

We hope that you will enjoy reading the history of the Field Lane Foundation which we believe stands as a valuable source of social and historical documentation in its own right. The thirty two pages which follow are also available from us as **2 illustrated booklets at a cost of £5 including postage and packaging.**



The Field Lane Story

Foreword

Over ten years have passed since the first edition of “The Field Lane Story” was published. It was a modest attempt to outline the development of the Field Lane of today from its humble beginning in 1841. This second enlarged edition contains some additional details from the past and brings the story up to 1984. The opportunity has also been taken of including a brief account of the work of the Home Workers’ Aid Association from its foundation in 1904 until it was amalgamated with Field Lane in 1953.

It is doubtful whether historians have done justice to the contribution which the Ragged School Movement – of which Field Lane was a part – made to the social progress of the second half of the 19th Century. Whatever the shortcomings of our Victorian predecessors may have been – and they had their blind spots just as we have ours – it is only fair to claim for them that in their time and in the

conditions under which they produced results of lasting value. Much that is good in our generation has sprung directly from their ideas and experiments.

It is salutary, therefore, for us to remember what they did and the Christian faith which inspired them to do it; to realise again from their experiences what great things can be accomplished through the power of God.

As this is in no sense a history, it has been impossible to mention more than a very few of the host of people whose contributions to the building of "Field Lane" deserve to be remembered. It is hoped however, that this "Story", by reminding us of what has been done in the past, may strengthen us in our services both today and tomorrow.

July 1972.

I The Beginning

In the Autumn of 1841 Mr Andrew Provan, the newly appointed London City Missionary to the Field Lane District of Central London walked the streets of his area with a heavy heart. The district, of which Field Lane, West Street and Saffron Hill formed the main thoroughfares, was a notorious one and had long been known as a criminal quarter. Charles Dickens was only portraying reality when in "Oliver Twist" he set Fagin's house on the corner of Field Lane, and the fictional Bill Sykes, Charlie Bates, Artful Dodger and their associates had many counterparts in the life of that part of London in those days. Small wonder therefore, if Mr Provan was dismayed as, taking care to avoid the dirt and filth which littered the pavements, he surveyed dilapidated buildings – dark unsanitary, verminous - which housed the miserable homes of London's poor. There were dismal attic rooms which accommodated two, three and sometimes even four families; and lodging houses where as many as thirty men women and children crowded into one foetid, unventilated room for a night's sleep. He saw men and women ill-clad degraded and slatternly, temporarily forgetting their misery in the cheap intoxication offered by the gin shops. He braved the hostile stares of bystanders as he nosed into narrow courts and alleys, the haunts of pickpockets, prostitutes, and other criminal classes' places into which the police dared to venture only in daylight and in pairs. But above all he saw the children – neglected, half-naked, hungry – quickly absorbing the evil which surrounded them and early forced into crime and vice by the struggle to survive.

Mr Provan quickly realised that even if the means of education had existed in the district these children were far too dirty and ragged to enter any ordinary school. Feeling that something should be done to bring a little learning within their reach he procured the use of a small back room in Caroline Court. There on the afternoon of Sunday 7th November, 1841 he held the first session of Field Lane Sabbath School. Forty-five boys and girls of various ages crowded into that

room and as there was no furniture sat on the floor and listened, many of them for the first time in their lives to the Christian gospel.

There was nothing original in this venture. The Father of the Ragged School movement was a crippled shoemaker of Portsmouth, John Pounds by name who, out of his own slender resources befriended and educated some five hundred outcast children. John Pounds died in 1839 but his work inspired many similar endeavours in other parts of the country. A London pioneer was Thomas Cranfield, "a pious tailor and ex-Army Corporal", who opened a school in 1798 for the slum children of Southwark. Early workers of the London City Mission had also undertaken similar service and by 1840 the Mission report that "several schools have arisen out of their labours and five had been formed exclusively for children raggedly clothed." Mr Provan therefore, was following a pathway already well trodden by others although that pathway had never before led to this particular part of London.

After a few weeks in Caroline Court, the school was moved to a narrow dirty and secluded lane known as White's Yard, Saffron Hill. Here Mr Provan was assisted by a few friends. Unfortunately, their efforts to educate and evangelize aroused the suspicion and hostility of many of the people they sought to help and they were subjected to every sort of insult and petty persecution. The school was moved again, this time to a room on the first floor of the same house, in the hope of avoiding some of these annoyances, but unfortunately it proved but little better.

Mr R.S. Starey, one of Mr Provan's first supporters, has left a record of those early days which reveals the courage and the tenacity of purpose with which they faced the appalling difficulties which confronted them. "In the year 1842," he wrote "I was led to visit the Field Lane Sabbath School, then lately commenced, where I witnessed a scene so foreign to anything I had ever before experienced or heard of that it made an impression on my mind never to be effaced. On opening the door of the school then held up a miserable court in Saffron Hill, a motley group of half-clad youths rushed up the rickety staircase into a small apartment, some ten feet square and commenced leaping upon and overturning the forms which stood in their way; others showed their daring agility by descending from the first floor window into the yard beneath, whilst the remainder evinced their love of fun and mischief by blowing out the lights and giving ever and anon a specimen of their vocal talents by a shouting chorus of some low and popular song; when however, some order was obtained and the two teachers present endeavoured to impart instruction with candle in hand, they were obliged to keep on their hats for protection from rotten vegetables and animal refuse which the rebels without were continually throwing through the broken windows. Such scenes lasted more or less for several months until the following circumstance brought matters to a crisis. The school at this time was open on Tuesday evenings for females and Thursday for males. One Tuesday evening, being at the school prior to the arrival of the superintendent, I was engaged in

