submitted to HMIs. These could come into operation complete in every detail with equipment collected and staff knowing their business, on the day when there was found to be the necessary number of children (ten) for the centre to qualify for 100% grant.<sup>60</sup>

Not many of the Authorities approached showed much enthusiasm and except in Hexham, little came of the contacts and further development was curtailed. The reasons were that the same building had frequently been earmarked for overlapping or conflicting shadow plans, or that the 'under fives' had all gone home. On the other hand a future increase in the 'under fives' could not be contemplated because the district was full, and there could be no further immigration of people of any age.

After consultation with HMIs some of these difficulties were solved, such as premises which could be constructed of pre-fabricated materials, or where there was room in the school, centres could be conducted on school premises. Providing there was a nucleus of 10 children earning the billeting grant, the centre could take in local children as well.

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<sup>59</sup> TWAS 1232/14 Board of Education Circular 1495, 9.1.40

<sup>60</sup> TWAS 1232/14 Appendix to Circular 1495 'Setting up a Nursery Centre'

It was realised that there would be private evacuees, too well off to claim the billeting allowance, but living often in very confined quarters, who could count as local children. Voluntary helpers were to be trained in intensive courses of lectures, visits and discussions before the centres were opened and equipment could be obtained from American sources.

A start was made in Hexham, where Mrs. Bull got together a committee and helpers. Professor Stanley presided at their first two meetings. The Billeting Officer, MOH, and Clerk to the Council all took a keen interest in the plan and HM Inspectors, Miss Thomas and Mr. Paget attended the second meeting. Miss Hand helped the voluntary workers and Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Bull found, by canvassing, the necessary number of children. Miss Steel of Welbeck Nursery School agreed to second Miss Hand to the Hexham Centre for two months as soon as it started, to get things under way.

Unfortunately, the premises originally promised for the Centre were no longer available and Mrs. Bull approached the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education,<sup>61</sup> for a pre-fabricated building, and obtained the promise of a site. It was hoped the venture would soon be started and followed by the establishment of other centres in country districts.

In 1941/42 the Government Scheme for War-time Nurseries was rapidly developed and the TNSA made special efforts to co-operate with the scheme and to emphasize the educational side in planning and running of war-time nurseries.

The day-to-day running of the old nursery schools continued under TNSA surveillance. Welbeck Road was in great demand for practical training of ancillaries and of students for teaching.

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<sup>61</sup>TWAS 1232/18 Ministry of Health, Circular 2388; Board of Education Circular, 1553, recommended by TNSA (1940-41)12th Annual Report to members as a piece of constructive planning for 'War Nurseries'

North Shields and Tynemouth remained closed but 40 children from their catchment areas were always in residence at Haydon Bridge. At Hebburn there was a waiting list of 174 children under 3 and a half years of age. Sunderland children remained evacuated at Croft, North Yorks.

The Byker playroom and West-end playrooms continued to make life more tolerable for children whose mothers were *not* working and who did not qualify for a place in a war-time nursery.<sup>62</sup> A fourth playroom was opened in the West-end in 1941.

In November of the same year, Bensham Grove re-opened after air-raid shelters had been provided. Two nursery classes were started by Newcastle Education Committee in Delaval Road Infants' School. The hours were the same as the Infants' School, and milk and biscuits were provided for the children at 3d per week. Each class accommodated 30 children. In spite of requests for the re-opening of Ashfield, the Newcastle Education Office issued a negative response to the TNSA.<sup>63</sup>

Since May 1941, efforts had been made in Hexham to establish a Nursery Centre, but in response to the application to the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education, the Committee were refused a pre-fabricated hut. These were only available for war-time nurseries and as the mothers of children who would attend at Hexham were not doing direct war work, a recognised war-time nursery could not be sanctioned there, although by the efforts of Mrs. Bull and her committee, a site had already been secured. Thus where a sincere effort had gained much ground, all was lost!

In 1941, the Ministry of Health issued information regarding the position of

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<sup>62</sup> TWAS 1232/20 TNSA (1943) 15th Annual Report, p.3

<sup>63</sup> TWAS T765 (27.5.41) Prof. Brian Stanley's anger at the response is illustrated on the handwritten letter as Grrr!

war nurseries in the region.<sup>64</sup> Two were to be opened on Tyneside - one in Newcastle at Ashfield House, which used to be a nursery school, and one in Gateshead.<sup>65</sup>

Plans showed that five more were intended for Newcastle, and one each in Hebburn, Jarrow, Birtley, Washington and Sunderland. To follow later were one each in South Shields, Tynemouth, Prudhoe, Alnwick, Chester-le-Street and Durham. Sites were also chosen for future nursery schools at Newburn and Houghton-le-Spring with other nurseries for more distant parts of the region.

During the years 1942/43, the number of war nurseries was considerably increased in all areas of the North East, and the TNSA continued to co-operate wherever possible, especially in the educational aspect of their work. Lectures and discussions were arranged for staffs of war nurseries and members of the Child Care Reserve.

The pre-war nursery schools and play rooms continued to fill a need which could not wholly be supplied by the war nurseries as the mothers of the children attending the schools and playrooms were not necessarily in direct war work.

Welbeck Road, North Shields and Tynemouth (still resident at Haydon Bridge) Nursery Schools all continued to work satisfactorily, whilst at Hebburn the need for more nursery provision was evident in the long waiting list of 123 names. A war-time nursery was opened in 1942, which after the war became a day nursery.

The Sunderland Nursery School remained evacuated at Croft. The school was administered by the Sunderland Education Committee for the period of the

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<sup>64</sup> Dual control, although Min. of Health (Circ.2388) has **central** role & Bd. of Ed. (Circ.1553 ) is 'recognised'.

<sup>65</sup> TWAS T765 TNSA (1942) 14th Annual Report includes opening of Ashfield House Day Nursery 27.3.42

war and was financed by the Ministry of Health as an evacuated residential nursery.

The playrooms of the West-end of Newcastle were almost threatened with extinction and a public meeting was called to arouse interest in their activities. As a result £110 was given and later £26 was received as a result of a letter in the press by Professor Brian Stanley; £25 was donated by the TNSA, £75 by Messrs. Vickers-Armstrong and £100 by the Sir James Knott Memorial Trust. The local health authority gave 3/6d a week for each child of a mother working full- or part-time, and the mothers raised their weekly subscription from 2/6d to 3/6d. Gifts of toys were received, often made by ARP and Fire Service groups. The playrooms filled a real need in the West-end of Newcastle, as there was a shortage of war nurseries, in an area where there were many mothers involved in war work. Also they were able to help mothers handicapped by illness etc., who, because they were *not* working mothers, could not send their children to the war-time nurseries.

During the year 1942, a war nursery was opened at Blaydon on the site chosen for the Blaydon Nursery School as were schools at Birtley, Chester-le-Street, Hebburn, Jarrow, North Shields, and South Shields, Prudhoe and Sunderland. Five more nurseries were opened in Newcastle making a total of six in the city. In 1943, the TNSA concentrated its efforts on bringing before the public the various types of nursery education available, and suggesting what was the most desirable and possible, under the proposals of the new Education Bill.<sup>66</sup> A pamphlet, 'Tyneside's Youngest Youngsters' written by the Hon. Sec., Miss Nobbs, Lecturer at Sunderland Training College, was issued by the TNSA for this purpose, and had wide distribution. The activities of the local group were further

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<sup>66</sup> White Paper (1943) as prelude to Education Act 1944



publicised by the arrival at Haydon Park of ‘...three little boys from London who are beginning to play and laugh again...’ - evacuees from the horrors of the blitz!<sup>67</sup>

Also during this fifth year of the war, the TNSA, having weighed up all the advantages and disadvantages of such a step, decided to become affiliated to the Nursery School Association of Great Britain. This meant that 2/6d of each member's subscription (1/3d of each Child Care Reservist's subscription) was handed over to the central association, but monies retained and other funds, could be put to local use. The chief advantages of affiliation would be the fact that the TNSA was kept in touch with national policy, and would receive publications.

During 1944, the Playrooms suffered some set-backs. Byker Nursery Play Centre which had started as a war-time emergency measure in May 1940 had to be closed at the end of March 1944 as the Assistant Superintendent was called up to the Women's Forces, and it was found impossible to replace her. Of the four West-end nursery play rooms, the one in Westmorland Road was closed, but the three remaining play rooms in Park Road, Wharnccliffe Street and Rye Hill continued to flourish.

A nursery play room was established in a Church Hall at West Hartlepool the borough's *first* response to the needs of the under fives. It was open five mornings a week with a Child Care Reservist in charge, and WVS voluntary helpers.

From Welbeck Nursery School, Delaval Road nursery classes, Sunderland, Tynemouth and North Shields, reports showed that schools were continuing to cater for the under-fives in difficult days. By now Sunderland had two nursery classes at Havelock Infant School and two war-time nurseries.

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<sup>67</sup> TWAS TT765 (1943) 15th Annual Report of TNSA

In 1944, Hebburn Nursery School suffered damage by fire which began in the boiler house. The children were quickly evacuated and a great quantity of equipment was rescued. The school carried on temporarily in the boys' hut at the Social Services Centre and plans for rebuilding were sent, with the support of the TNSA, to the Ministry of Education for approval.<sup>68</sup>

'... The need for an informed body of opinion upon matters relating to the welfare and education of the youngest children of the community becomes increasingly urgent. By the use of machinery of such an association as the TNSA, much could be done to help to bring the reforms envisaged by the Act to fruition, for only in so far as the children of the community are given right conditions at the start, can those who are responsible for their later education build upon safe foundations..<sup>69</sup>

In November the Committee of the TNSA invited Miss D. Hall, Head of the Nursery Department of Darlington Training College to prepare a Memorandum on..

'The possibility of stimulating the demand for the provision of the best types of Nursery School Education in the schools to be set up under the new Act...'<sup>70</sup>

Miss Hall used her wisdom and experience of all forms of provision and of student training. She first paid due regard to the work of the pioneer schools, the NSA and all the associated workers but found 'little room for complacency'. There still lay an abyss 'which may or may not be bridged by implementing the 1944 Education Act'.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps rather unexpected were the papers sent to the TNSA from the Communist Party's regional office in Newcastle.<sup>72</sup> Miss Atkinson, Lecturer in Professor Stanley's department seems to have taken on his outspoken stance as she endorses the latter, 'I do find the Communists 'irritating'! Nevertheless the

<sup>68</sup> TWAS TC 765 T.N.S.A. 15th Annual Report 1943-44

<sup>69</sup> TWAS TC 765 TNSA Annual Report, 1944

<sup>70</sup> TWAS TC 765 TNSA Annual Report, 1945

<sup>71</sup> TWAS TT 1232/75 TNSA (March 1945). Memorandum submitted to the Committee of the Tyneside Nursery School Association .pp.1-10

<sup>72</sup> TWAS TT 1232/75 TNSA Communist Party statements on under 2s, under 5s, future of War Nurseries. London Women's Parliament deputation to Ministry of Health and campaign proposals 1943-45. The final C.P. letter in the file tells of developments in Gateshead, Jarrow, W.& E. Newcastle and requests more TNSA recruitment forms

main thrust of the party message could not surely be denied ... 'making the public more nursery school minded'.<sup>73</sup>

In July a public meeting was called when the speaker was Lady Allen of Hurtwood.<sup>74</sup> After outlining the great advantage of nursery schools - 'small workshops of democracy', she warned delegates against lethargy among parents and administrators, where nursery schools were concerned, and against the temptation to dilute staffs for pre-school age-groups, an aspect which had been jealously guarded during the war years.

Meanwhile, reports during 1944/45 from the individual nursery classes and schools showed an ever- increasing demand for places. Delaval Road Nursery Classes, with a full complement of 60, had 48 on the waiting list. Newcastle now had 10 war-time nurseries and one residential nursery school which together accommodated 500 children of working mothers. Their ages ranged from 6 weeks to five years of age and the curriculum was planned by the Wardens on nursery school lines.

The probationers in the war-time nurseries were given a course of training lasting for two years, which included lectures on the physical and mental health of children. At the end of the course they took the examination for the National Society of Children's Nurseries. By 1945, the future of the war nurseries was uncertain but, in Newcastle, all had long waiting lists.

The Sunderland Nursery School was still in evacuation at Croft. In the last two years of the war many of the children in attendance were those placed in the care of the Local Authority under a court order. There were three war-time nurseries at George Street, Chester Road and Thompson Park, a nursery class in

<sup>73</sup> TWAS 1232/75TNSA 14.3.46 Communist party policy statement.

<sup>74</sup> Chairman of NSA and instrumental in founding the first war-time nursery at Guildford in 1942

the building of St.Columba's school and two classes at Havelock Nursery/Infant school - all had waiting lists!

Hebburn gutted by fire in 1943, re-opened in re-built premises in November 1944, and by December there was the full complement of 80 on roll, with a waiting list of 120. Children had to wait at least two years before being admitted so the Committee made it a rule, that when a child reached the age of 3½ his/her name was taken off the list. In consequence only children between 3 and 3½ were admitted.

Jarrow Nursery school which was to have opened in September 1939 was used as an infants' school throughout the war. Due largely to the intervention of Miss K.M.Thomas HMI, the committee were persuaded to open the school as a nursery on 11th March 1945. Sixty children were to be accommodated, but due to a delay in the delivery of nursery furniture, only 40 were admitted at first. After 4 months, the school had a waiting list of 78.

Tynemouth Nursery School was re-opened in March 1945 with 18 children. In a few weeks this built up to 67 on roll and about 70 on the waiting list. Tynemouth still had one small war-time nursery at Louvain Place and there was a great need for nursery school facilities. Many of the children lived in 2-roomed flats and some with grand-parents.

In 1945 the TNSA decided to issue *its* policy following the passing of the 1944 Act. This was printed in the 17th Annual Report 1945/46 :-

The TNSA and the Provision of Nursery Schools under the 1944 Act

Throughout the country there is apparent a growing interest in, and concern for the earliest implementation of those clauses in the Education Act of 1944 relating to nursery school provision. The TNSA has become aware of the increasing interest on the part of the public on this question by reason of the many requests wanting us to send speakers to address meetings all over the North Eastern area on matters relating to the care of children under five years of age. As we found ourselves

unable to supply the number of speakers to meet the demand we arranged in February to hold a short 'briefing course' on nursery schools to which interested organisations were invited to send members who, after attending the course would be asked by the organisations concerned, to speak to any of its groups on the subject of nursery school provision. The course was held in the Education Department of King's College and was attended by nearly sixty representatives.

At the final session it was decided that local committees of women's organisations should be formed to survey intensively the needs for nursery schools in each of the Tyneside areas. Such groups would canvas mothers, especially those attending Maternity and Child Welfare Clinics, those on the waiting lists of nursery schools and war-time nurseries, and those who had applied for the admission of their children under age, to Infant Schools. The object of the surveys would be to present Education Committees with evidence of the need of nursery schools from the mothers of at least 100 children of nursery school age within walking distance – or 'toddling distance' – of possible sites.

Those present determined to find out whether county and city councils had adequate numbers of nursery schools in the 'development plans' (due to reach the Ministry of Education on 1st April, 1946) whether they proposed to close war-time nurseries when the percentage grant was reduced on the same date and whether they were advertising for nursery trained teachers.

At the end of May the various representatives were asked to come to another meeting to report on the work they had been able to initiate in various districts. Some very useful propaganda work was reported, especially that done by Mrs. Badenoch, for the South Northumberland District Women's Co-operative Guild. Interesting accounts of the eagerness with which mothers looked to the Old Fold Nursery, Gateshead for help and advice were given by Miss Hugh, the Matron. It was felt that local organisations working in their own area could do, and on the whole were doing, much to stimulate opinion among the general public. In some cases these local organisations had succeeded in persuading their County Councils to receive petitions and to give their proposals consideration in planning for further educational development.<sup>75</sup>

In addition reports from the individual nurseries show that as soon as hostilities ceased, the schools got back to pre-war routine as quickly as possible. The Sir James Knott Nursery School, Percy Square, Tynemouth was reopened at Easter 1945, with 80 children on roll and a long waiting list. Howdon Road Nursery School was de-requisitioned by the Navy and the Committee was engaged in alterations and re-decoration prior to re-opening.

The end of the war found the nursery school position in Sunderland very much as it had been in 1939. Briefly, the first nursery school had been set up as an emergency open-air nursery in George Street by a Voluntary Committee. This later came under the LEA and was evacuated to Croft during the war, whilst the

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<sup>75</sup> TWAS TT 765 T.N.S.A. (1945) 17th Annual Report'

premises vacated in Sunderland were taken over by the Local Health Committee as a war-time nursery. In 1945 Sunderland Education Authority regained the George Street School premises as a nursery school. There was also the nursery wing at the Havelock Infant School. Of the 3 war-time nurseries therefore, one was closed and the other two remained under the Health Committee, but plans were made by the LEA for a nursery school on every new estate. At Jarrow, the newly opened nursery school had 60 children on roll, and 146 on the waiting list, while Bensham Grove Gateshead had plans for 80 children and 50 on the waiting list. The Welbeck Road Nursery School continued to provide for 20 children.

