THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL CHILD WELFARE SCHEME

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In the early part of the 18th century a certain Capt. Thomas Coram travelled the seas in the Merchant Navy, and during his voyages he was so shocked at the sight of the deplorable conditions under which children were living that he determined when he retired to do something to better their lot in his own country. In 1739 he found the means to achieve his purpose and in 1741 he rented a house in Hatton Gardens for destitute children. In 1745 he completed the building of the Foundling Hospital in Brunswick Square. Hogarth was one of the earliest governors and Handel was also a benefactor. Many will remember this building, which was pulled down within the last few years. It had charm of design and was one of the remaining features of early 18th century London. It was not, however, entirely suitable for the care of children. In 1926 the governors sold the site and buildings and moved temporarily to Redhill, later finding their permanent home at Berkhamsted.

Much controversy ensued on the future of the Brunswick Square site, and at one time it appeared as though St. Pancras would lose this open space, which would be utilized for building purposes. It was largely due to the efforts of Mrs. G. M. Trevelyan that nine acres of the area were made available as playing fields, and the governors were able to repurchase 100,000 sq. ft., to be known as Coram's Gardens, which they determined to use for the benefit of young children. They erected a residential nursery and a day nursery (see Fig.) for

children of the neighbourhood as a memorial to Capt. Coram on the site where he built the original Foundling Hospital, and together with these a model nursery school for some 80 children with a series of large rooms for the instruction of pupils in the care of babies and children. All the arrangements for the residential and day nurseries and the nursery school are ideal, providing ample playing space, a southern aspect, hygienic walls and floors, the most modern toilet arrangements particularly suited to young children, and window space of ideal proportions in a building of beautiful design.

When all these preparations were completed the war broke out in 1939, and it was decided that London was unsuitable for keeping a large number of children together in an area likely to be attacked by enemy action. The premises were requisitioned by the St. Pancras Borough Council and used as a rest centre, in which capacity they were of inestimable value. A year or two later, however, the need for day nurseries in London became of paramount importance to enable women to work. By arrangement with the governors the ground floor of the residential nursery was utilized by the St. Pancras Borough Council as a wartime day nursery, and the governors made available to the Council their furniture and equipment. At the end of the war it was possible to derequisition that part of the premises used as a rest centre, and in due course the nursery school block was opened and is now administered by the St. Leonard's Nursery School Committee with the help and support of the governors.

The next development was the need to find residential accommodation for babies, and by arrangement with the St. Pancras Borough Council the first floor of the day nursery has been made available for this purpose. A scheme has been agreed between the governors of the Foundling Hospital and the St. Pancras Borough Council whereby there shall be one matron, one doctor, and one kitchen staff for both the day and the residential nurseries, but the nursing staff will be separate. It

is hoped that within a matter of weeks the residential nursery will be open and receiving its first young residents. There will then be on the site a day nursery, a residential nursery, a nursery school, and teaching quarters ideal in design and efficiency.

Teaching Centre

It became obvious that here was not only an opportunity for caring for young children by the many means now considered appropriate, but an excellent opportunity for teaching, for over the road is the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children with the Nuffield Institute of Child Health, and nearby is the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, both bodies keenly interested in teaching child welfare to doctors from both Britain and the Empire. The friendly help of Col. Nichols, secretary of the Foundling Hospital, made it easy for Prof. Alan Moncrieff, as Director, and for me, as lecturer on Public Health at the Institute of Child Health, to place a plan before the governors to complete their scheme for the care of children.

We suggested that the war-damaged building originally used as a canteen and later as a laundry should be repaired and converted to form a maternity and child welfare centre, with ultimate provision for a minor ailment clinic for school-children. A tentative ground plan was prepared by the architect. At this stage the governors are prepared to carry out the work to convert this derelict building into a maternity and child welfare centre provided the local authority will be responsible for its maintenance, staffing, and upkeep.

The governors of the Foundling Hospital placed this proposition before the St. Pancras Borough Council, and it received their immediate and whole-hearted support. The scheme links the governors' welfare work on the Foundling site with local authority activities and co-ordinates it with the Institute of Child Health at Great Ormond Street Hospital. It is anticipated that the staffing of the welfare clinic, and possibly even of the residential nursery, may in due course be carried out in conjunction with that hospital. In addition, this site would provide a training ground for postgraduate teaching at the Institute of Child Health for doctors studying for the Diploma in Child Health and for nurses as well. Co-operation already exists between the Institute and the St. Pancras Borough Council, for the medical officer of health of St. Pancras is lecturer at the Institute, the assistant medical officers of the Council are external tutors, and there is interchange of staff between the Institute and the Council's welfare medical officers—a scheme suggested in the report of the British Paediatric Association. This proposal to build a welfare centre will be placed before the Ministry of Health for approval and will be considered by them in conjunction with the L.C.C., which is the new health authority and will be responsible for child welfare in the near future.

Associated with the child welfare activities of the governors on this site there exist the residential schools at Berkhamsted and homes which they are administering for the care of women and children. Furthermore, a large area adjoining the site has been scheduled for the erection of one of the L.C.C.'s new schools, and the St. Pancras Borough Council has acquired many acres on which it has already begun to build blocks of modern flats. If this scheme is adopted there will be on this site and in the vicinity modern flats, a modern school, a nursery school, a residential nursery, a day nursery, a maternity and child welfare centre, a school clinic (possibly with a dental clinic), a swimming pool, nine acres of playing fields, and perhaps one of the clinics envisaged in the new Act for general practitioners—and this in the heart of London and in the centre of London's teaching district. It will indeed be a centre of health and health teaching, and an example of the finest type of co-operation between the Government, local authorities, teaching bodies, and voluntary associations.

The Board of Registration of Medical Auxiliaries has recently published the seventh edition of its *National Register of Medical Auxiliary Services*, which gives the names and addresses of persons engaged in work ancillary to medical science and practice. Medical practitioners may obtain a copy free from the Registrar, Board of Registration of Medical Auxiliaries, Tavistock House North, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1.