admitting the young women and girls, when I was surprised by a woman coming hastily into the passage of the house and beckoning to me to close the door. As soon as she had recovered her breath she informed me that she had overheard a number of young men state that they intended coming to the school that evening to have a lark, and if the teacher interfered they would 'rip him up'. One having attempted on a previous occasion to stab the Superintendent, the threat was deemed no vain one. Ere, however she had finished her tale, the door was surrounded by the men, who on its being opened civilly asked to be admitted, but the unfairness to the females was pointed out as it would deprive them of their usual night of instruction. Arguments were of no avail; therefore, the door was closed and bolted, and I ascended to the schoolroom on the first floor, which was filled with women and children. I had however, scarcely entered when a loud crash and a general rush up the dilapidated stairs, gave note of their triumph and the room was crammed with the denizens of the neighbouring lane. Fearing the consequences, I determined to send the children away; and whilst so engaged, at a given signal the lights were extinguished, the windows smashed, the forms and tables broken to pieces and a general rush took place to the stairs with the movable articles of the room. Here the screaming, swearing and uproar, as they fell pell-mell over one another, was tremendous. At this time the landlord lay in an adjoining room in a dying state. His wife and two young children, the only other inmates, supplied fresh lights, but these were blown out immediately afterwards. After considerable difficulty the house was cleared, but not before the woman was nearly stripped to the back by the rough usage she received. Three policemen now arrived, having heard of the 'row', the scampering in the court giving signal of their approach. One stated on inquiry that 'they dared not come singly, so bad was the locality'."

Despite such experiences the teachers persisted and by June 1842 Mr Provan had a staff of seven voluntary teachers working under his superintendence all of whom had sufficient confidence in the permanence of their labours to form themselves into a Committee of Management, and lay plans for the future development of their work.

Mr Provan was a Scotsman and it is not surprising that in seeking to recruit teachers he had turned first to the Presbyterian Churches in London and in September 1842, the Field Lane School joined the "Sabbath School Union in connection with the Scotch churches in London". This association lasted for less than two years, however, for the Union was dissolved with the intention of reforming as a Presbyterian Sabbath School Union. The Field Lane teachers had already decided that "their work could best be established if they acted on the broad principles of Christianity without reference to sect or party" and they found this invitation to link themselves with a denominational association was not acceptable. Nevertheless, the lessons of such imagination of Mr Starey, at this time the Treasurer of the Field Lane School, for within a few weeks he had gathered together a body of workers from other schools and formed the Ragged School Union of which he became the first Secretary. The Ragged School Union

(which now continues as the Shaftesbury Society) was to play a considerable part in the early growth and development of the whole Ragged School movement.

The Field Lane School, had celebrated its first anniversary by moving to new accommodation – a front room at No.65 West Street, West Smithfield, which had been secured at a rental of 3/- a week. Shortly afterwards two smaller back rooms were added to the modest establishment. Here by the end of the year the school activities had grown into a Sunday morning class with an attendance of fifteen children, a Sunday afternoon class of between forty and sixty children and a Thursday evening class with a similar attendance. The only equipment at the teachers' disposal apart from six chairs and a few forms, were six New Testaments, thirty-six reading books and six hymn books.

During those early days the school was maintained almost entirely by contributions from the teachers, but the growth of their work placed a heavy strain upon their slender resources. In February 1843 the Committee decided that they must seek financial help and they inserted an appeal in the columns of "The Times". Little did they realise what the result of this venture was to be. The advertisement caught the eye of Lord Ashley (subsequently the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury), who immediately visited the school and for the rest of his life was actively associated with it. "I never read an advertisement with greater pleasure," wrote Lord Shaftesbury. "it answered exactly to what I had been looking and hoping for. I could not regard it as other than a direct answer to my fervent prayer." It was not long before he was invited to serve as President of the School, an office which he held until his death in 1885 and which he prized more highly than the political and social honours he richly deserved but rarely received.

Charles Dickens, always interested in any endeavour towards social improvement, has left a graphic description of the school as it was at this time. "I found my first ragged school in an obscene place called West Street, Saffron Hill, pitifully struggling for life under every disadvantage. It had no means; it had no suitable rooms; it derived no power or protection from being recognised by any authority; it attracted within its walls a fluctuating swarm of faces – young in years, but youthful in nothing else – that scowled hope out of countenance. It was held in a low-roofed den, in a sickening atmosphere, in the midst of taint and dirt and pestilence; with all the deadly sins let loose, howling and shrieking at the doors. Zeal did not supply the place of method and training the teachers knew little of their office; the pupils with an evil sharpness, found them out, got the better of them, fought, danced, robbed each other, seemed possessed by a legion of devils. The place was stormed and carried over and over again; the lights were blown out; the books strewn in the gutters, and the female scholars carried off triumphantly to their old wickedness. With no strength but its purpose, the School stood it all out and made its way. Some two years since I found it quiet and orderly, full lighted with gas, well white-washed, numerously attended and thoroughly established."