The 10 Newcastle war-time nurseries were still open in 1945 and there was great need for provision from working mothers. The cessation of 100% grants from the Ministry of Health did not result in any closures, but one nursery at the extreme east end was closed due to lack of demand in the area.

Plans were in hand for six of these nurseries to be retained by the Health Committee as Day Nurseries, to accommodate children whose mothers were obliged to work, and cases where special circumstances such as illness in the home, made nursery provision essential.

The remaining nurseries were to be taken over by the Education Authority as nursery schools, subject to the approval of the Ministry of Education. These three were to carry on as normal so that the transition could be as smooth as possible.

The Newcastle Nursery Playrooms continued in the West End, but the Rye Hill Playrooms had to be closed due to staffing difficulties. They did useful work and there was great demand for places. From March 1946, the 100% grant from

the Ministry of Health ceased,<sup>76</sup> although grants were approved by Newcastle Health Committee. Thus the Playrooms were left in severe financial difficulties. Many of the children were admitted on social and economic grounds. Some had parents who were deaf, blind or invalid and would be left stranded.

An appeal was made for more money, gifts in kind and voluntary helpers. During 1946/47 the TNSA's major effort was a Children's Week (2nd -7th June) when lectures, films, discussions and exhibitions were staged to arouse more public interest and support.

As President, Brian Stanley<sup>77</sup> also continued active communications. A strong rejoinder came from his pen once again when on 6th June 1946 he attacked Professor Spence's reported criticism of public nurseries.

Two statements had particularly revealed the Professor's lack of understanding of the social situation in which nurseries and nursery schools functioned...

'...children's physicians who know most about nurseries are the least willing to use them for their own children ...' and '... the passing of the old-fashioned nanny...'<sup>78</sup>

Stanley asked...

'...What percentage of parents ever employed a nanny, however old-fashioned? What proportion of children's physicians live with their families in two rooms at the top of a tenement?' 'No institutions – educational or medical were perfect, nor even old-fashioned nannies'...' but nurseries are surprisingly good and are improving and are socially necessary under present conditions of housing and play space...'

So there was no need for the '...majority of women to remain prejudiced ...' (Prof. Spence's words ) against them. Stanley urged the 'prejudicial woman' ... 'to visit a good nursery school and see. There are several on Tyneside...' he

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<sup>76</sup> TWAS TT 765 (1945) 17th Annual Report of TNSA

<sup>77</sup> TWAS TT 765 (1946) 17th Annual Report TNSA. Professor Stanley resigned as Chairman and became President

<sup>78</sup> Professor J.C.Spence

concluded. This of course applied to the other case studies in this thesis, in Darlington and County Durham.

As well as the normal workings of the *established* nursery schools – Sir James Knott, Welbeck, Bensham Grove, things were getting back to normal in some of the schools which had been closed during the war.

Howdon Road began admitting children after Easter 1946 and soon had the full complement on roll, and a long waiting list, whilst the nursery class at Prior Street Nursery/Infant School, Gateshead had 30 children from 3 to 4 and a half, and more places were needed. There was some re-organisation within Newcastle when Ashfield Nursery School was re-opened by the LEA on 7th January 1947. Miss Dixon, of Delaval Road nursery class, became the new Superintendent, but it was decided to retain the nursery class as a small unit for 30 children.

Much equipment had to be returned from Delaval back to Ashfield, but by the end of February the full quota of 90 children (including 18 from Delaval who lived in the Ashfield area) were accommodated. The waiting list was 120 by the end of the year. Meanwhile 8 of the war-time nurseries continued as day nurseries and places were given only to those whose mothers were compelled to work, although the demand for accommodation was greater than ever.

The first group of students between 16 and 18 began preparing for the National Nursery Education Board (NNEB) Certificate. Two days each week were spent in Further Education in General and Vocational subjects and the rest of the week in practical training in the nurseries.

Thus by 1947/48 the former nursery schools were functioning as before the War. In the same year the TNSA lost the services of Dr. Hickling, one of its



founding members<sup>79</sup>. In Newcastle the war nurseries remained under the Health Department as Day Nurseries. South of the river, this was not always the case, and most of the war-time nurseries in the County of Durham were taken over by the LEA as nursery schools.

Two Durham war-time nurseries deserve particular scrutiny as being typical case studies of war-time provision...

**Framwellgate and Gilesgate Nursery Schools, (Durham City)**

... were established in 1942 as part of the war-time nurseries scheme of the Ministry of Health/ Board of Education, one on the east side and one on the west side of Durham City.

In the pre-war years, Durham City had represented an oasis in the centre of the county administrative area, in more than one sense. The original nucleus of the city, sited on a meander of the River Wear, provided an ecclesiastical and university enclave, almost untouched by the hustle and bustle of every-day living. To the north, east and west were sprawls of 19th and 20th century urbanisation and industrial development.

The population of the 'city'<sup>80</sup> in the post-war period was just over 20,000. In 1801 it was 4,000. During the intervening years the population of the county increased tenfold in contrast to the City's figures increasing five fold.

Durham held its special place in being the administrative centre, although being much less populous than several of the county's towns. It was the headquarters of both county Government and county organisations that had been

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<sup>79</sup> TWAS TT 765 (1946-47) 18th Annual Report of TNSA. Dr. Hickling, representing BFUW had been a member since 1928 and was Hon. Medical Advisor. She retired in 1947

<sup>80</sup> When boundaries were re-drawn in 1974, the population of the city of Durham was increased almost threefold

attracted by its central position and established status. It was important as an educational and medical centre, but shopping and entertainment facilities were limited.

From this brief survey it is not surprising that the city was occupied by a large proportion of white collar workers - teachers, doctors, university staff, local Government officers and police personnel. Also there was a considerable commuting population. The situation was slow to change.

In the thirties, however, the city was not without its problems, although these may not have been so intense as in the surrounding mining villages where the mine was the sole source of work. Areas of Framwellgate, Crossgate and Elvet where there were some of the oldest properties of the City, were warrens of human habitation and the slum clearance programme was carried out along the lines of other local authorities, in moving the tenants from the city centres out to new council housing estates on the city boundaries.

Certainly at this time, there was considerable human suffering due to lack of work, poor housing and ignorance, and no doubt if nursery schools had been started, there would have been plenty of children able to benefit from them.

However, until the 1944 Education Act, Durham City was a Part III Local Education Authority - a small, semi - independent local education authority in the centre of the county authority, administering no more than a dozen schools from a tiny office over a shop in the Market Place!

Finances needed careful planning, and if indeed any nursery plans *had* been submitted (and I can find no evidence of this) no doubt the authority would have had its hands quite full keeping its house in order. When in 1944, it became merged with Durham County Education Authority, economies of scale made many

such projects more feasible, even if the intimacy of the small authority, where every one knew everyone else, had been swamped by the floods of bureaucracy. By this time, however, two nurseries had already been planted in its midst.

In order to help the unemployment situation a small trading estate was established at Dragonville on the east side of the town, adjoining a large over-spill housing estate. The Community Service Association was also active in providing two centres, one on the east side and one on the west side of the city.

With the outbreak of war, the trading estates' factories turned over to munitions and women were employed. Some women also found work at munitions factories in Spennymoor and Croxdale. When the question of nursery provision for the children of married women workers arose, the accommodation for children was provided at two schools of the standard pre-fabricated type. One was situated at Framwellgate Waterside and the other in Gilesgate.

However, proposals for the establishment of Nursery Education in the Durham County Administrative Area had been planned to take effect before the War, in the financial year 1938/39, when four nursery classes were to be established at the following Council schools :-

Coundon Infants	North Brancepeth Infants
Boldon Colliery, Hedworth Lane Infants	Ferryhill Station Infants <sup>81</sup>

This was the first phase of a large programme following a survey of schools of the county in 1938, when a considerable number of schools were especially selected in response to Circular 1444.

In 1939 the outbreak of war produced a multitude of special precautions and preparations and much available classroom accommodation was taken up for the provision of Rest and Feeding Centres, First Aid Posts, Wardens' Posts etc.

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<sup>81</sup> DRO DCEC, 21.12.38, Min.553

The first indication in the printed records of movement towards war-time provision of nurseries for the young children of women 'employed in munitions and other factories' is in the Durham County Council Proceedings, 31st July 1940.<sup>82</sup> The County Medical Officer was authorised to respond to a Ministry of Health Circular 1396, and '...to take any necessary action thereon'.

There is no further record of action in the county however until 16th October 1941. A Health Committee minute<sup>83</sup> announced that the Ministry of Health was seeking to establish war-time nurseries in seven towns and villages in the County's area including the City of Durham. Consultations were in progress about sites and a sub-committee had been appointed with power to take such action as they thought advisable. Committee members were appointed from the Maternity and Child-Welfare Sub-Committee. On the Education side representatives were - the Director of Education and a total of four members of the Education Committee, i.e. its Chairman and Vice-Chairman (both men), together with two women members of the Elementary Education Sub-Committee. Later, the Senior Regional Officer of the Ministry of Health was co-opted. She was Mrs. T. Todd of Seaham, a member of Seaham Harbour District Council and Deputy Director of the Women's Voluntary Services (WVS) for the County.

The War-time Nurseries Scheme was initiated by the Ministry of Health, but Local Authorities were also encouraged to provide other means for the care of children under five years in the Board or Education Circulars 1495 (1940) and 1553(1941). Nursery classes in existing public elementary schools were to be the chief means. Durham County's Director reported verbally on 29th September 1941 to the School Buildings Committee<sup>84</sup> and it was subsequently resolved:-

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<sup>82</sup> DRO DCC, 31.7.40, p.676, para.46

<sup>83</sup> DRO DCC, p.631, para.25

<sup>84</sup> DRO D.C.E.C.29.9.41,p.87

- to admit children on application from the parent, at the beginning of the school term in which they reached the age of five
- to admit children at the age of four years where existing accommodation and staffing permitted.
- to admit children at the age of three years where the need was discovered and was not met by war-time nurseries and where existing accommodation permitted the necessary equipment and staffing to be provided.

Board of Education approval came two months later.<sup>85</sup>

During the County Education meeting in October the Chairman mentioned the receipt of a letter from a father pleading for permission for his daughter to leave school before the end of term to look after three younger children because his wife had registered for munition work and could not be released. The Committee had no power to accede to the request, but the man would be able to secure relief under the nursery class scheme.<sup>86</sup>

Two schemes got under way using the school houses at:-

- 1) Ferryhill Station, using three bedrooms and the large sitting room, leaving one bedroom and one sitting room for the Headteacher, whose wife was to act as Matron of the Nursery.
- 2) Shildon, St. John's C.E. School Infants' Department, converting two classrooms and a detached cloakroom. A new small kitchen was to be built on. The cost was borne by the Ministry of Health.<sup>87</sup>

In the City of Durham possible provision of a nursery school for war workers' children appears to have been discussed during November/December 1941. By 8th December, H.M. Inspector had been informed that the General Purposes Sub-Committee had not found it necessary to consider the establishment of such schools.<sup>88</sup> On 13th January 1942, however, the establishment of nursery classes within the city boundary by *County* authorities was discussed with H. M. Inspector, and at the same time, the possible provision

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<sup>85</sup> DRO D.C.E.C., 17.12.41,p.132

<sup>86</sup> DCL DCA, 24.10.41, p.41

<sup>87</sup> DRO D.C.E.C. 5.11.41,pp.589-90

<sup>88</sup> DRO D.City Ed.Com., 8.12.41,p.353

of play centres for war workers' children.<sup>89</sup>

At the April meeting suggestions for a centre at the Bluecoat National School, then near the city centre in Claypath, were made, and it was resolved that the views of the staff and managers be obtained before further discussion with H.M. Inspector. On 1st May at a special meeting H. M. Inspector outlined proposals.<sup>90</sup> He undertook to prepare a circular to be issued to parents in order to learn the extent of the demand for a centre. Replies were due on 19th June 1942, and at the monthly meeting of the City Education Committee, 13th July, it was felt that the establishment of a Play Centre was not justified, because of the small number of parents who had asked for provision to be made for their children. Meanwhile the two war-time nurseries had been built, equipped and furnished.

Of the war-time nurseries generally, no record is available of the search for suitable sites, reasons for selection of those finally used, or any objections to their requisition. The two Durham City sites seem to have satisfied the general need to be reasonably safe from possible bombing, i.e. away from industrial congestion. They were near the children's homes, or easily accessible by public transport and large enough for the nursery buildings, air raid shelters and playing space, i.e., approx. one third acre. (see photographs pp. 334 & 336)

These were located:-

- 1) in the grounds of the Vane-Tempest-Stewart Hall, property of Lord Londonderry and built in 1857 as barracks for a voluntary militia, and
- 2) on a portion of waste ground known as Freeman's Piece, owned by the City Council, and formerly surrounded by tenement dwellings which had been demolished in the 1930s in a slum clearance programme. It was on the banks of the River Wear in Milburngate adjoining Framwellgate Bridge and close to the main thoroughfare and shopping centre.

Objections to the proposed siting of the new nursery in Gilesgate Barracks

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<sup>89</sup> DRO D.City Ed.Com. 9.2.42, p.359

<sup>90</sup> DRO Circ.1573 Regulations relating ...

came from Durham City Council<sup>91</sup> :-

- a) the Council had not been consulted
- b) the barracks were not considered a suitable place.

The County Authority could only reply to the effect that they were only *agents* for the Ministry of Health. The reply from the Ministry of Health's Senior Regional Officer was that the suitability of the site had been agreed by representatives of the Ministry of Labour and National Service at whose request the nursery was being provided. The Board of Education and Ministry of Health had no reason to alter their decision on the site.<sup>92</sup>

The actual starting days of the nurseries are not known, as school log books, if kept at all, are missing. Public opening day for both schools was Thursday, 6th July 1942, and it is reported in the local newspaper.<sup>93</sup> They were described as prefabricated structures each occupying an area of some 500 square feet and accommodating 40 children in two separate rooms with an ablution room between. Each school was also provided with a reinforced air raid shelter for protection against glass and gas, and fitted with bunks.

At the Gilesgate ceremony the Mayor declared that while such schools were primarily intended as a war-time measure, he sincerely hoped they would become a permanent institution. He reassured doubting mothers that they need have no fear at leaving a child there. The acting Senior Medical Welfare Officer, Dr. Madge Hopper, stressed the provision of trained staff, meals and the opportunities for play. Children would leave the school at about 6 p.m or 7 p.m. according to the needs of the district. The Senior Regional Officer of the Ministry of Health, Mrs. T. Todd, underlined the principle of 'Repayment of debt' to the women

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<sup>91</sup> DRO D.City Coun. 4.2.42, min.13(5)

<sup>92</sup> DRO D.City Coun. 4.3.42

<sup>93</sup> DCityLib. Durham County Advertiser , 24.7.42, p.6

**Gilesgate Nursery School, Durham City**

**Built 1942 in the grounds of the Vane-Tempest Stuart Hall**



**A war-time nursery, it was a 'standard' pre-fabricated building**





war workers by providing for the health and happiness of their children. If the accommodation proved to be insufficient for the needs of the district, the ministry would sympathetically consider an application for the erection of another school.

At the other ceremony in Framwellgate, the councillor presiding complained that women workers had not availed themselves of the opportunity as they might have done, and wondered whether this was because they were expected to pay a shilling a day!

An appeal was made by the County Medical Officer of Health, Dr. I McCracken, for full use of the nursery, for only thus could needs be known, and the scheme extended. The Chairman of the City Education Committee confirmed that consideration would be given to a further nursery if this was found to be necessary. Finance Committee minutes show that internal furnishing at each school was to be about twelve hundred pounds<sup>94</sup> - the usual charge on war-time nurseries of this size.

A War-time Nursery Sub-Committee Report<sup>95</sup> showed that staff had been appointed to the sixteen nurseries already established in the County. A Warden had been appointed to each of the Durham City nurseries and a Superintendent over both - Miss Wilhelmina Martin. She was also to superintend other nurseries for the time being.

This surely reflects the shortage of trained teaching staff to act as Superintendents for the nurseries existing at this time. For the ancillary staff vacancies, including nursery assistants, there had been a 'considerable number' of

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<sup>94</sup> DRO D.C.C. 6.5.42 pp.137-9 – exact amounts are :  
 Gilesgate £1179. 15s..1d  
 Framwellgate £1166. 1s 6d

<sup>95</sup> DRO D.C.C. Health Committee Minutes 11.11.42, pp.375-80, para 29

**Framwellgate Nursery School**



**A wartime nursery built in 1942 before the area was redeveloped. It was relocated to Newton Hall**

applicants.