II Something More Must Be Done

The progress of the Field Lane Sabbath School – small though it might seem – posed its own peculiar problems. It was of little value to teach these rough unlettered youngsters the elements of the Christian faith unless they could also learn to read the Bible for themselves. There was little purpose in sowing the seeds of faith unless the tender plants of grace could be protected from the stunting effects of bad homes and evil companions, of misery and want. It was futile to teach them that picking pockets was an undesirable occupation if the possibility of earning an honest living did not exist. It was foolish to suggest that cleanliness was next to godliness if soap, water and scrubbing brush could not be procured to remove the ingrained grime of the streets. To every one of those problems, however, there could be but one answer. If something more must be done then the school must do it. Certainly no one else was prepared to do so - and certainly not the Government. (The National Budget in 1845 totalled £55,000,000. Grants to voluntary schools – compulsory state education was still twenty-five years away – totalled £40,000. In the same year £70,000 was allocated for the upkeep of the Royal stables!) Yet every forward step of development, every fresh channel of activity, meant an increased strain on the Committee's meagre resources of cash and personnel. Every advance was a true venture of faith taken in great trepidation and only after prolonged prayer.

The Divine ordering of the school's progress is easy to follow in retrospect but those responsible for the day-to-day management could scarcely see one step at a time and the leading of God was often apparent only through the compulsion of circumstances. New activities grew not from advance planning but from the willingness of volunteers to undertake them. Towards the end of 1843 two lady teachers offered to open the school on two afternoons a week to teach girls writing and "other useful matters". About the same time washing facilities were provided a gift from Miss Burdett Coutts. A Dorcas Society was formed to provide and repair suitable garments for the most ragged of the scholars. A Sewing Class was started and a Clothing Fund instituted. In return for modest weekly contributions the children were able to purchase clothing – a pinafore for 2d, for example, and a frock for 9d. In 1845 a Sunday evening class was started. Instruction in reading and writing was given on weekday evenings, but in the view of the teachers the greatest need was a free day school. "When I consider the destitute neglected and ignorant state of these children when they first came to the school," wrote one of the teachers towards the end of 1846, "and also the pernicious influence to which they are subjected at the moment they leave to go to their miserable homes, I feel assured that if they could be offered instruction during the day much greater results would, with the blessing of God be speedily seen. I therefore humbly beseech the Lord to bless the efforts that are being made in his name for the establishment of a Free Day School in this destitute and long-neglected district."

This prayer was answered when early in 1847, the Field Lane Free School was opened under the superintendence of Miss Stevens, the first salaried member of the staff who was appointed for an initial period of six months at a salary of £30 per annum. The School was opened from 9:30 am, to 12 noon and from 2 pm to 4 pm. The average attendance was forty: within a year this had grown to seventy. Shortly thereafter the name of Field Lane Ragged School was adopted, largely on the advice of Lord Ashley. "Keep to the gutter", was his Lordship's frequent challenge; for the school was provided to teach children who were too poor to obtain any education elsewhere; boys and girls who, but for the ragged school, would receive no instruction whatsoever and would be left prey to the vices and temptations of the streets. The level of education offered was not high by present day standards and the curriculum was limited- reading, writing, spelling, grammar, geography, arithmetic, occasional lessons on other matters of interest, but above all, a Bible lesson every day. The aim was to introduce the children to the Christian faith as the foundation of all true welfare, while at the same time, providing just as much of that kind of education as would qualify them for active usefulness in life.

Typical of the scholars of those days was a six year old girl who had "attended the Sabbath School about nine months and for a short time on a weekday, but is now taken away to nurse a child for which she receives sixpence a week and her tea. So great is her anxiety to attend school that she will come and stand at the door with the infant in her arms and beg to be admitted for a little time while the child is asleep. This poor girl has suffered much from want of food ..." "I did not like Christmas Day," another child was heard to say, "I had rather come to school than be at home. It is like heaven to be in school".

In addition to the Day School other branches of activity were being explored. Six years after the humble beginning in Caroline Court the Committee could report that the regular meetings held included: Monday Evening – Parents' Meeting; Tuesday Evening – Writing Class for Boys; Wednesday Evening – Girls' Sewing Class; Thursday Evening – Girls Reading Class; Friday Evening – Boys reading class; Sunday – Bible Schools in Morning, Afternoon and Evening. Soon it was discovered that some of the children attended the day school without so much as tasting food from morning to evening. What could the teachers do but try to feed at least the most destitute of them? Plans also had to be made to give some sort of training in a trade to some of the boys "to keep them from picking and stealing now and enabling them at some future time to earn a respectable living."

By this time, however, the school had outgrown the accommodation available and larger premises had to be sought. A large room on the corner of West Street was taken at a rent of £35 a year, towards which the Ragged School Union promised an annual grant of £15. The new school-room could house four hundred children.

III Widening Opportunities

The opening of the day school and the move to larger premises soon revealed further problems crying out for solution and opened the door to wider opportunities. The difficulty of finding employment was an acute one and much effort went into the task of obtaining work for those who had so recently abandoned lives of vagrancy and petty crime. In 1850 tailoring and shoemaking classes for boys were started. The opportunities in the Colonies and in America were exploited by Field Lane and other organisations by sending parties of emigrants to start a new life overseas. In 1851, at the time of the Great Exhibition, the school co-operated with other Ragged Schools in forming the Ragged Schools Shoe-Black Society. Boys enrolled in the Shoe-Black Brigade earned £500 by cleaning 101,000 pairs of shoes during the period that the Exhibition was open – an unusual piece of Christian enterprise designed to inculcate habits of industry, cleanliness and courtesy in boys picked up from the gutter.

Efforts were made also to assist poor mothers by providing suitable clothing and bedding for babies and supplying extra food comforts and other help during confinements. It was not unusual for babies to be born in damp unheated rooms already crowded with children, the mother lying on a pile of rags in a corner enjoying neither privacy nor medical assistance. The help given by the Maternal Society, as this branch of work came to be known, was invaluable and was the means of saving the lives of many mothers and their babies.

One persistent challenge, however, was the need to do something for the homeless and destitute men and boys who haunted the streets, eating what they could find or steal and sleeping in doorways or any odd corner which provided a little shelter from the cold and the rain. Thanks to the generosity of Miss Portal part of the premises was converted into a dormitory and on 30th April, 1851 the Field Lane Night Refuge was opened into which such folk could be admitted. There was sleeping accommodation for one hundred and this was later increased to one hundred and thirty. A similar refuge for destitute women and girls was opened on 1st March, 1857 this was situated in nearby Hatton Yard, off Hatton Garden.

About this time Field Lane's activities came under the sympathetic eye of a Mr Nicholas Wood. Much to the Committee's surprise, for Mr Wood had not disclosed the purpose of his enquiries, "The Times" on 24th December, 1858, contained an article from his pen entitled "Our Homeless Poor". In this he described the two refuges and some of those who sought admission. "Old men and little boys, street sweepers and orphans in every grade of misery and loneliness, who struggle through some years of bitter want and maybe crime until they creep into a hole to die;" youngsters like "four children all orphans, all destitute and living upon the streets, without home and without friends in the world. One has a pair of tattered canvas trousers and the remains of a grown man's fustian jacket hanging about his little limbs. Dirt and sores disfigure his

body, his eyes are swollen, his face puffed and fevered-looking for, though spokesman of the party he can scarcely draw his breath from inflammation of the lungs....”

“Shelter for the night and half-a-pound of dry bread,” commented an editorial article in the same paper, are not such mighty inducements that any person who could do better would be likely to abuse the boon. What they get is but a clean board on which to spread their ragged clothes and a rug to put over them. They are supplied, besides, with eight ounces of bread at night and as much more in the morning when they go out, but there is shelter, and there is a fire for common use.”

This unexpected publicity brought a host of visitors, some three thousand letters and gifts totalling £7,000. As a result the Committee were able to open a new infant school, enlarge the refuges, and set aside a substantial sum for future needs.

The wisdom of this provision was shortly revealed when it was discovered that the construction of an approach road to the new Smithfield meat market would involve the demolition of the school’s premises. It was decided that new buildings should be specially designed to accommodate all the branches of activity which were undertaken. A piece of land was purchased with a frontage on Saffron Hill and Hatton Wall. In June 1865, Lord Shaftesbury laid the foundation stone and the new building was opened on the 6th June, 1866. It was a “strong warm fireproof structure with lofty rooms, plenty of light and air. It had four storeys and a basement. One side was devoted entirely to the refuge for women and the other for men and boys. The Matron’s and Master’s rooms were in the upper storeys, with rooms for teaching and sewing and instruction in reading and writing. In the basement were baths, lavatories and kitchens, while the whole of the top floor was used for a very large and a very lofty Ragged School room capable of accommodating a congregation of nearly one thousand people”. “Literally forced from our old position by the improvements in the neighbourhood by which our work was becoming out of place,” reads the 24th Annual Report, “we again raise the standard of the cross in the midst of noisome courts and filthy alleys.”

The larger accommodation at the Committee’s disposal provided space for the opening of a Day Nursery for babies and small children. A youths’ Institute was also started for the benefit of “hard-working, hard-living youths who, when removed from the discipline of the schools, needed rooms in which they might enjoy harmless games.” State provision for the homeless poor by the opening of casual wards made it possible to exclude beggars and vagrants from the refuges and restrict their use to “the respectable unemployed”. A Servants’ Home in which younger women and girls could be given training for domestic service, was opened as an annexe to the Female Refuge. Once again new premises meant greater opportunities.

IV Changes

The introduction of the 1870 Education Act, the first great step towards universal compulsory education, had serious repercussions on the work of Ragged Schools. The Field Lane Ragged School was placed under the management of the London School Board. For a time it continued to use the same premises and its affairs were conducted by a joint Committee consisting of four members appointed by the School Board and four members of the Field Lane Committee. When New Board Schools were opened, however the scholars were transferred and the association of "Field Lane" with day school activities terminated. In order to ensure that children could still receive Christian training – a most important part of the Ragged School curriculum but relegated to a comparatively minor role in the Board Schools – special Bible Ragged Schools were opened by the Field Lane Committee on Sundays and on Friday evenings.

As one door of educational service began to close another opened. In 1871 two certified industrial schools were started, one for boys and another for girls. These residential schools, the forerunner of the modern approved schools, were designed to educate and train orphans, destitute and deserted children. The scholars remained in the schools until they reached the age of sixteen, when suitable employment was found for them. The Home Office made a grant of £15 a year towards the maintenance of each child admitted to the schools.

About this time, too, efforts were made to relieve distress in the district by the distribution of food. "Broken" food – the surplus provisions from restaurants and from meals supplied to the staffs of some of the larger warehouses – was collected and used to provide meals for poor children and for distribution to needy families. Often more than fifteen hundred weight of food was distributed daily in this way and was the means of saving many from absolute starvation.

The year 1872 brought the unwelcome news that the construction of the new Clerkenwell Road would involve the demolition of the premises so recently opened. The buildings were to be compulsorily purchased by the Metropolitan Board of Works and steps had to be taken to find another site for the erection of new premises. At last a site was secured in what is now Vine Hill and the foundation stone of the new schools and Refuges were laid on 13th June, 1877. As the premises in Saffron Hill had to be vacated on 1st November, 1877, temporary accommodation was found in Wilderness Row, Aldersgate, where all the varied activities were continued until the new building became ready for use in March 1878.