A newspaper report stated that it was encouraging to learn that the Nurseries were coming more in favour with mothers as the full benefits were realised. Sixteen were by then in operation with three more to be opened. Difficulties associated with transport to and from the nurseries would be met where possible.

No summary appears to be available of Durham County's total efforts but by 31st August 1943, probably a 'peak' time, some 1,000 children were attending the specially provided war-time nurseries and under the scheme for earlier admission to school of children between four and five years of age 1,491 were in attendance.<sup>96</sup> In fifteen of the schools concerned the numbers were large enough to justify special nursery school treatment and wherever possible the Education Committee had made provision by the appointment of additional staff and by securing what equipment was available.

Two war-time nursery classes stand out in the Durham County scheme of things - important because they remained the only two nursery classes in the post-war enlarged Administrative Area. These were at West Cornforth and Coundon.

Building alterations and special fittings were necessary. They were primarily for children aged 3 to 5 years whose mothers were engaged on war work. Where vacancies occurred, they could be filled by the admission of other children of appropriate age, but always on the understanding that application for the admission of children of war-working mothers must not be refused unless the approved number of children of war-working mothers had been reached.<sup>97</sup> Meals

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<sup>96</sup> Many as 'Rising Fives' i.e children admitted at the beginning of the term preceding their 5th birthday

<sup>97</sup> DRO D.C.E.C. 27.10.43.p.74

were to be provided on the premises and not from a cooking depot. A gas cooker, gas boiler, and cook's bench were installed.<sup>98</sup>

The run-down, however, of war-time nurseries in the Durham County Administrative Area began as early as 1944, when five were closed, leaving a total of 17 from the 'peak' of 22.<sup>99</sup> Another five were closed during 1945, leaving a total of 12 in use at the end of the year. It would seem that Professor Stanley had previously enquired of North East Authorities their intentions regarding war-time nurseries. Durham's response was that where the premises were suitable, they would be used as nursery schools, subject to '...no legal obstacles...'<sup>100</sup> In fact by the following April (1946) nine of these were taken over by the County Education Committee as nursery schools, while the other four were taken over by the County Health Committee, two as 24 hour nurseries, and the other two as day nurseries.

The ultimate fate of these latter four nurseries is indicated in Education Committee proceedings when they were reported by the Director as now occupied by 'Unauthorised persons', elsewhere described as 'squatters'.<sup>101</sup>

The Ministry of Education was unable to give any guidance, and suggested that the owners of the sites should be informed that in the circumstances, '... it is not proposed to proceed at present with the tenancy negotiations...'. Equipment was removed and notices were given to caretakers of termination of their appointments. Thus the projects for conversion to full nursery schools were 'abandoned'- to use the Authority's term.<sup>102</sup>

The 'take over' dates as nursery schools (under 1944 Act) involving

<sup>98</sup> DRO D.C.E.C. 23.9.42, min.151

<sup>99</sup> DRO DCC (1944) Rep. of MOH, p.17

<sup>100</sup> TWAS 1232/5 TNSA. Letter DCC to Prof. Stanley 8.12.45

<sup>101</sup> DRO DCEC.SB 257, 25.9.46. Nurseries at Shildon, Trimdon, Thornley and Wheatley Hill

<sup>102</sup> DRO DCEC p.161,28.8.46

transfer from the Ministry of Health to Ministry of Education, was 1st April 1946. A surviving 'School Record' Book of the Gilesgate nursery school shows that 38 children were enrolled on the day and only 35 could be admitted until 5 more stretcher beds were supplied. These came 10 days later. The school was reported on, a year and a term later by Durham County's Inspector of Nursery and Infant Schools and was said to be 'a flourishing nursery school and a credit to the Superintendent and staff'.<sup>103</sup> It was used as a demonstration centre for Child Care Reserve Courses, which were still training nursery personnel, and received many visitors who came to observe its methods.

The requisition of the Framwellgate site was transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Education and the Clerk of the Council was authorised to act as the Minister's agent for the transfer of the requisition for any subsequent negotiations.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education pointed out the undesirability of expending a large amount of money on improvement to the nurseries as powers of requisition would expire four years later in 1950. Arrangements to *open* nurseries could proceed, but the necessity to provide permanent accommodation of their own had to be kept in mind.<sup>104</sup> In April 1948, the Central Divisional Executive (i.e. Central Durham) asked the County Authority to press forward with the provision of nursery schools or classes at, among other places, 'Framwellgate Moor'.

The two schools in Durham, along with others in the County Administrative area continued in the 'care and nurture' of the under-fives in the difficult post-war years of austerity, rationing and increase in birth-rate. Although the 'bulge' of post

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<sup>103</sup> DRO School Log Book , 6.1.48. Durham City Education was by now incorporated into Durham County and formed part of the Central Divisional Executive

<sup>104</sup> DRO DCEC 13.9.46, Mins.260-1

war years appeared with the return of peace there was no extra provision - nor was there any significant action until much later. Resources (both of finance and staff) now had to be used for children of statutory school age and the provision for under-fives was shelved – yet again!

In 1956, along with other pre-fabricated buildings the nurseries were purchased from the Ministry of Works for £180 each. Although originally built to last 7 years, these prefabricated buildings were still surviving into the late sixties and early eighties respectively, and provided adequate accommodation. Nevertheless, the lives of some of the buildings were interrupted by other schemes, and although the Ministry of Education would not allow provision of *new* nursery schools, existing buildings *could* be replaced if the reasons were strong enough.

### **Post-war development in Durham – Newton Hall Nursery School**

**This nursery school replaced the war-time nursery school which was situated on Framwellgate Waterside. A new motorway development precipitated its demolition and the nursery was relocated in 1964**



In this category, Durham City gained one of the most up-to-date nursery schools in the country. The old site of Framwellgate Nursery came under a compulsory purchase order when negotiations for a 'through' road scheme began. A site at Newton Hall, Framwellgate Moor in the Durham Rural District area was obtained as early as April 1957 for £500. This was 0.2301 acres and later an additional 0.54 acres was obtained which would enable the LEA to build a 40-unit nursery replacing Framwellgate Nursery School, on a site which would eventually be extended to an 80-unit when the Ministry of Education gave permission for further provision. A maternity and child welfare centre was also included in the site giving the ideal conditions of 'continuity' from 0 to 5 years. The school was moved on 8th May 1964 and the official opening was 5th November 1964. The busy daily routine of the Nursery School is shown in the photograph on p.340 of the outdoor play of the children on the patio and sand pit, whilst the domestic back-up is exemplified in the line of clean washing. Thus the original standards of the pioneers were being carried forward!

Soon afterwards the old building in Framwellgate was demolished and by the opening of the 'through' road, all traces of the original war-time nursery school were lost.

The Gilesgate Nursery School survived until the demise of St Nicholas Primary School (off Bakehouse Lane, in Gilesgate), when it moved into their vacated buildings in the early 1980's.<sup>105</sup>

On the whole the Durham LEA seemed to have emerged from war-time conditions with a strong network of nursery provision in schools and classes.

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<sup>105</sup> Oral evidence from Miss S. Rutherford, last Superintendent of 'Gilesgate' Nursery

Sunderland, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Newcastle were not so perceptive and their war-time nurseries were initially used as day nurseries under the Ministry of Health. Most of these were eventually closed due to rising costs.

Nationally the drive for *nursery schools* continued and a 'Margaret McMillan Fund' was launched to raise £250,000 for the Rachel McMillan centre in Deptford, and to establish a new training centre in memory of Margaret in the North of England (Bradford). It was well supported. Ever faithful to the cause and in spite of its annual turnover of only £100 the TNSA granted £25 towards the fund!<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> TWAS TT765 (1948) TNSA 19th Annual Report



## Chapter 6

### Post-war Nursery Provision from 1945 to Plowden Report (1967)

This final chapter brings the chronology and analysis back to the familiar Governmental restraints of pre-war provision. Although, following the 1944 Education Act it became the *duty* of local authorities to make nursery provision, in the post-war period social, economic and financial restraints took precedence. The under-fives had been a prime consideration during the war as children of working mothers, and once again they became 'forgotten children'. Their only hope for nursery provision lay in the 'positive discrimination' anticipated in Plowden. (1967)

Unemployment had been seen as the catalyst to the poverty and despair of the 1930s :-

'... in the post - war settlement the determination not to return to the conditions of the 1930s led to a public policy focus' ... (so that)... 'by the early 1950s the spectre of mass unemployment seemed to have disappeared...'<sup>1</sup>

Thus *one* problem driving the provision of nursery education was no longer pertinent. Also the question of working mothers was somewhat alleviated. Married women over sixty got early retirement from wartime-work but ...

'...the registration of young, unmarried women in industry was continued ...' (however) ...'one year after the end of the war more than a million women had left their jobs and by 1951 the numbers of women in employment had dropped back to pre-1939 levels...'<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, as part of the post-war educational provision Section 11 (1) of the Education Act 1944 had required each local authority to prepare and submit to the Minister, a Development Plan showing the action the authority proposed should be taken for securing sufficient primary and secondary schools

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<sup>1</sup> Burk K.(2003) 'The British Isles since 1945' p,65

<sup>2</sup> Anderson J. (2009) 'Women of the War Years' pp.123&127

available for their area and the successive measures by which it was proposed to accomplish that purpose.

To this duty was added that of bringing sites and buildings up to the standard laid down in Regulations prescribing Standards for School Premises made by the Minister of Education under Section 10 of the Act.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas the central problem for most authorities was probably the proposed plans for the organisation for secondary education, the nursery school provision was certainly a 'tall order'.

The London School Plan published in 1947, proposed 103 comprehensive high school units for its secondary reorganisation but no less than 1,350 units of 40 pupils each, mostly accommodated in new nursery schools on new sites.<sup>4</sup>

In order to decide how many nursery schools and classes would be needed some estimate had to be made of the number of children whose parents would wish to send them to school before they reached the age when they must attend by law. This estimate was not easily made since parents sent their very young children to school for various reasons. Most authorities reckoned on places for half the number of children between two and five.<sup>5</sup> Thus London was providing for 54,000 children.

Of the North East of England LEAs, Darlington had the lowest estimate, being one-third of the three youngest age-groups. This was surprising in view of Darlington's relatively high attendance in nursery schools and classes - 500 out of 3,500 - an average of 14% of the town's under fives. Their experience showed that nursery facilities when provided, tended to reveal a demand which previously

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<sup>3</sup> S.R.O., 1945, No. 345

<sup>4</sup> LCC (1947) 'London School Plan' p. 15

<sup>5</sup> LCC (1947) 'Replanning London Schools'

had not been apparent.<sup>6</sup>

Middlesbrough LEA also estimated a one-third provision, but in a different way, viz. 50% of the four year olds, 33% of the three year olds, and 16.5% of the two year olds. Thus an overall 33% of one age group. Here however, the Ministry of Education stepped in and required provision for 50% of the whole age-group, or equivalent of 25% of any particular age-group, and this in fact doubled the number of nursery schools required, making 56 in all, the rest being in nursery classes attached to infant schools.

Sunderland's plan was for a straight 50%.

Gateshead was for 40% overall, based on an estimate of 50% for the four year olds, 50% of the three year olds, and 20% of the two year olds. The question of size was closely tied to the site available and, of course, to costing.

Durham's Plan (as in the County Development Plan, 1949) gives details of present and proposed distribution of schools:-

- 1) Existing nursery schools situated at Billingham, Blaydon, Chester-le-Street (2), Durham (2), Hartlepool, Hebburn, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton-le-Spring, Jarrow (2), New Brancepeth, Spennymoor, Stanley, Washington, and Wingate.
- 2) Existing nursery classes at Coundon, West Cornforth and Stockton-on-Tees.
- 3) Day nurseries (under the Ministry of Health) were also provided at Stockton-on-Tees, Shotley Bridge, Bishop Auckland, Hebburn, Birtley and Haverton Hill.

The facilities had all been provided during the war (except for Jarrow, Hebburn and New Brancepeth)<sup>7</sup> and most of the schools were in prefabricated premises. The provision covered few urban areas and many new nursery schools and nursery classes were needed.

Proposals for future provision of nursery school facilities in the County of Durham reflected local enthusiasm and included a total of 390 new nursery

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<sup>6</sup> W.F.Houghton, CEO, later Director LCC

<sup>7</sup> See chap.4

schools and 107 nursery classes.<sup>8</sup>

Such was the Durham County Plan, soon to be 'shelved' but nevertheless a sincere effort to comply with R.A. Butler's Education Act of 1944 Section 8, (2) (b) requiring Local Education Authorities, when drawing up their School Plan to have regard to :-

'The need for securing that provision is made for pupils who have not attained the age of five years by the provision of nursery schools...or nursery classes in other schools'.<sup>9</sup>

In discussing the 1944 Act, Lady Allen (NSA) reported ...

'The new Education Bill is a great triumph for the NSA. We have believed in and worked for the recognition of nursery school education for the past 21 years. As part of primary education, nursery schools will no longer be a special service. In future, local education authorities will have a *duty* to provide nursery schools and classes. It is very regrettable however, that throughout the Bill, they had been coupled in the drafting of special schools...<sup>10</sup>

...and in this report is again a hint of warning. The nursery schools were to be linked to some other form of provision which tended to obscure their cause. Mr. Kenneth Lindsay, M.P. urged that since nursery schools were part of the primary system, they should be considered along with them and there should be a separate Department for Young Children, with its own Junior Minister.<sup>11</sup>

During the war, with the great expansion of provision of nursery school places, interest in the under-fives had grown considerably.<sup>12</sup> The NSA played a very prominent part in the post-war arrangements during the transition period, before the schools were handed over to the Ministry of Education. They felt that in the interests of the under-fives, insistence should be made that the war-time nurseries should only become nursery schools when conditions made it possible

<sup>8</sup> Development Plan, Durham 1949, see Appendix 15 and my summary table p.397

<sup>9</sup> Education Act, 1944, Section 8, (2) (b)

<sup>10</sup> TWAS NSA News Sheet, No.18, Jan.1944

<sup>11</sup> TWAS NSA, No.18, 1944

<sup>12</sup> TWAS NSA (Oct.1944) News Sheet No.22 The NSA itself had expanded from 3,000 members in 1939 to 7,500 in 1944

for them to be staffed up to good nursery school standards. Miss Horsburgh (Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education) promised that all war-serving staff would be retained and hoped that new staff would soon be trained.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly in the post-war period, with the chronic shortage of teachers, it looked as if the nursery schools (or potential nursery schools to be taken over from the Ministry of Health) would cease to function through lack of staff. However in the 'Draft Regulations for Primary and Secondary Schools'...

'The Minister accordingly proposes, for the time being, to approve the appointment of individual persons as temporary teachers – for a period of not more than 5 years in each case in the first instance, with power to grant a short extension of the period if conditions of supply require it. These temporary teachers, for nursery schools and classes, will include women who have previously acted as wardens in war-time nurseries, or war-time nursery classes. It is anticipated that those of them who prove to be satisfactory teachers and suitable for a course of training will take such a course so as to become qualified after their temporary period of service'.<sup>14</sup>

That it was imperative to try to keep the nursery school staffed and equipped is further endorsed by Miss Ellen Wilkinson (Minister of Education in the first post-war Labour Government) speaking at the re-opening of St.Leonard's Nursery School, London...

'As the Nursery school is the child's first step into society, we regard it of greatest importance that the standard of teaching be of the highest order. Parents can look upon these schools as complementary to the good home ... and there is no doubt that if parents want more nursery schools they will be provided'.<sup>15</sup>

Would that she had been right!

In less than one year the Government had announced plans curtailing the development of nursery schools and classes due to the 'present economic crisis'.<sup>16</sup> As of old, the NSA made a strong protest. The embargo on building nursery schools except where they would assist women to return to industry, meant that in the North East, where it was *not* the tradition for women to work,<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> HC Deb, 9.3.45.408,5s,col. 2444

<sup>14</sup> Min.of Ed.Circ.30 (12th March 1945) paragraph C - Temporary teachers

<sup>15</sup> NSA Annual Report, (Oct. 1946)

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Education Circular 155 (1947)

no new schools were envisaged, although in some parts of the country, e.g. Cookham, Berkshire, new nursery schools *were* opened. The NSA Buildings Advisory Committee had worked laboriously on a prototype building of simplified design and low cost, in an effort to interest LEAs so that even in times of stringent economy a cheap but efficient nursery could be included in the estimates.