Another difficulty arose from the decision of the Home Office that the Certified Industrial Schools must be moved out of the Central London area. The schools were transferred to premises in Hampstead – the boys to Hillfield Road off Fortune Green Lane and the girls to 9 and 9a Church Row. The boys' school

could accommodate one hundred – later increased to one hundred and forty – training was given in such trades as tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry and baking. Eighty-eight girls could be educated in the Church Row establishment, most of whom received training for domestic service.

In order to help boys leaving the Industrial School a working boys' hostel was opened in 1878 but unfortunately, this had to be closed owing to lack of funds.

V "A Hand to Hand Struggle"

With the opening of the new premises in Vine Hill and the moving of the Industrial Schools to Hampstead, the pattern of "Field Lane" activities was settled – apart from minor adjustments – for many years to come the work undertaken at this time included Bible Ragged Schools, a library, a Boys' Night School, a Mutual Improvement Society, a Band of Hope, a Penny Bank, "broken" food distribution, Ragged Church services, Sunday evening services, Boys' and Girls' Industrial Schools, Mothers' meetings, the Maternal Society, the Crèche, a Servants' Home and the Male and Female Refuges.

As Many as a thousand children attended the various meetings and activities arranged for them and a substantial proportion of them were literally clothed and fed from the Institution's resources. Time and again investigation of the family circumstances of the children who swarmed round the doors revealed the appalling poverty which was so much a part of life in the courts and alleys of Clerkenwell "E.W., six in family including a girl aged 15 and three boys aged 13, 7, and 2, living in one small room; W.S, eight in family, including a girl aged 18, a boy aged 15, a boy aged 12, a girl aged 9, a boy aged 8, and a boy aged 1, all living in one room; C.E.E., four in a family, comprising father and mother and two sons aged 21 and 10, only one bed in the small room in which they lived, the sons sleeping on the floor; M., ill according to the doctor through lack of food, living in a miserable garret, with his mother and four brothers and sisters, deserted by their father and all living on five shillings a week earned by the eldest girl – the mother being too ill to go out;" and so on – and on. Between three and four hundred of these deprived youngsters were sent away for country holidays each year.

An average of three hundred women attended the Mothers' meetings and another three hundred adults could be found in the various weekly mission services. Upwards of twenty people a night were accommodated in the Men's and Women's Refuges and a steady stream of these unfortunates were assisted in obtaining employment.

The industrial Schools, described in a report of the Industrial Schools Committee of the London School Board as among 'the best of the industrial Schools with which the Board has agreements' accepted children committed to their care under Orders of Detention issued by Magistrates. These youngsters were frequently the children of beggars, thieves, and the like, who were being initiated into the life of petty criminals – youngsters like ten year old E.H. whose mother used her as a decoy to entice other children so that she could rob them of their clothing, and a boy, not yet nine, sent out by his father to steal coal. These were the fortunate ones for they at least escaped from the degrading and depressing circumstances of 'home' into a world where they were well fed, well clothed, looked after with affection and launched into life with a reasonable prospect of making good. There was a careful "follow-up" service so that a paternal eye was kept on them for three years after leaving the schools.

The Ragged Church meetings had been commenced in 1853 and as the name implied, aimed at bringing the Christian gospel to those destitute folk whose ragged condition and unkempt appearance kept them from seeking admission to other places of worship, Doubtless many attendants at the Ragged Church came only for the food provided at the close of the services, but many received spiritual comfort, hope and new life through this ministry. At this time attendance at the Ragged Church services had mounted to between five and six hundred every Sunday, described in one annual report as "an assemblage of homeless and distressed human beings, tramps, hawkers, cadgers, thieving gaol-birds, and persons who have sunk from almost every level of society into a state of destitution".

All these activities, conducted for the most part by voluntary workers, built up a pattern of service which reached out to help the people of the district in practical demonstration of Christian love. Often it was uneventful service with many discouragements. It was usually the case as one annual report expresses it that "there is little novel to relate; another twelve months of hand-to-hand struggle with destitution, misery and sin."

Some years ago an elderly lady set down her memories of Field Lane in the 1890's.

"Our Sunday night Bible Class Teacher was Miss Billings, she came a long way (or so it seemed to us) from as far away as North London. I loved her gentle teaching of Jesus – so different from the texts in blazing red which looked down on us from the walls; 'The wages of sin is Death' – 'Prepare to meet thy God' – and so on, but what a lovely room it was – the largest we were told, of its sort in London. The building was beautifully designed. The wide white staircase seemed to welcome you. There were wide corridors, and stairs which led down to the part where we knew the poor men used to go. These stairs had a fascination for us for we never went down there.

"I shall never forget our tea parties. Long tables, beautiful white cloths, and spread with piles of good bread and butter cakes, and tea from shiny urns. I think too of the wonderful Christmas tree towering above us on the platform. We used to go up early to feast our eyes on it. On one occasion I saw a doll dressed in pale blue ribbons round its waist, pearls around its neck, woollen socks and booties, 'tammy' on its head. Oh, how I wished it could be mine! Then the distribution, and I shall never forget the moment when my name was called – and this doll was given to me.