In October 1950, Lady Astor, speaking at the Delegate Council Meeting of the NSA, called for a renewal of zeal among the members such as the early pioneers had displayed, to fight against the standstill in nursery school building and the unsatisfactory conditions in certain industrial towns. Post-war conditions of large families, overcrowding, rising cost of living, made it imperative to campaign for more schools for the under fives.<sup>18</sup> Nursery provision could have legitimately expected a post-war spurt of support and investment because in the first five post-war years the 'Welfare State' that ... 'talisman of a better post-war Britain...'<sup>19</sup> was in place and providing a free National Health Service, free education and a Government guarantee for full employment and cheap housing.<sup>20</sup>

1951 saw the great show case of the South Bank Exhibition for the Festival of Britain and the excuse for additional building outside the regulations. At the entrance of the New Schools Pavilion were the words:-

'Britain aims at providing for every child the education a wise and good parent would desire for his own child'.<sup>21</sup>

In pursuit of ... 'the notion that education should be a means of achieving equality of opportunity in society...', no one had forecast the impact of 'Austerity Britain' and the conflicting demands on finance or other social measures such as

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<sup>17</sup> See chap.4 (3)

<sup>18</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE (Oct.1950)15/2 Delegate Council Minutes

<sup>19</sup> Hennessy P. 'Never Again : Britain 1945-1951' p.122

<sup>20</sup> Sandbrook D. (2006) 'Never had it so good' p.58

<sup>21</sup> Festival of Britain (1951) Handbook

health and housing.

The Housing Section of the Exhibition staged in Poplar, included a *permanent nursery school* as an essential part of the area development. Lady Astor re-directed attention to the real need for nursery schools by opening up the subject in a letter to the Times<sup>22</sup> which was followed by a spate of letters all equally enthusiastic in their condemnation of Government policy. The continued embargo on expenditure on nursery schools and classes meant that schools in many parts of England and Wales were in jeopardy. In some areas the provision was only *threatened*, but four County Councils<sup>23</sup> decided to end their nursery education as a measure of economy and in seven other counties, cities and towns, proposals were made to curtail nursery schools and classes in an endeavour to reduce expenditure. The NSA branches all over the country continued to campaign for more and better nursery schools and to create a more informed public opinion. The image of the nursery school was becoming...

‘...increasingly associated with women in industry, broken homes, bad housing, so that the primary educational function is often never understood by the public...’<sup>24</sup>

A deputation from the NSA condemning all economies by closure was received by Miss Florence Horsburgh (Minister of Education) and in subsequent letters to LEAs<sup>25</sup> she said that in view of the many protests against proposals to close nursery schools, she must ask them to reconsider the matter from the point of view of the children’s welfare as well as the need for economy.

At the Delegate Council Meeting of the NSA, Miss Batstone reviewed the ‘Present Position of Nursery School Education’ -

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<sup>22</sup> DUL Lady Astor , letter to ‘The Times’, 18th August 1951

<sup>23</sup> Warwickshire, Dorset, Somerset, Cornwall

<sup>24</sup> TWAS NSA (March,1952) Newsletter

<sup>25</sup> DCEC Min.of Ed. (27th Feb 1952) letter to LEAs

'There are, in England and Wales an overall total of about 480 establishments which can properly be called nursery schools. These provide for 23,500 children out of a total 2-5 year old population of approximately 1,988,000. A further 9,872 children attend factory and other so-called nursery schools, not under the direct care of the local authority and 55,627 children are in nursery classes...'

'... In 1947 there were only 97 nursery schools in England and Wales. This figure was increased to 374 in 1948 as a result of local education authorities taking over prefabricated war time buildings from the Ministry of Health....'

'....Nursery classes on the other hand show a decline from 2,457 in 1948 to 1,965 at the present time. This decrease can be accounted for largely by the necessity for taking over nursery class space for 5 year old children to provide for the greatly increased number of 5 year old entrants. It must be remembered and noted that the nursery class space still exists and in due course, some will revert to their original purpose...'

'... Children in the 2 - 5 year age group who attend day nurseries number 24,658. At the present time there are 850 day nurseries administered by local authorities in England and Wales...'<sup>26</sup>

Such is a summary of the position in 1952, the Education Act already eight years old, and the end of the war seven years away. Had the LEAs not inherited the war-time nurseries from the Ministry of Health, the position would have been even blacker - and especially in the North East (Durham County LEA retained 17 war-time nurseries out of a total of 21). Newcastle upon Tyne, which did not take over war-time nurseries as nursery schools, possessed one nursery school and one nursery class. In the 1951 census, the population of Newcastle upon Tyne was 291,723!

With the decline in the birth rate in the early 1950's the NSA felt that a reduction in the numbers of children in infants' schools ought to release teachers and places for nursery provision. Thus definite information was sought so that it would be possible to present a demand for the withdrawal of Circular 155 (December 1947). To complete the propaganda campaign it was suggested that each branch of the NSA hold a meeting to be addressed by the Chief Education Officer of the areas, in which he would outline proposals for nursery classes and nursery schools as in the Development Plan for each area.

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<sup>26</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 22 NSA (1952) News letter



With specific figures and situations in mind, the NSA hoped to make definite proposals to the Minister of Education. At meetings of the Association of Education Committees<sup>27</sup> and National Council of Social Service<sup>28</sup> reference was made to the need for further nursery provision yet neither pressed for withdrawal of the embargo on new buildings.

The Labour Party's 'Challenge to Britain' pamphlet (1953) omitted any policy regarding the provision of nursery schools as they... 'felt it was inadvisable to make any promises concerning nursery schools' - in view of the resources of money, labour and materials required to clear the many sub-standard schools.

The Conservative Party's reply to the NSA from the Minister of Education, Miss Florence Horsburgh, stated that she was sorry she was unable to raise the virtual embargo on the provision of new nursery schools and classes: -

'I certainly look forward to the time when some relaxation of this policy will become possible but it would depend on the country's economic situation. Meanwhile, I have seen to it that there should be no indiscriminate closure of nursery schools and classes solely for the purpose of achieving economies and I am glad to note that between January 1952 and January 1953, although there was a small reduction in the number of under fives in nursery classes (due to pressure on accommodation resulting from the peak roll in the infants schools) the number of children in grant-aided nursery schools increased slightly'.

The Liberal Party stated:-

'While we are very keen on the idea of nursery schools we do not see any prospect at the present time of increasing their number'.

On 1st April 1954 a request was made by Mr. Paget, M.P. for Northampton, for the withdrawal of Circular 155, but the Secretary to the Minister of Education in a written answer said this was not possible as long as it was necessary to concentrate building resources on providing for children of compulsory school age.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Dr.Hunt, (July 1953) Peterborough

<sup>28</sup> Titmuss R., (1953) 'The Family as a Social Institution'

Again a question in the House of Commons, 27th May 1954, asked whether the Minister would not consider the withdrawal of Circular 155.<sup>30</sup> Miss Horsburgh referred the Hon. Member to Mr. Paget's question and the reply then given, but she goes on to point out that in January 1951 there were 454 nursery schools, and by January 1954, the number had risen to 477. Mr. Peter Remnant (Conservative M.P, for Wokingham) brought up the question of nursery school provision again on 24th June, and asked the Minister when Circular 155/47 was cancelled and whether any other circular had been submitted. Miss Horsburgh in a written answer replied that Circular 155 was cancelled on 8th July 1949:-

'The restrictions it imposed on the provision of nursery schools have been continued by the general statements of educational building policy contained in Circular 209 of October 1949 and Circular 245 of February 1952'.<sup>31</sup>

Contrary to Miss Horsburgh's claim that further provision had been made, the report of the Minister of Education for 1953 reporting on nursery schools said..

'There was no significant change in nursery school provision. At the beginning of 1953 there were 453 maintained nursery schools attended by 22,672 children together with 29 receiving direct grant or recognised as efficient, attended by 1,119 children. In the course of the year two maintained schools were closed, but nine were opened and four more were under construction at the end of the year'.<sup>32</sup>

While it is true that there was no significant change in the position of nursery schools, in fact there was a slight increase. It is worth remembering that the number of nursery classes decreased by 241 in 1952. This meant that 6,790 fewer children were accommodated in nursery classes during the year.

On 15th February 1955 the NSA again sent a deputation to the Minister of Education to present the urgent need for nursery school expansion but the reply again indicated that other sections were to receive priority and that there could be no expansion of nursery school provision at this juncture.

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<sup>29</sup> H.C.Deb. 528,5s,col.136,15.4.54

<sup>30</sup> Mr. Lewis, H.C.Deb.528,5s,col.590,27.5.54

<sup>31</sup> H.C.Deb.,529,5s col.58,24.6.54

<sup>32</sup> Min.of Ed (1954) 'Education in 1953', Cmd.9155, p.9

However the experiment of part-time or half-time attendance received commendation from the Minister, so that more children could receive the benefits of nursery education, although the Minister expressed reservations of a 'whole-sale changeover'.<sup>33</sup>

During 1955, however, there was a slight increase in the numbers of nursery schools from 477(1954) to 484(1955), and the NUT Sectional Meeting of Infant and Nursery school teachers passed ...

'... This Conference urges that a Nursery Class be opened in each Infants school as accommodation becomes available...'<sup>34</sup>

At the National Conference of the NSA, Dr. Soddy again drew attention to the wrong image people had of the nursery school ...

'...that a mistaken concept of the role of the nursery school had impaired the growth of the movement. This mistaken concept had arisen from the fact that the nursery school too often had been used for those children who cannot be cared for at home, and he urged that our goal should be no less than the provision of nursery school education for all children who can benefit from it.'<sup>35</sup>

And again at the NSA Conference 1956, a resolution was passed that...

'This conference asserts that the time is now opportune for greater emphasis to be focussed on the educational needs of the young child, and urges the immediate establishment of more Nursery Schools and Classes in accordance with the provision of the 1944 Education Act for England and Wales, and in 1945 for Scotland and the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 1947.'<sup>36</sup>

But even more depressing was the Circular 313 on Staffing and Reduction of over-large Classes, which aimed at restricting admission to school of children under five in the interests of the education of older children.<sup>37</sup> The Delegate Council of the NSA replied, condemning the Circular 313 and calling upon the

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<sup>33</sup> Goldsworthy G.E. (1964) 'Part-time Nursery Education' (Inspector of Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes L.C.C.) NSA

<sup>34</sup> National Union of Teachers Conference, 1955

<sup>35</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 22 NSA Conference, 4th May 1955 (reported in NSA Newsletter, March 1956)

<sup>36</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 22 Delegate Council NSA, 13th October 1956 (reported in NSA Newsletter, December 1956)

<sup>37</sup> Min.of Ed. (18.9.56) Circular 313

Minister of Education to :-

'... honour the pledge given in 1951 to restore those Nursery Schools and Classes closed down to accommodate the increased number of Infants' Schools, and to permit the opening of new schools and classes, where conditions are favourable'.

The following resolution was to be sent to MPs and LEAs from the NSA

protesting on the following grounds:-

- 1) that the exclusion of the younger children from nursery classes and nursery schools is a complete denial of the promise contained in the 1944 Education Act.
- 2) at a later stage when difficulties become even more acute it may be hard to retain our right to admit the five year olds, thus further depriving our young children of the educational opportunities.
- 3) the number of teachers engaged in nursery schools and classes is relatively small.<sup>38</sup>

This was also supplemented by a request for a continued proportion of students to be trained as nursery school teachers.

The NUT published a statement on the Staffing Crisis recommending that nursery accommodation be made available for the children of the 'married woman returner' i.e. to enable married women teachers to meet the staffing shortfall.

Sir David Eccles (Minister of Education) however, while receiving all protestations, reiterated his previous statements regarding nursery provision that a standstill policy was essential for the benefit of children of all ages. So much for Harold Macmillan, the Prime Minister's slogan 'You've never had it so good'- certainly *not* good for nursery provision!

But as was feared, certain LEAs contemplated drastic moves to overcome the staffing crisis. Leicester Education Committee decided to provide Secondary Modern Education by *closing down* 6 infant schools and 12 nursery classes. The NSA Head Office and Branch immediately swung into action. Letters to the press, protest meetings, collection of parents' signatures etc. were submitted, but the Director of Education stuck to the original plan; however, not without giving his

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<sup>38</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 15/3 Delegate Council of NSA (1956), re Circular 313

word that 12 new nursery classes would be opened as soon as possible on the new housing estates where they were badly needed. Still persisting was some opposition to the nursery school movement led by the investigators into the development of children in institutions (Bowlby et al.). Mason, on the other hand, saw 'Readiness' for the vast majority at three years of age.<sup>39</sup>

Somerset County Council followed closely on the heel of Leicester and instructed the Education Committee to close their remaining nursery schools at Bridgewater and Yeovil, unless reasons could be shown why this could not be done. The Council's reason for closure was purely economic, hoping thereby to cut educational expenditure.<sup>40</sup>

Again the NSA sprang into action to keep the nursery schools open, by helping parents to protest and by sending deputations to the Somerset County Council and the Minister of Education. But the LEA refused to receive a deputation and were adamant in their decision to close schools. Appeals from parents were made direct to the Minister of Education pointing out the need for the schools, and he was prevailed upon to intervene, but again the Somerset County Council gave strong reasons for intending to stand by their original decision.

Finally in 1957, the Minister of Education wrote rather strongly to the Somerset Education Committee as follows:-

'The minister ...is satisfied that the Authority, in deciding to close the two remaining nursery schools in their areas are proposing to act irresponsibly in respect of the performance of their duties. Accordingly the Minister directs the Authority to continue to maintain the two schools....'<sup>41</sup>

One of the leading mothers who took part in the campaign wrote to the NSA

<sup>39</sup> Mason E.M. (June 1952) 'Readiness to Enter Nursery School' in 'The New Era' vol.33 no.6

<sup>40</sup> Somerset had already closed down 8 out of its 10 nursery schools in 1951 for the same reason

<sup>41</sup> Bridgen P. & Lowe R. (1998) 'Welfare Policy under the Conservatives 1951-1964' indicate that the 'official' line for this direction lay in their policy of reaction to any proposed closure where it would 'damage the essential fabric of the education service' and where it would cause employment problems for women workers.

describing the feeling behind their demonstration ...

'Here in Somerset we have a modest pride in our good fortune, for throughout the campaign we were conscious of what hung upon the outcome. We knew that it was not only our own children and the schools that were threatened, but that the whole future of nursery school education in this country, might possibly be at stake. Each move we made, we made with the greatest care. We felt that if we were unsuccessful in an appeal to the Minister, every Authority in the country would be at liberty to close their nursery schools without fear of interference. Now a strong precedent has been created and precedent is probably as important in state as it is in common law.

We were of course, singularly fortunate in our Minister. He is, we think, a man of strong character and educational background, a lawyer who has probably a better understanding of his powers and of the Acts of Parliament relating to his job, than any other Minister of Education before him. The decision was his. So, to the Minister, the credit. A lesser man, we think, might have let it pass....'

W. Williams<sup>42</sup>

Strong words - but the fate of the nursery schools had never been in such jeopardy!. Throughout the pre-war years the struggle was to open new schools and to keep them going - with the emphasis on continued efforts to raise money to fulfil this service. Now - almost by the stroke of a pen - the schools were threatened with immediate closure. No doubt from the increased focus of public opinion on these LEAs described, one outcome would certainly be renewed interest in the *subject* of nursery provision. Indeed at the Annual Conferences of the National Union of Teachers, the National Union of Women Teachers, the National Association of Mental Health and the Conference of Labour Women, all brought up the subject of nursery provision. The President of the NUT said:-

'.....There is grave danger that the 1944 Act will suffer the fate of previous Acts... that national economies will be too strong for all the promised reforms to be carried out. Development is at a standstill, while proposals for increased technical education fall far short of requirements...'<sup>43</sup>

Further evidence of the growing need for and understanding of the value of nursery schools was revealed in an investigation into the facilities which householders would require in the Langley district of Middleton where on the large

<sup>42</sup> LSE Lib.BAECE 22 NSA, (June 1957) Newsletter

<sup>43</sup> NUT (1957) Annual Conference

new housing estates 50% of the population were in the age group 0 -14 years and half of these were under five. The householders were asked to choose 4 out of 13 facilities which they thought ranked most urgent and nursery schools came second on the list. Thus the public demand was strong. People were realising the great social and education benefits to be derived. But again in 1957 came another depressing blow - the system of financing by allocation of Block Grants. <sup>44</sup>

In the NUT letter, fears were voiced ...

'...We regretfully conclude that the fundamental object of Mr. Brooke's exercise is to transfer burdens from taxes to rates. We believe that the Government's proposals introduce an element of uncertainty into educational administration which will seriously hamper the orderly development of the service. Local Authorities will be forced to make cuts and the chief victim will be the education service....'

...and in particular,(as always) the young child.

Minor works, which under the percentage grant system had been permissible up to £10,000, had now to be 'severely restricted' and '...authorities will be informed of the total value of projects...' <sup>45</sup>

Thus, hope among the promoters of nursery education for the establishment of nursery classes in infants' schools (when numbers decreased) were again dashed, as there seemed to be no possibility of getting money for the conversion of premises should they become available. However this was an unnecessary worry. The birth rate continued to rise during the later 50's and the anticipated spaces in infants' schools for nursery classes, never appeared.

Throughout 1958, further schools were also threatened with closure - among them Ilkley, Nuneaton (Avenue Road), 3 nursery schools in Hertfordshire and Whitecross Nursery School (Herefordshire). It is interesting to note here that the

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<sup>44</sup> Min.of Ed. (1957) Circular 313

<sup>45</sup> Min.of Ed (1957) Circular 313

North East of England, which surely had one of the greatest legacies of old school buildings, at *no time* contemplated closure of nursery schools to re-direct finance to other schemes. Their value as a social service was appreciated.

During 1958, there were 477 nursery schools,(20 of these direct grant) catering for 22,193 children.<sup>46</sup> The strength of public confidence in the nursery system was revealed in numerous complimentary letters to the press, to MPs and to the Minister of Education.

Indeed, Commander J.S.Kerans, M.P. (after an interview with the West Hartlepool Branch of the NSA) asked the Minister of Education the numbers on the waiting list for entry into nursery school in the Hartlepoons. On being given the numbers he further asked :-

'...In view of the many young children on the waiting list can provision be made for additional nursery schools in an ever-expanding area?'<sup>47</sup>

Sir David Eccles (Con.) replied :-

'I realise there is a considerable unsatisfied demand, but, here again, I must give priority to the needs of the older children in the primary schools...'

Again a query came from Middlesex to ask about starting part-time nursery classes by married women (outside the quota). But again the Minister was quite definite in his refusal saying that even these part-time teachers may eventually return to the primary school and this was where the teachers were needed.

Mr. H. Boyden, MP (Lab. Bishop Auckland) asked the Minister if he would be willing to consider including new nursery schools in school building programmes where the need was particularly strong (no doubt he had in mind his own constituency).<sup>48</sup>

Following these questions the Minister introduced Circular 8/60 where he

<sup>46</sup> Min. of Ed. (1958) Report of Chief Medical Officer

<sup>47</sup> HC Deb. 31.3.60; 620,5s; col.1486

<sup>48</sup> H.C.Deb.28.7.60; 627,5s; Cols 1850-1



admitted:-

'It has not...at any time since the Act (1944) came into operation, been possible to undertake any expansion in the provision of nursery education...',

and the circular went on to explain that no resources could at that time be spared for the expansion of nursery education. In particular, no teachers could be used who might otherwise work with children of school age. The current focus was on the five year programme devoted principally to the improvement of secondary education and the urgent need to reduce class size in both primary and secondary schools.<sup>49</sup>

The circular further stated that:-

'...During and immediately after the war one of the main purposes served by nursery schools and classes was to release mothers of young children for work of national importance...'

... therefore the children were full time, (whereas half-time was now being accepted). Now, in common with all primary and secondary education it was provided in the interests of children...

'... The aim is always to meet the needs of the particular child...'<sup>50</sup>

Pioneers of the nursery movement no doubt would observe that, regardless of national needs *each and every child* had been the prime concern of their endeavours.

In 1961, the NSA issued a Building Advisory Report, being encouraged by the fact that in spite of setbacks, a few new nursery schools were built each year - mostly as replacement of older nursery schools, but some LEAs were building nursery schools to be occupied by primary classes until they were able to be officially opened as nursery schools.

<sup>49</sup> Min.of Ed. (31.5.60) Circ. 8/60 para. 3

<sup>50</sup> Min.of Ed. (31.5.60) Circ. 8/60 paras. 8 & 9

Also during 1961 the Advisory Centre for Education in conjunction with the Institute of Community Studies conducted a survey to estimate the interest in nursery schools. In their publication 'WHERE', they showed that nursery school provision would be very popular both with working class and middle class parents. Much propaganda was issued by the NSA, but by the turn of the decade we see emerging a new social class - a new society who are seeking (and expecting) educational benefits for their children, and the political parties were not slow to sense this.

Indeed at the Labour Party Conference 1962, Mrs. Renee Short 'stressed the need to think again about our nursery education' and at the Conservative Conference at Brighton, Mr. Carr MP, was to propose the motion...

'...This Conference calls upon the Government to expedite and increase the provision of nursery schools in urban areas'...

but this was not reached, and the Liberal Education Report stated...

'It is evident that the shortage of nursery school accommodation is acute.... We recommend that, as soon as conditions permit, there should be considerable expansion of nursery school education...'

However, the Minister remained immune to pressure, while various associations continued to gather factual information on conditions and to present workable solutions to him.

Mr. Willey MP (Lab. Sunderland) asked the Minister whether he would appoint a committee to consider the place of grant-aided nursery schools in the education service. Sir David Eccles replied:-

'Not at present, but I am considering the whole position in the light of continuing shortage of teachers for primary schools...'

The shortage of teachers however, was to become more acute on two counts. First the 'year of intermission', that is the year when the Colleges of Education transferred from the 2-year to the 3-year course, and the only students

coming into the schools were a small percentage of university students and mature students; and secondly national appeals for married women to 'return to teaching' had met with some success but certainly not on the scale envisaged.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore the Minister's promise to '...consider the whole position...' did not reveal a sudden switch to the nursery sphere, but rather, yet another plan to get back more married women to teaching.

Thus a concession was announced in July 1964, which authorised the extension of nursery provision (in existing accommodation only) where a local education authority was satisfied that a pool of qualified teachers was not only available but also anxious to return to teaching, but was prevented from doing so only by the absence of nursery provision for their children.<sup>52</sup> An appreciable net increase in the teaching force was stated to be the 'prime purpose' of this rather imprecise concession.

In December 1965 a further concession was guaranteed and LEAs would be permitted to open additional nursery accommodation on two basic conditions:

'Each local education authority's first three nursery classes must accommodate sufficient teachers' children to produce an extra four teachers; an authority with more than three classes yielding at least twelve teachers is allowed to expand its nursery provision so long as....

'the number of qualified women teachers whose service in maintained schools is facilitated by their children's attendance at any of the authority's nursery schools remains at least twice the number of teachers who are employed in the authority's nursery schools and classes as a whole.'

The cost of any building work involved has got to be borne within the minor works programme.<sup>53</sup>

Thus by 1967 legislation on nursery schools reached stalemate and Mr.

R.W. Ferguson stated:-

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<sup>51</sup> Min of Ed. Statistics of Education ,1961

<sup>52</sup> Circular 8/60 - Addendum 1

<sup>53</sup> Circ.8/60 - Addendum 2

'Every Government irrespective of its political colour, seems to be only too ready to cut back on education and particularly on the education of young children, despite the fact that there is practically no opposition to nursery education as such...'<sup>54</sup>

In November 1963, the NSA had been invited to give evidence to the Central Advisory Council for Education. A working party was appointed by the Executive Committee which issued a questionnaire, and subsequently a report and memorandum of evidence was submitted to the 'Plowden Committee' whose Report was published in February 1967.<sup>55</sup> Optimism was felt towards the changing atmosphere regarding nursery education and great hopes were based on the outcome of the Report. The NSA were concerned with the safeguarding of the highest standards, and the securing of nursery education for all who would require it, and not the few, privileged or needy, who managed to receive it. Based on experience of generations, the Committee, following the Report of the Primary Education Working Party, felt...

'...that the provision of Nursery School Education is essential to the optimal development of individuals as well as to the social needs of the community'<sup>56</sup>

Thus the NSA were promoting the 'Head Start' theories<sup>57</sup> where nursery education was not only essential for social betterment but also for all child development giving them the first experiences of life-long learning. Also memorable in 1963 was the opening of the Grace Owen Nursery School at Sheffield on 3rd October. This school was almost wholly financed by Miss Owen, one of the founders of the NSA in 1923, and for the greater part of her life a constant worker for the cause of young children.<sup>58</sup> It was thus a sense of great jubilation that in spite of restrictions, through such generosity a nursery school was

<sup>54</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE NSA, December 1965 Newsletter

<sup>55</sup> D.E.S.(1967) Central Advisory Council for Education (England) 'Children and their Primary Schools' (Plowden Report) Vol.1 – Report; Vol.2 – Research and Surveys.

<sup>56</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 22 NSA Report (1963/64), Primary Education Working Party

<sup>57</sup> Lascarides B.C. & Hinitz B.F.(2000) 'Head Start' was an American innovation designed to give opportunities to the socially deprived but seen by the middle classes as advantageous for their own children

<sup>58</sup> Miss Grace Owen died at Appleton le Moors, N.Yorks. on 20th November 1965, aged 92

able to be opened and many children living in high flats were able to enjoy the benefits, as well as an endorsement of the faith of the individuals who had worked so hard.

At the Annual General Meeting in 1963, the Delegate Council of the NSA passed a resolution asking for 'some form of liaison' between the NSA and the Pre-School Play Groups Association<sup>59</sup>, for against the background of inadequate public provision, individuals and organisations had been busy trying to fill the gaps. Having been founded in 1923 the NSA merged with the National Society of Children's Nurseries (NSCN) to form the British Association of Early Childhood Education.<sup>60</sup> Play centres, adventure play groups, toddlers clubs and play groups sprang up all over the country in a 'self-help' campaign for the essential provision which *should* have been state provision.

The upsurge in the number of play-groups established in the 1960's was in fact one of the most important factors in pre-school protest since the war. Where it was felt that nursery provision was needed, the Save the Children Fund, basically a charitable organisation (and closely identified with the provision of open-air nurseries in the 30s)<sup>61</sup> arranged the place, appointed the leader and generally organised the running of the groups. In many areas they were successful in getting help from the LEAs<sup>62</sup> e.g. Portsmouth, Southampton, Kensington and Chelsea. Long waiting lists reflected the popularity of the groups.

The independent and self-run play groups, many of which were registered with the Pre-School Playgroups Association were usually managed by parents

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<sup>59</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 22 NSA Annual Report, 1963

<sup>60</sup> BAECE founded 1967 by amalgamation of NSA (f.1923) and NSCN (f.1908)

<sup>61</sup> See Chap.3

<sup>62</sup> The SCF spent £50,000 in 1964 on Play Groups and recovered less than one tenth of the sum from charges to parents. Average annual cost per child-£24

who wanted pre-school provision, preferably from the State, but, recognising the futility of such a request were willing to try a 'do-it-yourself' plan. The PPA was established in 1960 as the by-product of a local campaign for improved nursery schools in St. Marylebone. The prime organiser, Mrs. Belle Tutaev, was a mother with children under five. The Association was based on the experience of the local groups and aimed to help other groups in suggesting standards and methods of organisation.

In some areas again the PPA received help from the Local Authorities. Many would like to have seen the Play Groups run under the wing and guidance of an existing nursery school but there was no legislation to make this workable.<sup>63</sup>

The NSA viewed the tremendous enthusiasm of the PPAs with great interest and, as in the past, gave advice and published pamphlets about nursery school standards but of course their *prime* concern was that *nursery school* provision be available for all who needed it or wished for it, and not for any private sector of the community.<sup>64</sup> There were also numerous nurseries in factories, hospitals etc., where the mothers worked.

No LEA was oblivious of the activity in the private sector and some were prepared to meet the demand when legislation was relaxed. One interesting experiment in the North East was in Sunderland where all Community Centres were registered as Play Centres, whether or not they were actually running groups. The aim was to help to organise a play-group without actually providing it.<sup>65</sup>

There was plainly a chronic shortage of pre-school provision and the

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<sup>63</sup> DES (1967) Plowden Report, Chapter 9 may have had this in mind

<sup>64</sup> NSA publications 'Nursery and Playgroup Facilities for Young Children', 1964; & 'Starting a Community Nursery School', 1962.

<sup>65</sup> LSE Lib. BAECE 22 N.S.A. 'Anticipating Plowden'

Plowden Report suggested :-

'..that there should be a large expansion of nursery education and a start should be made as soon as possible...'<sup>66</sup>

but the reasons *against* provision were purely economic!

It cost £153 p.a. to maintain a child in a nursery school, whereas a child in Primary School cost £73 p.a. and a child in a secondary school £131 p.a.- hence with the exception of special school provision, nursery provision was the most costly form of education.<sup>67</sup>

The fact that nursery provision for the under-fives was made by both the Ministry of Health (in Day Nurseries) and the Department of Education and Science, throughout the last half century contributed to confusion and muddle. No doubt the peak period was the establishment of the war-time nurseries by the Ministry of Health and the unravelling of the knot of dual control in the post war years. Approximately 93,000 children attended nursery schools and classes without any payment,<sup>68</sup> whilst 21,000 had places in day nurseries at a charge of up to 15/- per day.(this was reducible in cases of need)

It was not uncommon in a town like Hebburn, which had a nursery school and a day nursery, for a parent to ring up the Superintendent of the Nursery School and ask, 'Are you the 'free' or the 'pay' school?' On being told that this was the nursery school and the only payment required was for meals consumed by the child, the relieved parent would reply, 'Oh yes, you're the school we want'<sup>69</sup>

Perhaps a clearer definition in administration, and the public image, would have helped to promote the cause of the nursery school. To provide nursery

<sup>66</sup> DES (1967), Plowden Report, para.343 (1)

<sup>67</sup> London Education Statistics, 1963/64 (National average estimates by D.E.S.)

<sup>68</sup> Although a charge *was* made for a midday meal

<sup>69</sup> From personal conversation with Superintendent Mrs. McColl. Also similar reference from SCF in evidence to Plowden - Chapter 9

school places for half of the 2 to 5 age group would cost about £140 million and 30,000 extra teachers.<sup>70</sup> It had been suggested that some of the £100M spent on subsidised school meals and milk would perhaps serve a more worthwhile educational purpose, if it was switched to the expansion of nursery provision.<sup>71</sup>

The shortage of teachers, (despite the expansion in Colleges of Education), meant that there were no available teachers for nursery schools. An interesting light was thrown on the subject by the National Advisory Council in the Minority Report who predicted it ...

‘...will not secure until 1976 the achievement of standards of staffing which satisfy regulations approved in 1945; defers until 1982 the achievement of sizes of classes in primary schools with the maximum of 30 as in secondary schools, and defers until well into the 1980’s any prospect of significant expansion of nursery school provision. We do not believe that progress on this basis is acceptable...’<sup>72</sup>

In fact following an NSA conference, a report was published entitled ‘The Forgotten Two Million’<sup>73</sup> - a title evocative of the place of young children in history and their priority for consideration of educational provision, as outlined earlier.<sup>74</sup> Once again with the pressures on funding, teachers and buildings, the under-fives were ‘forgotten children’!

Plowden’s plan<sup>75</sup> for nursery groups however, need not, it was claimed, create demands for more teachers (para.334). Extra building would be needed certainly (para.340) and total running costs would of course be higher. It seemed significant that a note of dissent came from eight members (including the

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<sup>70</sup> DES. A cumulative, estimated total from all Development Plans at DES

<sup>71</sup> Suggested in ‘Under Five’ by E. Howe (Conservative Political Centre)

<sup>72</sup> Ninth Report of the National Advisory Council in the Demand for and Supply of Teachers 1963/86 (Minority Report) published 1964, HMSO

<sup>73</sup> NSA (1964/5) ‘The Forgotten Two Million : Why Nursery Schools?’

<sup>74</sup> See Chap.1 p.1

<sup>75</sup> Half-time education in 20-place groups for all 4 year olds and many 3 year olds on educational grounds through ‘historic’ factors dealt with in this study, are brought out - working mothers, neglectful mothers and generally poor home circumstances (paras.1236 and 328) and here full-time attendance for up to 50% is envisaged



Chairman and four Social Scientists) of the Council of twenty-five. Bearing in mind the poor record of provision to date, they did not believe adequate resources could be found for what was not an over-riding priority, except in 'EPAs'<sup>76</sup> where authorities were asked to adopt positive discrimination in their favour. A charge to parents of 5/- per half-day was recommended, reckoned to be the full cost.<sup>77</sup> Priority seemed justified in the face of social and economic deprivation.<sup>78</sup> Circular 11/67 followed a Government grant of £16M being made available for the next two years for school building in areas of 'educational priority'...

'...criteria for the allocation of grants would seem familiar to pioneers of the nursery school movement...' Some of these are... 'children in a district suffering from multiple deprivation because of overcrowding of houses, or family sizes above the average...' together with '... the general quality of the physical environment...a concentration of crowded, old, sub-standard and badly-maintained houses...'<sup>79</sup>

The concept of 'positive discrimination' seems present throughout this study, through private individuals and groups, and LEAs when they were able. It would appear that nursery education although considered by educational thinkers and philanthropists as necessary for the well-being of the young was always regarded as an economic bonus in education, to be shelved in hard times and wheeled out when funds or prevailing economic circumstances demanded. For over 100 years the needs of the under-fives had been aired. Nurseries had been established by philanthropic providing bodies with Government grant support but overall there was no *urgency* for state provision. Other priorities won the day in spite of the fact that a viable framework had been in operation in areas of social deprivation for at least 50 years.