"I mustn't forget our Annual Excursion to Theydon Bois. There we were with our clean faces, hair tied (perhaps only with tape), our tickets pinned on and proudly displayed. Then the 'goodbyes' to mother and friends who had gathered in Vine Street and Clerkenwell Road to see us off. The train journey was pure joy! I am sure we must have sung ourselves hoarse! Then the races, games and tea fights – and so the day was spent.

"On one afternoon of each week there was a 'Broken Food' distribution. Men and women queued up for it with bags – or, in some instances, the women used to hold out their white aprons and the 'scoops' would be emptied into them. I often stood with my bag amongst them. I will not harrow you with my deep humiliation – both at having to ask my day school teacher for permission to leave early and at having to stand and wait my turn. It was good food, cooked, of course, - meat, vegetables, and even occasionally, poultry. It came from restaurants and hotels, and those who served it did a wonderful service to hungry people. Alas, in those days I thought only shame of my task.

"Then there was our Tuesday Evening Sewing Class which I wouldn't miss. There were long counters, bales of white and unbleached cotton rolls of flannel, flannelette and sheeting – all ready to be cut to any length required. We had a card recording our payments for the lengths we bought – 1d, 2d, or 3d, a week.

"When I grew older I attended the Friday Night Bible Class. Our teacher was Mr Herbert Noel Cox. Only girls attended his class which had a fine library which he had instituted for us. I think I was the first librarian; we were growing up and appreciated these good books. On Saturday evenings our Mr Cox provided games of all kinds – skates, swings, puzzle games – in fact, something of interest for all tastes. We were now at work and those Saturday evenings were our only relaxation, for there were no Saturdays off in those days.

"I mustn't forget my holiday to Bushey Heath. All through the summer six girls at a time were sent there to spend a fortnight's holiday. Two ladies, sisters, had us in a lovely big cottage. They used to dress us all alike and we were allowed to pick the fruit for our dinners. What a delight this was to us who never saw fruit trees! All of us went with either one or other of these ladies to Church and for long walks, and as a special treat, into their own beautiful house and grounds. We must have meant a lot of work and responsibility!"

There are many other who can cast their minds back to the earlier days of this century and remember hurrying to the special children's service on Good Friday mornings fearful of being late lest they have missed their free hot cross buns; the Band of Hope meetings on Monday evenings, the Girls' Guild and outings – red letter days – often the only treats they had. For them Field Lane was a refuge indeed, an escape from the drabness of daily life; - and for some of the naughtier one, a refuge from the policeman chasing them down Vine Hill!

The enthusiasm which was brought to Field Lane service is well illustrated by the two workers (one of whom, Mr H.W. Bush subsequently became a Vice-President), who sought to obtain first hand experience of the life of London's homeless by "living rough" for a week. Dressed in his oldest clothes and suitably dirtied up, Mr Bush set out from his office for the agreed rendezvous. His friend never turned up, however, so for a week he carried out the planned programme on his own, sleeping out or in hostels, picking up whatever pence he could earn from casual jobs. Subsequent enquiries revealed that his colleague had been arrested by a suspicious policeman emerging from respectable business premises was, in fact, the proprietor of the firm!

Looking back over the years, one who came to Field Lane as a child and has since given years of faithful voluntary service writes, "How grateful we are that we were led to Field Lane, for God was truly in that place".

VI. Into the Twentieth Century

In 1885 the great Lord Shaftesbury died, and with his passing "Field Lane" lost its President and a true friend. A frequent visitor to the school, an active adviser behind the scenes, a great encourager, he was the acknowledged leader of the whole Ragged School Movement. His life showed to quote a letter written by his son, Evelyn, "how a man though penetrated to the core with religion, how a man saturated so to speak with the Bible, using it hourly for his language, his ideas, his consolation and his hopes can at the same time be entirely free from cant, take a keen interest in the public affairs of this world, a wide charitable view of dogma, and be full of humour and cheerfulness – but at the same time without religion he would have done few of the great things which he accomplished. The mere impulse of philanthropy or feeling for suffering would not have sufficed to sustain him."

Lord Shaftesbury was succeeded as a President by the Earl (subsequently the Marquis) of Aberdeen who held this office until his death in 1934. In 1937 his place was taken by his son, the 2nd Marquis of Aberdeen. Lord Aberdeen died in 1965 and the Viscount Brentford (who had been a Vice President since 1935) was invited to assume the Presidency, an office he accepted and still holds. Thus

in 130 years Field Lane has had only four Presidents all making in different ways their personal contributions to the progress of a work which has been dear to them.

After thirty years of useful activity difficulties were encountered in 1901 in the management of the Girls' Industrial School. Home office standards governing the issue of registration certificates had been raised and the school premises were found to be inadequate for the care of eighty-eight girls. A reduction in the number of scholars was considered but it was decided that such a policy would place a very heavy financial burden on the Institution, since income would be reduced without a corresponding reduction in expenditure. Unfortunately, there were no funds available to provide alternative accommodation and after discussion with the Home Office, it was reluctantly decided that the school must be closed.

In 1907 a District Nurse was appointed for the first time in an endeavour to provide some nursing care in times of illness for the families in the area. Despite the steady improvement in housing standards during the 19th century, it was estimated that there were still 400,000 families in London whose homes consisted of one room only. It requires little imagination to appreciate the difficulties which such housing conditions created.

In 1908 "Field Lane" was incorporated under the Companies Acts a change of legal status which in no way affected the work carried on, and the title of Field Lane Institution, by which the organisation had been unofficially described since 1875, was now formally adopted as its registered name. 1931 saw the closing of the Female Refuge, the demands for admission having fallen steadily during the preceding years suitable accommodation being available elsewhere for those who were still unfortunate enough to need help of this nature. This gave opportunity for certain structural alterations to be made to the premises and permitted the enlarging of the Men's Refuge and the Day Nursery.