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<sup>76</sup> Educational Priority Areas

<sup>77</sup> Plowden Report, p.489

<sup>78</sup> Plowden - Appendix B to Chapter 31

<sup>79</sup> DES (24.8.67) Circular 11/67 'School Building in Educational Priority Areas' para.6

## Conclusion

A study of nursery provision, both nationally and locally, involves a wide interpretation of situations and events. It is significant therefore - yet not entirely unexpected - that even as late as 1932 in North East England only one nursery school was founded by an LEA, that being Ashfield in Newcastle upon Tyne. Even then it was not of the *ideal* open-air type. All the rest were founded through private external sources. Voluntary bodies, inspired by philanthropic individuals and groups, championed the ideals of educationalists and social reformers which had developed over centuries.

During WW2, by direction of Government departments with full remission of costs, there was a massive upsurge, illustrating that money *can* be found in emergency situations. Of the five case studies of pre-war nursery schools, only one was taken over by 1939 and one remained independent until the later part of the 20th century. Of the LEAs involved in the sample, only one, Darlington, showed keen interest and support from the outset, perhaps due to the prominence of the Pease family in public offices. Educational benefits as well as social and economic advantages were discerned in all cases.

Whatever the attitudes of local authorities in 1919, when 'schemes' were formulated, all saw the need for nursery provision by the early thirties. The 'model' example of all the voluntary nursery schools attracted numerous visitors and led to favourable reports. In a sense, each North East nursery school was a demonstration school in its own immediate neighbourhood, as was the school linked to the Teacher Training College. Where plans were formulated, however,

authorities elected the cheaper, nursery *class* form of provision. By 1939 two of the LEAs had two nursery classes, and the largest LEA was planning an establishment of four more in the following year.

Social and economic factors combined in the pressure for further expansion of nursery schools making it a matter of urgency for the promoters. Significant were over-crowding, mal-nourishment, and poor housing conditions arising often from unemployment which was present in all the school environments studied, elements of which remained well beyond the study period. The positive help which (in particular) open-air nursery schools gave in the build-up of resistance to disease was sustained and improved with modern replacement buildings in three of the samples.

Another obvious feature is that some children under severe social handicap never took up a place in a nursery school when it was provided, and followed the normal pattern of no schooling under five. How far this was due to the fees payable (as none of the schools was entirely free, though most had a sliding scale of meals payments) perhaps cannot now be determined. However most authorities stated that the burden on the rates, due to support for unemployed, did not leave a margin for the provision of pre-school education.

In the inter-war period, some mothers were working but by no means all, not even a majority - a feature which continued for a long period. Thus the findings are not representative of all England and Wales, due to the tradition of wives in many North East communities who did not take employment outside the home.

Estimated future demand for nursery provision, as revealed in the waiting lists of individual nurseries, was thought to be unreliable due to varying methods of

recording and head teachers' personal assessment of need. But since the inception of the schools and classes, there were always some names on the waiting lists.

The part played by the Nursery School Association (and the Tyneside Nursery School Association ), as a pressure/advisory group was central to the development of nursery provision and closely involved in its history. Along with various voluntary bodies, particularly the Save the Children Fund, it was responsible for guidance and limited financial initiatives to help individual schools.

Of the economic factors, shortage of qualified nursery teachers does not seem to have been a problem until the war. A Government scheme provided for training of reserve personnel and a system of one qualified teacher in charge of more than one nursery anticipated Plowden's 'grouped teacher' plan. Qualified elementary and secondary school teachers were even unemployed before 1939, and only following the war was staff shortage a valid excuse for restriction of nursery expansion. On the face of things, the inter-war period could be viewed as the ideal time to have reduced that other restricting factor - i.e., large classes in levels of education other than nursery, as the birth rate fell and teachers were available.

But LEAs had even larger problems, for always there were a number of other priorities which had to be dealt with, and which have been illustrated in the sample areas, to which there were often attached special inducement grants.

These appear to have been concerned with senior children over the age of eleven.

A series of key dates are significant:-

1918 - school leaving age fixed at 14;

1926 - Hadow re-organisation followed by first requirement of 3yr.expenditure plan  
 1938 - school leaving age to be raised/ necessary re-organisation of schools 1939;  
 1944 - school leaving age raised and general expansion for increased birth rate;  
 1958 - new secondary schools' drive and from -  
 1970 - school leaving age to be raised again.

True, there were reminders about nursery education in 1929, 1933, and 1936 and of course 1943/4 - this last the most ironical, when, following on the 'duties', came an almost immediate embargo. Between these peaks of potential growth came the significant financial crises of 1921 and 1931, underlying the fact that the basis of all educational provision lies ultimately in the national economy.

During the 19th century it has been shown how the industrial developments led to the accumulation of social evils. With the discovery of new resources in the world and the development of great technical inventions, trade increased and wealth accumulated, but under the laissez-faire system the wealth was not evenly distributed. There was a great need for philanthropic work in all social spheres and in this setting of extremes of rich and poor, together with the exclusion of the under-fives from elementary school, are the beginnings of nursery provision in England and Wales. The leading educators had demonstrated the benefits of early training of young children and their ethos was carried on into the 20th century by the Macmillan sisters, Grace Owen, Maria Montessori and Freda Hawtrey among others.

The period of national prosperity can be assumed to have extended into the 20th century to the outbreak of the war in 1914, although the peak of production and economic achievement may have been reached in the 1870s. By 1914, however, a national elementary system of education was secure, as well as school meals and a school medical service second to none. However conditions of war were soon to focus attention on new social and economic

factors. For the first time the country's labour force was augmented by women. Food rationing (from 1917) and working mothers led to the spread of nursery provision for young children, whilst the immense loss (estimated at 10%) to the country of manpower killed or severely injured, meant that future economic development could no longer ignore the female labour force, and 'woman's dual role' was seen to be possible.

With the return of peace, world markets were not easily recoverable and new centres of finance and industry began to challenge Britain's former economic leadership. However, the war (as did the 1939/45 War) certainly accelerated many economic and social changes already in progress, carrying them nearer completion than otherwise would have happened. But by 1921 a world slump from failure to assess the enormity of economic change in six years, led to severe financial restriction. Education was chosen as one of the fields where expenditure could be cut; and one can argue, particularly with nursery schools in mind, that such education costs would be considered as investment costs. These cuts could be made without any long-term effects on the economy. Nursery schools and classes were just one of the social improvements which were shelved, and lack of nursery provision as an investment could be shown in very tangible comparisons in the health and physical development of two to five year olds in the inter-war period.

Psychological and educational advantages, though not so easily measurable, became one of the chief demands of parents wanting nursery provision by 1967.

A further drastic restriction in spending in 1931 had occurred when Britain left the Gold Standard. The lack of demand for British goods in foreign markets led

to the highest unemployment rate that Britain had ever known; and only when a re-armament programme was commenced did the men get back to work.

Unemployment in the North East, second only to Northern Ireland, caused tremendous hardship and inspired philanthropic help in many spheres and from many sources. Help towards the nursery schools came from the more favoured parts of the country, from secular and religious groups, and even from American and Canadian sources.

The increasing intervention of the Government in planning economic matters became inevitable. During the 1914 -1918 War, controls had been necessary but were not popular and were quickly dispensed with, but public spending had already become involved in the provision of social services and conditions were so complex, that only agreements and controls by the Government could gain order out of chaos.

But the Government had to direct so much revenue to debt service that the expansion of all factors of social policy were slow. In the case of the North East, another type of Government intervention came in 1934 when assistance amounting to £2,000,000 was granted to the four Special Areas. This was intended to improve economic conditions in a declining industrial area. Three years later a similar sum was added to permit concessions of rent, rates and taxes to firms which would settle in the areas. However the scale of expenditure and activity was thought by many to be too small for the local level of unemployment to be significantly raised. Eight nursery schools were funded from this source - three of them in the case studies.

Thus economic power over the years became more concentrated in the Central Government and therefore more closely interwoven with national policy.

More social services were possible, financed by levies in the taxes and rates, which eventually were to lead to improvement of social conditions for those who most needed it, that is, the poor.

But the war years were to compel the Government to impose a further system of controls and in this respect war-time nurseries were a direct outcome of the Ministry of Labour's demand for women workers in munitions. 1,500 nurseries were provided nationally, over two years, at an average cost of £2,000 for building and equipment.

In the post war years, a planned economy with varied allocations of Government spending reflected the national economic conditions. Measures of restraint were used when other various claims were being made on expenditure, but this is the basis of all economic activity, in that a choice must be made of limited resources. In post-war education there was never enough to finance the essentials for children of statutory school age, due to the increasing birth rate, extended schooling to fifteen, replacement of school buildings, extended training and extra teachers.

From the philosophy of educational thinkers all agreed that the concept of early years education was a sound investment, but educational benefits were difficult to measure; and in this respect nursery schools may not have had sufficient support, especially when complementary social services were developed in the post-war period which helped to improve home conditions for young children.

Faced with choices, should the Government have provided full-time education for 15 -18 year olds to enhance their future earning capacity, or should they have invested in nursery education at an average of £150 p.a. per child to precede statutory schooling? Psychologists postulated that the benefits were also



preventative, in that a period in a nursery school could arrest the development of maladjustment or delinquency; and in this sense, the anticipation of considerable savings in the future.

Also to be considered is the 'Head Start' which a nursery school was thought to provide, and although there was no positive evidence to substantiate the claim, nevertheless it was on this assumption that middle-class parents began to seek nursery provision and to organise for themselves, the numerous pre-school playgroups. Thus the theories and practice of Froebel still found a mention in Plowden.

It was suggested that unless more money was allocated, there would be no dramatic increase in provision in the 20th century, so that the situation really would merit drastic measures such as provision with 'positive discrimination' in favour of areas of special need, or provision requiring parental contribution.

By 1967 the position was in deadlock. A framework had been in place for fifty years, following the campaigns of the nursery pioneers, and it would seem that unless there was a revival of this spirit there was a danger of losing one of the most valued assets in the structure of British education. The value from this research topic endorses three main themes. Primarily, educational progress largely depends on the strength of Government finances; pressures come from individuals or groups campaigning on specific needs with philanthropic goodwill, often against local opposition and finally having recognised that educational progress is cyclical with 'stops' and 'starts' it would be difficult to change the chosen chronological ordering and therefore a historical appraisal of provision is essential.

The topic is wide open for further research, perhaps in other regions where

a similar nucleus of development emerged following philanthropic measures of enlightened medical and educational practitioners and where the 'seen' *general* benefits could be related to the *particular* local situation. As an exercise highlighting the extent and full meaning of *social* deprivation, the topic was worthy of research in any educational or historical context.

North-easterners developed a solidarity of community support especially in times of financial restraint and recession. The present-day 'Big Society' of mutual help is shown in many ways,<sup>1</sup> and on a grand scale in the region through bold public constructions.<sup>2</sup> This thesis shows how such boldness and confidence produced social benefits under adverse circumstances in the fields of health and education for the under fives, when supported by determined individuals and pressure groups like the NSA and TNSA. Nursery schools and classes were, and continue to be, precious institutions and examples for future development. Programmes such as 'Sure Start' need to build on 20th century provision by embracing the tenacity and commitment of the 'providers' as well as their vast experience of accelerating child development through 'play'.

The historical struggle for nursery provision here encountered in its stark reality, is a reminder for those who wish to examine the broad coalition of all issues involved, and their potential outcomes. The 'History of Education' and its associated social sciences provides the models and should be a part of teacher education in the future. Processes and practices developed in the 19th and 20th centuries can be studied and adapted with advantage to participants in current and future initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Sir Bobby Robson Foundation

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Life Science Centre (Newcastle), The Angel of the North, The Sage, (Gateshead), the Stadium of Light (Sunderland), Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Witness : Mr A. C. Coffin – Secretary to the Newcastle on Tyne Education Committee

He had been connected with Newcastle for 12 months and previously worked at Darlington. A decision had been made to exclude children under five from public elementary schools in Newcastle which had been taken before his appointment.

#### 1. Reason for exclusion of children under five in Newcastle

The decision arose out of the proposal of the Board of Education to increase the grants for older scholars, if the younger ones were excluded. In addition to the financial aspect, educational considerations had some share in bringing about the exclusion. The tendency to press children on is rather more noticeable in the North than in the South of England ; the people feel that the children are sent to school to *learn* . Beyond the expression of opinion of the Committee questions was not considered in detail from the medical point of view.

The population of Newcastle is increasing and it has been necessary in the last few years to build new schools. This fact however can hardly be said to have influenced the decision. In planning new schools the Education Authority have provided the same accommodation for babies as was allowed before the exclusion, because, the matter being in such an unsettled state, it may at some future time be necessary to revert to the old practice. In the meanwhile the accommodation so provided will be used for other infants.

#### 2. Results of Exclusion

The time which has elapsed since exclusion took place has been too short to admit of observations being made as to the results of the policy from the point of view of health. Teachers in the poor districts are unanimous in thinking that it is better for children under five to be at school. As to the feeling of parents there were some at first from parents whose children were children refused admission but that does not occur now. Some of them would be glad if the decision were reversed, but others do not seem to wish it; there is a growing opinion amongst working class parents that children should not receive education until they are six or seven.

Witness had no information as to whether there were any number of places in Newcastle where children are 'minded'. He thought it very unlikely however, as female labour, other than ordinary charring work, is rare.

Educationally there is great diversity of opinion among teachers. Some assert that children coming for the first time at five show greater originality while others think that their education suffers because it takes them longer to get accustomed to school discipline.

#### 3. Social Conditions

There is very little female labour in Newcastle except by the river side; there are very few factories which employ women.

#### 4. Modifying decision

An alteration in the policy would involve additional expenditure because the staff would have to be increased; the present accommodation of the infants' schools will be sufficient to admit children under five. Witness was of the opinion that such children ought in certain cases to be admitted to school in Newcastle and he thought it quite possible that the matter might shortly be reconsidered by the Authority.

#### 5. Practice in Darlington

In Darlington a compromise has been made, children being admitted to school at the age of four years, and the system seems to be giving general satisfaction. There is not much poverty in that town and there is little female labour.

(Board of Education -1908 – Cd.4259)

## Appendix 2

### Witness : Miss Grace Owen : Manchester University Training College (1908)

In answer to questions, the witness stated that it is still common to find reading, writing and numbers taught in infants' classes. The limit of a quarter of an hour for the lessons is not as beneficial as it may sound as the continual collecting and giving out of material is distracting and unsatisfactory to both teachers and children. All instruction is out of place but suitable occupations need by no means be limited to a quarter of an hour.

### Instruction of Children Under Five : Witness suggested :-

- 1) No rigidity of fixed time table
- 2) That about two hours a day be given to organised games and occupations, and the rest of the time to free play, resting, or quiet undirected occupations.
- 3) That desks and galleries be removed, and chairs and folding tables be substituted, sand corners provided etc.

This state of affairs has not been reached yet greatly owing to the fact that the teachers are hampered by the expectations of inspectors and of the teachers of classes above as regards the standard to which the children of the infants' school must reach before they leave it. They feel that if they do not start reading and writing at the earliest possible moment the required standard will not be reached in time.

As a matter of fact, it is probable that the children would read more intelligently at seven years of age, even if they could not read difficult words, if they did not begin until they were six years old, than if they began at three. Witness believed that teachers of the youngest children need quite as thorough a training as others – though it might be possible for a mature and thoroughly trained teacher of experience to supervise several groups of children under the immediate charge of less qualified assistants. She disagreed entirely with the contention that young girls just leaving school are suitable teachers for young children because of being "nearer to the child's mind" : on the contrary she felt that older teachers had much more sympathy with the youngest children.

Board of Education(1908) Cd.4259

Appendix 3Visit to Nursery at Mitre, Stepney on 9th July 1914, by Miss J.M. Campbell,  
M.D., with Mrs. Astor

Housed in an ex public house and has been in existence for about a year, provides for about 20-30 children of about 2 to 5 years of age and education is carried out on Montessori principles though it does not necessarily follow exactly the methods of Mme. Montessori herself. The main room on the ground floor is extremely pleasing, the shape is attractive and there are plenty of windows and consequently ample sun and air. It is simply and suitably furnished with small tables and chairs. Montessori apparatus is not at all extensively used. The children were seen at dinner in this room. Two little boys four and a half, laid the tables and afterwards ladled out soup and distributed it to other children. I gather that the whole of the education aims at making the children do things for themselves and that great attention is paid to the personal hygiene and training in good habits. On the first floor is another room which has simple hammock stretchers which can be used for the afternoon rest. There is also a bathroom where children are bathed once or twice a week and every child has its own tooth brush. Food is cooked in a small kitchen which opens on to a small roofed play ground. The children are supposed to come from 9 to 4. In practice they come from 8 to 5. They are only given one meal-dinner, which is served at twelve o'clock. Clothes are provided which the mothers are supposed to keep in order and the children are expected to come clean and tidy: this they generally do. When the school was first started leaflets explaining its object were distributed in the neighbourhood. Most of the children belong to mothers who go out to work but no strict enquiry is made into home circumstances. The school is under the general supervision of Dr. Robertson and Mrs. Bullock. A medical woman comes twice a week to inspect the children and to give them simple physical exercises. I was not able to make an extensive inspection of the school but the general impression received was extremely pleasing. Considering the position of the school, the premises may be looked upon as entirely suitable and in fact unusually good. Grants to nursery schools if available at some future date, this school would certainly be eligible.