The years of War between 1914 and 1918 naturally caused some upheaval and created difficulties. Problems of poverty, hunger and distress were accentuated by war conditions, and there was more not less need for the social and spiritual services the Institution sought to render. The years which followed 1918, with widespread unemployment of that time, added to the demands for help which so many looked to the Institution to provide.

Changes that would affect the Boys' Industrial School were also taking shape. In 1923 the Home Office decreed that the word "Industrial" should be omitted from the name of the school. A few years later with the introduction of the Probation Service, admissions to certified schools dropped substantially and by 1930 the Field Lane School, with room for one hundred and forty boys, had only fifty-three in its care. It was obvious that this situation could not long continue, and in 1931 the Home Office closed a number of Certified Schools, including the Field Lane

School at Hampstead. The building was sold and part of the proceeds used to buy some land adjoining the Vine Hill premises in order to provide a children's playground. It was hoped that eventually this land could be used to enlarge the Institution's premises, but before any plans could be formulated to this end Germany invaded Poland and Europe was once again plunged into war.

The years between the wars also saw the further development of the work of sending children and families away to the country or seaside for convalescence and holidays. This had reached such proportions that in 1939 the Committee purchased Eastwood Lodge, near Southend, with the intention of using it as a Holiday Home. Repairs and alterations had been put in hand and a large bungalow erected in the grounds, but the outbreak of war frustrated further development.

The 1939-45 war created much more upheaval than the war of 1914-18. Evacuation brought most of the work among children to a standstill for the time being. The Creche was moved out of London but, after a time it was re-opened at Vine Hill to meet the needs of the many small children who had been brought home again by their parents during the "quiet months" of 1939 and 1940. The Male Refuge was also closed although for a time it was used for the reception of Belgian and French refugees. Extensive bomb damage meant the removal of many folk from the district but, unfortunately the Institution's premises suffered practically no harm.

As far as possible, the work of the Institution was carried on despite the unprecedented difficulties of those years. At the same time however, it was a period of waiting and looking forward to brighter days and to new opportunities. One thing was certain; the post-war world would be different from the world of pre-war days; perhaps it might even be better!

VII. Serving the Elderly

The end of the Second World War in 1945, and the introduction of the Welfare State shortly thereafter, called for considerable adjustment in the Institutions Work. Many of the services which had been pioneered by Field Lane and similar organisations now became the responsibility of the State, while the introduction of the National Health Service, and developments in Social Security benefits, meant that much of the former distress had disappeared. Yet other long existing needs that people were facing were yet largely unmet. Loneliness, failing health, inadequate and unsuitable housing; these, and many other factors, contributed to what only too often proved to be the tragedy of old age. The Committee decided therefore, that the Institution could best serve God in the post-war era by addressing itself especially to the task of helping the aged.

The larger premises in Vine Hill which had housed the Institution's activities since 1878 now proved to be too large for the mission work which had survived the war years, and were far too expensive to maintain. Towards the end of 1946 the building was sold, part only, No. 16 Vine Hill, being retained as a Mission Centre and as office accommodation. Alterations were made in 1963 to provide much needed additional office space.

In 1946 also, Eastwood Lodge, empty and neglected since 1939, was put in order and opened to provide holidays, the bungalow being used for children but the house being reserved for elderly people.

In 1947 a lovely old house, Dovers at Reigate, Surrey, was purchased and opened the next year as a residential home for twenty-one able-bodied elderly people. Shortly afterwards, in 1950, Holly Hill, Banstead, Surrey, was opened. This home purchased with the generous assistance of the National Corporation for the Care of Old People and of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, was established as one of the first "half-way" houses in the Country – half-way between the hospital ward and normal home life. The Home, which works in co-operation with the Geriatric Departments of the St. Hillier and the St. George's Hospitals, receives most of its patients after a period of hospital treatment. In the happy, home-like atmosphere of Holly Hill many of them quickly respond to further care and become fit enough to return to their own homes.

In January 1951 the institution was invited to take over the Priory West Worthing, a holiday home for elderly people from the London area which had been established by Sea-Air Ltd., a housing association brought into being largely through the initiative of Mr H. Blake. Under the Institution's management the Priory became a residential home for twenty old folk.

1953 saw a further development when the Institution took over the Home Workers' Aid Association's holiday home at Walton-on-Naze and converted it into a residential home for forty-three old people. (The story of Singholm and the Home Workers' Aid Association will be found on page 37.)

When in 1946 Field Lane embarked upon its work for the elderly the immediate requirement had been homes for able-bodied old people. This situation changed rapidly and within ten years the greatest need was for more accommodation for frailer elderly folk, a trend which has continued and which called for substantial changes in the type of care provided. From 1957-1967, therefore the Institution carried out a programme of modifications and extensions to the homes in order to meet these changing needs.

First Eastwood Lodge was extended, the holiday programme abandoned, and the home used to provide accommodation for forty-two folk who needed nursing care and attention. This extension was opened by the Marquis of Aberdeen on 27th July 1957. One of the main features of the enlarged home was the provision

of most of the accommodation on the ground floor level. A further extension at Eastwood Lodge, opened in 1963, provided a new lounge and dining room, improved kitchen facilities and additional bedroom accommodation so that all forty-two residents could be accommodated on the ground floor. First floor bedrooms, previously used by residents, were converted into staff accommodation.