(Signed) J.M.Campbell

14th July 1914

Appendix 4

'Model Nursery school'

- 1) Definition Well managed crèche plus education in broadest sense
- 2) Object Prepare child, physically fit and intelligent ready for Public Elementary School, especially where it is not possible to be done by the mother
- 3) Premises Small and near homes of children. To provide for not more than 60 to 120 children. Rooms light and airy, S. or S.E. aspect : direct access to open air wherever possible.
- 4) Equipment Light tables, chairs, net beds or hammocks or rugs for sleeping. Such Froebel 'gifts' or Montessori apparatus and toys as required
- 5) Hours 8 – 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.
- 6) Age 2 – 5 years
- 7) Staff Teachers specially qualified, one staff person to 20 children plus nurses
- 8) Aid prevention of infection. Each child should be inspected daily before admission particularly with a view to avoiding measles, chicken pox, whooping cough. Regulations for prevention of measles. Monthly weighing and medical inspection. Weekly baths.
- 9) Inculcations of habits leading to personal hygiene. In open air wherever possible .  
School should be under supervision of Medical Officer attached to the school, who should be S.E.O. or one of his staff. Children should not be brought in bad weather.
- 10) Treatment School clinic available - adenoids, squint, teeth
- 11) Curriculum General principle is 'modified Montessori'
  - a) Hours for meals and rest periods one and a half - 2 hours' 1 – 3p.m.
  - b) games and free play exercises
  - c) finger and hand training
  - d) observation and self control lessons
  - e) training of senses – colour, form, touch
  - f) speech training
- 12) Meals Provision of milk early in the morning and substantial dinner
- 13) Clothing All children to be provided with overalls
- 14) Finance Estimated cost £8 - £10 per child p.a. government grants should be paid on basis of cost and not on attendances. No rigid conditions of grant should be made at first.
- 15) General School attendance officers should have no jurisdiction. Children to be examined by M.O. before being admitted. Delicate, under nourished or backward children to be returned for further period. Mothers to see for themselves methods adopted. Practical demonstrations. Home visit is necessary to prevent wrong children attending school. Suitable arrangements for disinfection.

Appendix 5

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regulations for Nursery schools

1. (a) A Nursery school (which expression includes a nursery class) for the purposes of these Regulations is an institution which provides for the care and training during the day of young children over two and under five years of age, whose attendance at such a school is necessary or desirable for their healthy physical and mental development.  
 (b) Children may not be admitted to a Nursery school below the age of two years; they may not be retained beyond the end of the term in which they attain the age of five, except with the special permission of the Board.
2. An Authority for the purpose of these Regulations means a Local Education Authority for the purposes of Part III of the Education Act, 1902.
3. If a School is not provided by an Authority:
  - (a) The Board before recognizing it will consult the Authority
  - (b) It must be conducted by responsible Managers, and provision must be made for the appointment of at least one-third of the Managers by the Authority, where the Authority so desire.  
 A person must be appointed to act as Correspondent of the Managers.
  - (c) It must be suitable in character and financial position to receive aid from the Board, and must not be conducted for private profit or be farmed out to any member of the staff or other person.
  - (d) It must be open to inspection by the Authority.
4. Before recognising a Nursery school, the Board will consider its suitability in relation to the needs of the area, its accessibility to the children's homes and the co-ordination of its work with the medical and educational services of the Authority.
5. The site, premises and equipment must be approved by the Board as generally suitable for the purposes of a Nursery school.
6. (a) The School must be open for not less than 200 days in the year, but due allowance will be made for any period of closure on medical grounds or for any other unavoidable cause.  
 (b) The times of opening and closing must be suitable
7. Adequate arrangements must be made for attending to the health, nourishment and physical welfare of the children, as well as for training appropriate to their age and circumstances. There must be sufficient opportunity for rest, meals and recreation.
8. Satisfactory provision must be made for medical inspection, supervision and treatment, and for the prevention of infectious diseases.
9. (a) A Nursery school must be under the charge of a competent Superintendent. Her appointment must be approved beforehand by the Board.  
 (b) The subordinate staff must be suitable, and sufficient in number and qualifications.  
 (c) The salary of any certificated or un-certificated teachers employed full-time in the School must be not less than the minimum salary prescribed by the Board for teachers of those grades employed in public elementary schools.
10. No fees shall be charged or other charges of any kind made in a Nursery school except for food or medical treatment. A fee, if charged for these purposes,

must be reasonable and must not exceed the cost of the food or medical treatment provided.

11. (a) The school must be open at all reasonable times to inspection by the Board.

(b) At least a full week's notice must be given to the Board's Inspector of any alteration in the time of meeting of the school, or of its closure. In the case of closure on account of an emergency, notice should be given by telegram.

12. Such records must be kept as may from time to time be required by the Board, and any returns called for by the Board must be duly furnished.

13. Where a school is not provided by an Authority:

(a) Grant will be payable for each year commencing 1st April at the rate of one-half of the expenditure in that year. The grant will be payable after the end of the year.

(b) In determining the expenditure on which grant is payable the Board will reduce the gross expenditure by the amount of any fees received and by the amount of any contributions from an Authority ; they will also exclude any items of expenditure which, in their opinion, should not be taken into account for the purposes of grant.

(c) Application for the payment of grant must be submitted to the Board through the Authority, together with an audited statement of accounts for the period under review.

(d) The grant payable in respect of a school which has been closed or which ceases to be recognised will not, as a rule, exceed the amount of the outstanding liabilities at the date on which the school is closed, or on which recognition ceases.

14. The payment of grant and the continuance of recognition is subject to the fulfilment of the conditions laid down in these Regulations, but if any of the conditions have not been fulfilled the Board may, nevertheless, where there are special circumstances which would justify it, pay such grant as they may think fit instead of withdrawing recognition, or as a preliminary to so doing.

15. If any question arises as to the interpretation of these Regulations, the decisions of the Board shall be final.

16. These Regulations come into force as from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1918, and may be cited as "The Regulations for Nursery Schools, 1919".

Given under the Seal Of Office of the Board of Education this 5th day of March, 1919.

(L.S.)

*L.A.Selby-Bigge*  
Secretary to the Board of Education



## Appendix 6

### 'Curriculum' for Nursery Schools

The main areas of concern were the physical, social, emotional and educational development. Much of the daily routine was based on Froebel ideals but there were also features of Montessori and other pioneers who had impressed the nursery staff and committees. Even before the establishment of Nursery Schools, the under fives played games (indoors and outdoors) with or without music, chanted nursery rhymes, enjoyed picture lessons, paper folding, mosaics, mixing and matching colours, drawing, plaiting paper, threading beads and sequencing numbers and symbols

Pre-eminent in the nursery school however was

a) Physical development - to introduce the children to a healthy life style with physical exercise, adequate rest and wholesome food. The children were to be trained in good hygienic habits such as hand washing and teeth cleaning to maintain a healthy life style, and an afternoon 'nap' ensured a comfortable rest period often not available within the child's own home.

A course of physical training was incorporated into the daily programme with organised exercises and free movement. There were simple physical games both indoors and out, and there was always access to outdoor activities and fresh air.

b) Social training involved sharing toys and games with other children, displaying good manners and courtesy to other children as well as grown ups. The children became a member of the nursery 'family' and as such had to play their own personal role in clearing, cleaning and helping to maintain good order and standards.

c) Emotional training set the parameters of behaviour throughout the school so that a code of conduct was established by example and by negotiation. Temper tantrums were discouraged with diversionary activities.

d) Intellectual (Cognitive) Development included a number of competencies, skills and concepts so that areas overlapped. A child playing in a sand pit could be developing language, spatial awareness, mathematical concepts, as well as physical, personal and social knowledge and understanding, and creative competencies through this one activity. 'Formal work in reading, writing and arithmetic should have no place at all...'

Always the emphasis was on learning through play and freedom within the framework of the nursery school, its routines and its activities.

This early programme (curriculum) provided the flexible model which allowed staff to accommodate individuals and experiment with strategies which would benefit every child. The same framework continued throughout this study period, cited in:-

- 1) Bd.of Ed. Prefatory Memorandum to Grant Regulations No.6 (31.12.1918)
- 2) Grace Owen (1920& 3<sup>rd</sup>.ed.1928) 'Nursery School Education'
- 3) Bd.of Ed.(1927)'Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers'(Sections 28,29 & 30)
- 4) Bd.of Ed.1933 Rep.

## Appendix 7

### 'An Appeal to Candidates and Electors of ALL Parties'

This is not a party leaflet. It concerns children. Its issues coincide with an immense increase in the Women's Vote. It may be said that women make their entrance into public life at the very hour when the salvation of children is something more than a possibility.

Hitherto the love of children may have been, and indeed was genuine in members of all parties. The means of giving it effective expression were not present. For though the tragedy of wasted life was in every city and even in many hamlets and villages, the experiments which show how all this tragic loss and suffering can be prevented had not been made,

All this is changed. Men and women voters now for the first time enter the arena with full power to save the children.

How is it to be done?

By the very simple means which can be seen and understood by the simplest voter and helped by legislation of all parties. We must open Nurture Centres or Open-air Nursery schools for all children who need them, beginning in the poorest and most crowded areas. These Nursery schools must be large, mainly because we have to deal with large numbers to serve crowded areas and teeming little insanitary homes. The big school is the safest school, for it can be organised and it illustrates the truth that things can be done cheaply, not by buying poor food, but by cooking for large numbers. The cost of a child in a large Open-air School is £12 - £14 per annum. In such a school, children by tens of thousands can be kept healthy and beautiful in the midst of the crowded city. The Child Welfare movement has brought down the infant death rate at a run. The Nursery school makes life worth living for the survivors.

It remains only to do this thing. Parliament can help by voting supplies and making it compulsory on Local Education Authorities to establish Nursery schools in all crowded areas, and in less congested districts where there is a demand for them.

Women are now responsible for the great wastage of child life at every age, but especially in the first seven years. This wastage has gone through the ages and is going on today. The right to the exercise of the vote puts into the hands of millions of girls and mothers, the means of swiftly arresting the leakages of human power.

We confidently appeal to all candidates to make Nursery schools a prominent plank in the political platform.

We appeal to Electors of all Parties to support only the Candidates who will adopt this new measure of creative reform.

MARGARET McMILLAN, C.B.E. (President)  
S. EVELEGH (Chairman)

January 1929

Appendix 8

Memorandum from the Principal on the value to the College of the George Dent Nursery School.

The case for raising the payment from £300 to £1000 in 1966/7 in respect of the services and facilities given by the school to the staff and students of the College.

Only 20 of the 148 Colleges of Education in England shown in List 172 published by the Department of Education and Science for 1966/7 offer students training as Nursery School Teachers. Darlington is the only college to take nursery students in the Durham and Newcastle Area Training Organisation. In the whole of Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire the training of nursery teachers is confined to two colleges only, namely, Darlington and Margaret McMillan, Bradford. The George Dent Nursery School is regarded by the Darlington College Committee as a most valuable asset in both recruitment and training, if the supply and quality of nursery trained teachers is to be maintained.

Historically, the George Dent Nursery School was founded by the College in 1917 in the pioneer days of Nursery schools, and has since that date drawn students and observers to the school, usually as college students, from all over the world. To fulfil its function adequately the school should have the closest relationship to the College, at the same time providing the best conditions for the children's development and welfare. It is clear that the College needs control, through the Headmistress of the educational policy of the school. The Lecturers and Headmistress should see eye to eye in the use of new or old methods, and in the application of modern research to the needs of young children as well as on the practical side of the students' training. To attain this, appointments to the school staff should be, as indeed they are and always have been, made with the approval of the College Principal, through the School Committee.

The College uses the school for observation and training in every aspect of the children's school day, not forgetting the preparation and serving of meals, the standards of cleanliness and the children's health. For this purpose every member of the school staff contributes to the work of training, and in particular the Headmistress who gives occasional lectures and informal talks to students. Providing the children with new experiences at times means additional apparatus, and students who are likely to teach after training in any nursery school in the country must take with them skills, knowledge and attitudes equal to the best schools they are likely to find, and the ability to bring new light to the less privileged.

If the College needs, as it clearly does, a school of this type and uses its facilities freely for training purposes it should be prepared to pay suitably for it. The sum of £300 annually which it has paid for some years has become unrealistic and I suggest that the Department of Education and Science should be asked to approve an increase to £1,000 per annum, which compares incidentally, with the salary of one experienced teacher.

13.9.66

P.M.S.

## Appendix 9

### THE SET UP OF THE CSS

The setting up of Durham CSS was a direct result of the NCSS being asked by the Government to widen their sphere of social work from purely RCC interests, to take in the plight of the unemployed. This was stepped up by the Prince of Wales ' speech, and money was made available by the Government....

.....The NCSS concentrated at this point on such areas as S. Wales, Lancashire, Staffordshire, Durham and Tyneside; unemployment being as heavy and pervasive in Durham as in S. Wales.

Because they were having to look at the problems of an area, rather than just a town or city, the NCSS suggested setting up County CSS. In Durham, with the NCSS's backing, Georges Haynes went into this thoroughly, talking to Bishop Henson and the Dean. He also talked to W N Smith, a School Attendance Officer (known as 'Kiddy-Catcher -Smith') and Chairman of the County Council, who was a Methodist of the strictest upbringing. W N Smith felt that the setting up of a County CSS was the correct thing to do. He saw the problem as a moral one, not a political one, feeling that any wastage of human material was to be avoided. As a consequence, in the face of the opposition of the whole of the County Council, he lent his name to the enterprise, agreeing to become its Vice-Chairman. The Dean agreed to become Chairman.

Therefore, largely because of W N Smith's support, the CSS came into being, although its position was a precarious one. The CSS was seen by many to be a 'sop' to the Government: by keeping the unemployed happy, it was allowing the Government to duck its responsibilities towards the unemployed. This was not, in fact, the case, since the CSS's activities caused the unemployed to be much more aware of their position....

Setting up a CSS in the climate prevailing at that time (the {former} Dean of Durham {Dean Weldon} had been thrown in the river a year previously) meant that its future was unpredictable. For example, the Dean, Lady Somebody, and one or two other individuals might suggest they form them selves into a committee to look after old people. A volatile reaction would be provoked from one or other of the political parties, who would come up with numerous reasons as to why this should not be done. The CSS would therefore be in an untenable position because of the strength of feeling. Because of this situation, the style of operation which the Council adopted under its Director, John Newsom, was to throw back the ideas to groups of people and to work anonymously....

## Appendix 10

### Lady Gainford, letter to 'The Times', August 27th 1937.

'I am writing to appeal to those of your readers who may be interested on behalf of the scheme for providing a nursery school in the village of New Brancepeth, Co. Durham. New Brancepeth is a typical Durham mining village, with a population of just over 3,000. More than 40% of the householders in the village are bearing the burden of unemployment, and in the great majority of the remainder the family has to depend on a minimum subsistence wage. The average unemployment figure for the last four years has been 25% of the insurable population. Housing in New Brancepeth is inadequate and the children have no playground but unmade back streets lined with insanitary ash middens. There are at least 100 children under five years of age and as in so many similar villages health and physique are bad. In these circumstances it is a courageous venture for New Brancepeth to contemplate establishing a nursery school under the management of a voluntary committee. The school will be the first of the kind in this country and its success may mean the possibility of similar experiments in mining villages where proper care of the children under five is sorely needed, and where money for such projects is so hard to raise. The immense burden of rates in County Durham makes it impossible for the statutory authorities to initiate such experiments and we appeal confidently to those who have helped Durham in the past, and without whose aid much valuable social and educational work which has been undertaken in the area, would have been impossible.

The plan includes the conversion of a disused cinema hall, and the Commissioner for Special Areas has generously offered 90% of the cost of construction and equipment. In addition the Home Office Social Service Association which has helped New Brancepeth so much in recent years has guaranteed £100 of the cost of the first year's running expenses. It remains to raise £300 to make up the balance of the capital cost and to ensure maintenance until the school can qualify for grant from the Board of Education. We have, since the plan was first discussed, enjoyed the help and warm support of the Nursery School Committee of the Save the Children Fund who are anxious for the success of the experiment as we who live in Durham. A large part of the equipment for the school will be made by unemployed men and their wives, members of the New Brancepeth Social Service Centre who will also help substantially in the maintenance of a school from which their children will benefit so much, but the school cannot be started without the help of those in other parts of England to whom the plight of the children in Durham is a matter of concern. Donations should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, the New Brancepeth School Committee, Hallgarth House, Durham.

## Appendix 11

### Impressions at New Brancepeth (by Ernest Hardy)

The official opening of the Nursery School at New Brancepeth was a study in contrasts. From the laurel-decked verandah the speakers faced the bleakness of the pit-heaps, and the dark outlines of a pit shaft. Behind them was the gaily coloured schoolroom, only a few moments before alive with the interested parents and visitors watching the babies at their play. Directly in front was an audience of parents from the village, and visitors from all parts of the country. On the platform, Lady Gainford was supported by a distinguished company.

Just prior to the opening I had a short chat with the Rev. George Lamb, now of Gateshead, to whom the inception of the idea of the school was due when he was curate-in-charge at New Brancepeth. "It must be a great day for you", I said to him. He answered with a smile, but with evident feeling, "Well, it's nice to see one's dreams come true". That, indeed, seemed to be the predominant feeling. I watched Lady Gainford who from the beginning has taken an active interest in the scheme, as she moved proudly and happily amongst the little ones, for the time being an enthusiastic assistant with their games. As Chairman of the Nursery School Committee, she knows the ups and downs of the last year's striving, and is as overjoyed as any one at the ultimate success of the venture.

I can say without hesitation that Wednesday's function was the most successful event which I have seen featured by Community Service Council. Even the weather, so unpromising in the early morning, seemed to relent, and sent out a real May smile to grace the proceedings. The official opening itself became happily informal, and all the speakers seemed to share in the joyous atmosphere that prevailed.

It was an undoubted feather in the cap of the responsible body to secure the presence of Lord Eustace Percy, a former President of the Board of Education, for such a day, and his speech was admirable in its clearness and simplicity and in its comprehensive survey of nursery school progress. Those who were familiar with the events which led to the idea, must have been moved when Mr. Lamb spoke of the beginnings, and I am sure that everyone was gratified at the recognition by the parents of the great amount of work carried out by Miss Mary Clarke, the secretary of the committee.

#### Village Pride

New Brancepeth had entered whole-heartedly into the unique occasion, and there was obvious pride in the fact that the village had given the lead to all similar communities in the country. From the nursery school grounds could be seen a great poster blazoned across the wall of a school on the other side of the road, "Welcome to our nursery". Mothers to whom I talked spoke of the nursery school with the same sense of affectionate individual ownership, and not as some institution which was vaguely recognised as communal property. That, I believe, is

sufficient testimony to the hold which has already been gained by the school in the heart of the community.

Another striking testimony was that paid to the general appearance of the children. Pressmen from Newcastle commented to me on the evident health of the babies and the air of well-being that was so marked. Miss Harland, the school superintendent, if she had not been too busy to listen to the flattering remarks that were to be overheard on every side, must have been gladdened at the universal appreciation of the work she has carried on.

As I came out of the school grounds I passed some visitors from other social service centres in the district. "We've slept in", said one of them. "I don't see why New Brancepeth should be the only village with a school like this. It's just what we want at our place." He turned back to look with somewhat envious eyes at the little building, and I am certain that his feelings will be shared by the hundred other mining communities in the county whose need is as great as was that of New Brancepeth

from "Durham County Advertiser", 13.5.38

## APPENDIX 12

### Lady Astor's Appeal for Nursery Schools

#### "We can't afford not to have them"

The Kings Hall was crowded with well-known men and women last night when a public meeting was held in connexion with the Tyneside Nursery School. It had been called in connexion with prospective emergency open-air nurseries for Tyneside, and the interest which is being aroused was evident by the enthusiasm of the audience.

"In this country we pay the highest taxes, and more money is devoted to special services than in any other country. We can call ourselves the most progressive nation in the world as far as social service is concerned. Two million pounds are spent yearly on sickness and yet 27% of the children who enter elementary schools are physically defective in some way or other," said Viscountess Astor, who was the chief speaker.

"Only 7% of the children who go from nursery schools have anything the matter with them" she declared; and drew attention to the large proportion of children who die in early life, adding that the damaged child in the crowded area - and there were many - is far better dead.

"Far from crying we can't afford nursery schools I maintain we can't afford not to have them. It is absolute madness not to have open-air nursery schools. Their effect on the children is miraculous.

"I have never heard of a child who had just been through a nursery school and afterwards appeared in a juvenile court," she said, when pointing out that crime had increased by 103% two fifths being under the age of 21.

"The finest thing that could happen would be the raising of the school age to seven", the speaker declared, "Let us have the children until then and we will bring about a more democratic education. In the nursery school I see a chance of building a far better nation than we have ever known. You have a great need for them on Tyneside and the open-air emergency nursery school is a wonderful opportunity.

"I believe that if every one of us had been to nursery school when we were children the world would be a very different place. If I had my own way every child in England would go. I wouldn't have them wandering about the parks with two or three nurses - poor little rich children.

"I am convinced if we can build sufficient emergency nursery schools during this 'dark period' it will only be a question of time before the State takes them up. I wouldn't wait for the State to start anything", she declared.

"We can't get a better world individually unless we have a community spirit. Excessive nationalism is a danger, and to avoid it we must begin at the beginning of a child's life and develop individuality and community spirit at the same time.

#### BASIS FOR A BETTER WORLD

"In the nursery school is the basis of a better world and an England even greater than it is today. Come out and be real Crusaders - not Fascists or anything else - just Crusaders for a better England," Lady Astor appealed

It was announced by Mr. J.R. Steele that the work had been started in connexion with the new emergency Nursery School at Byker which Lady Astor has promised to open.

Newcastle Journal Report, 19th October 1933



Appendix 13  
Extracts from letters to Local newspapers

Evening Chronicle, 12th December 1934

Sir:- It is lamentable to observe these cold wintry mornings children of pre-school age being led by the hand by older children and parents or guardians, shivering with cold and being taken to nursery schools. Are the home conditions of these little ones so shocking that they must be sent out at such early hours?

Cannot the Council do something better with the ratepayers' money to help these unfortunate families and save such suffering to these poor little mites? It is little short of wanton cruelty.

If this is the ethics of the infants' charter that Lady Astor and her friends are endeavouring to thrust on us in the North-east, then the sooner they take it away the happier it will be for all concerned.

Yours etc. OBSERVER

Sir:- At 9.30 p.m. on Saturday evening last, I was called out to visit a home, one room, five people in it, the three children all very sick with bronchitis. Earlier in the week the doctor had ordered milk, bovril and other things for the children. The income from the P.A.C. was insufficient to get them. The poor mother, not liking to beg, pawned the blankets. This money has now been used. She sought me out in desperation. She was the second case I had on that day seeking help for sick children.

The answer to your question and mine is : Long unemployment has brought about substantial and progressive deterioration in public health, to quote a health authority. Besides, where people had been out of work for a long period, bedding, towels, underclothes have all worn out and these cannot be replaced out of dole.

A visit to the homes of some of the people in my parish would shake any man out of his complacency.

RALPH JUMNEY (Vicar of St.Jude's)

Newcastle

Some replies to 'Observer' (12th December 1934)

'We are doing the children the best thing possible by taking them there.... The children are much better off for food, rest, hygiene and play' A MOST HURT MOTHER

'Regular rising coupled with regular meal times at the school will make them grow strong and healthy. To save the rates in the future the council should spend more money on nursery schools.' UNCLE J.

'... These little children come from homes whose mothers have little time and less money to look after them properly, so that when they are old enough to go to school the lack of good food and enough sleep has had its effect'.

OBSERVER OF FACTS

'... As a voluntary worker with 20 years experience of nursery schools in Tyneside and elsewhere, I can assure your correspondent that if he could take the trouble to compare for himself the nursery school conditions with those of the children's homes he could not fail to realise from how much suffering these little mites are being saved, and how much health and happiness is being added to their lives'.

A DOCTOR

'... If 'Observer' had visited the homes of these children where poverty and overcrowding predominate, he would understand the necessity for nursery schools, where conditions for small children are ideal'.

'... If 'Observer' is sufficiently interested he should perhaps visit one of these nurseries and so be convinced of their necessity and usefulness. The Tyneside Nursery schools are supported entirely by private subscriptions, except for small initial grants from the Education Committee towards building expenses...'

GEOFFREY HARDWICH

'...Had 'Observer' visited one of the nursery schools and seen the good work being done, perhaps he would be less quick to condemn... As I watched their bright and happy faces and the wonderful tact and patience of those in charge, I felt that these schools must be a god-send to poor harassed mothers.' VISITOR

## Appendix 14

### The Case for Nursery Schools

Laying foundations of Health and Character

by Grace Owen O.B.E., M.Ed.

(Hon. Advisor to the Nursery School Association of Great Britain)

The ban on Government grants for nursery school is now at least partially lifted. Applications to the Board of Education for a sanction to open new nursery schools are promised careful consideration with reference to the urgency of the need they represent.

It is therefore up to the local education authorities to renew their former applications, to make new plans and to persist until these receive the necessary sanction of the central authority. It is up to voluntary nursery school committees to renew their efforts. Above all it is up to intelligent citizens to provide that drive of public opinion which is all-victorious and without which all fails.

All this however will not happen until the public in each locality is convinced that the nursery school is an indispensable adjunct to the home in laying soundly in early childhood the foundations of health and character.

#### EVERY NEED CATERED FOR

A nursery school provides for the greater part of the day all the simple essential conditions of a healthy, happy life for children passing through the critical period between two and five years of age. It gives them space for free development in open-air conditions. It provides all the things a little child needs to handle and think about, to play with and use, to occupy his mind and to assist his growth, and skill. It cares for his nutrition and the right balance of rest and activity. Above all it secures the happy companionship, the guidance the personal care and love without which no child can thrive, and all in close touch with the home life.

The nursery school is able to go a step further than the giving of medical inspection and advice to parents provided at infant welfare centres. It shows how marvellously each little child may respond in growth, health, intelligence and social interest to right conditions. Moreover, it can prove that far from weakening the ties of home life, the nursery school strengthens the home life it serves.

#### HARMFUL CONDITIONS

There is more than one type of home to which the nursery school offers invaluable assistance. We think first of the great need of homes in badly congested districts, and of the terrible handicap suffered by thousands of families which are the victims of over crowding, and poverty, lacking the very essentials of health and happiness. We realise that little children cannot wait for slow improvements in social conditions. It is now, while body and mind are developing at a rate unknown in later years, that they most need good food, fresh air, room for exercise and play, tranquillity and loving supervision, and it is during the years

that are passing now that thousands of children are lacking the suitable environment in which habits of cleanliness, self-reliance, and co-operation can be formed. The nursery school can give all these to children from the least favoured homes and might, if widely used, prove a veritable salvation for the new generation of children born in sordid conditions.

It is no less urgent to secure the provision of nursery schools in the new housing areas, especially where the inhabitants are being transferred from veritable slums.

It should be realised that the nursery school wherever it has been founded, has been carried on in close touch with the homes and parents of the children. There has been close co-operation, give and take, on both sides, and many a nursery school teacher has been a source of strength and happiness to the mothers of her children.

### RICH OR POOR

There is a growing demand for nursery schools for the benefit of children of widely differing circumstances. The only child, whether rich or poor, needs that community life of the nursery school. The child suffering from the artificiality of modern life needs the simplicity and regularity of the nursery school routine. The child of the highly intellectual parent needs to get away from excessive attention. The mother that needs help with her children, but is no longer content with unskilled assistance, turns thankfully to a properly staffed nursery school.

The nursery school movement is growing, public opinion is rapidly strengthening and our 60 odd nursery schools will multiply accordingly. But each locality has to tackle the problem for itself, and carry out the idea in the form best suited to the various districts of the area it covers. In certain places large separate nursery schools within their own gardens, like the famous Rachel McMillan Nursery Centre, may serve a district. In the new housing areas nursery schools tucked away from main streets may serve various groups of houses. Where a newly built area has for its centre a group of schools, the nursery school may find its place in close proximity or it may in its own wing and playground adjoin a school for older children. Again it may occupy the top storey and roof garden of a block of flats.

In any of these forms the nursery school, by the healthy and happy conditions and nurture it provides for its children, by its activities, and by its atmosphere of love and co-operation may lighten the burden and strengthen the life of every home.

Newcastle Journal March 9th 1935

Appendix 15

Durham County Post-war Plan

North West Durham area:-

16 new nursery schools(3 - 80 unit & 13 - 40 unit)  
8 nursery classes( 6 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Stanley

22 new nursery schools(2 - 80 unit & 20 - 40 unit)  
3 nursery classes ( 2 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Blaydon

13 new nursery schools (1 - 80 unit & 12 - 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes (attached to R.C. schools)

Ryton

5 nursery schools (all 40 unit)  
1 nursery class (R.C).

Lanchester

4 new nursery schools (2 - 80 unit & 2 - 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes (1 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Chester le Street

6 new nursery schools (1 - 80 unit & 5 - 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes (1 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Felling

12 nursery schools (6 - 80 unit & 6 - 40 unit)  
3 nursery classes (R.C.)

Whickham

12 nursery schools (3 - 80 unit & 9 - 40 unit)  
3 nursery classes (2 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Chester le Street R.D.

22 new nursery schools ( 2 - 80 unit & 20 - 40 unit)  
4 nursery classes (2 R.C. & 2 LEA)

Boldon

8 new nursery schools (2 - 80 unit & 1 - 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes( 1 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Hetton U.D.

9 new nursery schools ( 3 - 80 unit & 6 - 40 unit)  
1 nursery class ( LEA)

Houghton le Spring U.D.

14 new nursery schools ( 4 - 80 unit & 10 - 40 unit)  
3 nursery classes ( 2 R.C. & 1 LEA)

Washington U.D.

9 new nursery schools ( 2 - 80 units & 7- 40 units)  
2 nursery classes ( both R.C.)

Jarrow M.B.

11 new nursery schools ( 3 - 80 unit & 8 - 40 unit)  
6 nursery classes ( 4 R.C. & 2 C.E.)  
1 adaptation (Clervaux Terrace N.S. to 80 unit)

Hebburn U.D.

8 new nursery schools( 3 - 80 unit & 5 - 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes (1 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Sunderland R.D.

10 new nursery schools ( 4 - 80 unit & 6 - 40 unit)  
3 nursery classes (2 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Durham Municipal Borough

8 new nursery schools (1 - 80 unit & 7 - 40 unit)  
3 nursery classes (2 R.C. & 1 C.E.)

Brandon & Byshottles

11 new nursery schools (all 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes (both R.C.)

Seaham U.D.

11 new nursery schools (5 - 80 unit & 6 - 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes (both R.C.)

Durham R.D.

14 new nursery schools (2 - 80 unit & 6 - 40 unit)  
4 nursery classes (all LEA)

Easington R.D.

49 new nursery schools (4 - 80 unit & 45 - 40 unit)  
9 nursery classes (8 R.C. & 1 LEA)

Hartlepool Municipal Borough

8 new nursery schools (all 40 unit)  
3 nursery classes (2 R.C. & 1 LEA)

Stockton M.B.

31 new nursery schools (24 - 80 unit & 7 - 40 unit)  
5 nursery classes (all R.C.)

Billingham U.D.

16 new nursery schools (7 - 80 unit & 9 - 40 unit)  
5 nursery classes (3 R.C. & 1 LEA, 1 C.E.)

Sedgefield R.D.

14 new nursery schools (4 - 80 unit & 10 - 40 unit)  
7 nursery classes (1 R.C., 3 C.E., 3 LEA)

Bishop Auckland U.D.

14 new nursery schools (3 - 80 unit & 11 - 40 unit)  
6 nursery classes (2 R.C. & 4 LEA)

Crook & Willington

11 new nursery schools (2 - 80 unit & 11 - 40 unit)  
4 nursery classes (2 R.C. & 2 LEA)

Shildon U.D.

5 new nursery schools (2 - 80 unit & 9 - 40 unit)  
1 nursery class (C.E.)

Spennymoor U.D.

8 new nursery schools (2 - 80 unit & 6 - 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes (1 R.C. & 1 LEA)

Barnard Castle U.D.

1 new nursery school (40 unit)  
1 nursery class (C.E.)

Tow Law U.D.

2 new nursery schools (both 40 unit)  
1 nursery class (C.E.)

Barnard Castle R.D.

4 new nursery schools (all 40 unit)  
3 nursery classes (2 C.E. & 1 LEA)

Weardale R.D.

2 new nursery schools (both 40 unit)  
2 nursery classes (both LEA)



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Miss S. Rutherford, (Gilesgate Nursery School), Miss McColl, (Hebburn), Miss Davies (Bensham) – nursery superintendents  
 Miss M. Liddle, Miss L. Liddle & Mrs.Liddle (mother), pupils and parent helper at New Brancepeth. Margaret and Linda both became Nursery Nurses

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