In 1958 an extension of the Priory at Worthing was opened to permit an increase in the number of residents from twenty to fifty, and to provide facilities for the accommodation of frailer elderly people needing nursing care. In recognition of the financial help received from Worthing supporters, a substantial proportion of the accommodation was allocated for the use of old people from the Worthing area. A further small extension was completed in 1964 providing more single and double bedrooms in place of larger shared accommodation, and a new lounge and other facilities. Earlier in the same year through the efforts of a group of friends, the Priory had been presented with an ambulance- a most useful vehicle which has made it possible for many of the frailer residents to be taken out in comfort and safety.

At Singholm in 1963, a lift was installed and a new sun lounge made by enclosing the loggia at the front of the house.

At Holly Hill alterations included the installation of a lift, the building of a new Sun Lounge, the enlarging of the Dining Room and substantial alterations to the kitchen facilities were completed by 1967.

At Dovers, a new wing was constructed providing better accommodation and making it possible to accommodate an additional sixteen residents thus increasing the total to thirty-seven. The scheme also included the provision of a lift, new lounge accommodation, a handicrafts room, an enlarged dining room and kitchen improvements. Completed in 1967, the enlarged home was officially opened in 1968.

This summary of post-war developments gives no indication of the benefits which have accrued to older folk or of the generous help received from many friends and the sacrificial service, which have turned bricks and mortar into centres of loving care. Words such as "Thank you for taking me in when no one else wanted me" – "It's nice to be home again" – "I feel secure; I don't have to worry anymore" – open windows into the thoughts and feelings of many who have been helped and who have shed the worries and anxieties which were making old age a frightening nightmare.

VIII. The Community Centre

This Concentration of efforts on homes for the elderly did not mean a reduction of interest in evangelistic and social work in Central London. A fifty-year lease of a derelict, war-damaged chapel- Ampton Street Baptist Church, near King's Cross – was secured, the premises rebuilt and re-opened in 1952 as a new mission centre bearing the name "Field Lane Community Centre". Here the modern counterpart of the Field Lane's earlier work was continued although once again, it was found that the greatest social need was among the elderly and most activities – clubs, meetings, a meals service, visitation, and so on – inevitably became orientated to the needs of older people.

In 1967 substantial alterations were made to the Community Centre which included the installation of a lift, improved toilet facilities, and a new approach to the front entrance by the construction of a ramp on one side and new steps on the other. These building works were undertaken with the encouragement and support of the London Borough of Camden in order to provide accommodation for a Day Centre for the elderly. This useful addition to the work of Field Lane means that every day some fifty to sixty elderly people (many brought to the Centre by ambulance and otherwise housebound) may be spending a time of fellowship and useful activity in pleasant surroundings where they are provided with meals and the care they need.

To enjoy a few hours in the company of others to find that there is a place where one can "belong" and is wanted and where one has something to contribute to the life and happiness of others – this is to begin to live again. Forgotten skills are revived for many through a handicrafts class and an art class, while others take part in a weekly singing class. Outings, visitation in time of sickness, help with personal problems, concerts, lectures, film shows – all these and many other activities are an expression of practical evangelism which makes the love of God real to people in a way they can understand. As one visitor remarked "I have never been in a happier place".

An attempt was also made to develop work among the youth of the area around the Community Centre. A youth leader was appointed in 1965 and a youth club organised. Although much useful work was done problems arose, mainly through the lack of sufficient helpers and the consequent difficulties of maintaining order and discipline, especially with gang warfare in the vicinity. In consequence of the club had to close in 1968 and it has not proved possible to resume work of this nature.

The work of the Community Centre has been aided by the gift in 1972 of an ambulance – provided from funds donated by the Bourne School, Singapore, an Army Educational Establishment recently handed over to the Singapore Government.

IX. Planning for the Future

Following the completion in 1967 of building works at the Homes and the Community Centre there was a necessary period of consolidation which provided an opportunity for reviewing activities and planning for the future. The Management Committee appointed a Development Sub-Committee which, in 1971, recommended a number of developments for initiation as soon as conditions became favourable. It was then that there was a sudden turning of hopes into practical possibilities by a most generous gift from a long-standing friend of Field Lane. At the same time the profitable sale of property in Doughty Street, London, W.C.1, greatly augmented funds available for use in the Central London area – a geographical limitation imposed by the Trust Deed controlling the property which had been sold.

In consequence this latest chapter in the story of Field Lane to 1984 shows the further progress made in that period. An architect was appointed and plans were prepared for an extension to Singholm at Walton-on-Naze. This extension would bring Singholm up to the standard of the other Homes and provide facilities needed to give adequate care and attention to the frailer elderly folk now seeking admission.

At Dovers, Reigate, working in co-operation with the Reigate Association for the Elderly, a small Day Centre for old people was established, a development which, it later grew in both extent and usefulness.

The possibility of further developments at the Priory was held under active consideration and further thought was given to improvements at the other homes. It was also hoped that an extended range of activities for various age groups, centred upon the Community Centre, would be initiated in the years ahead.

The cost of further progress, however, greatly exceeded the available resources and, as has been the case throughout the one hundred and thirty years of the Field Lane ministry, plans could only be made and carried through with the support and goodwill of a wide circle of friends. Nevertheless, past experience had confirmed that God was no man's debtor and the future was therefore faced with the certainty that he would supply our needs.

There remains one final matter to record. It had long been felt that the name 'Field Lane Institution', in use since 1908, no longer adequately expressed the nature of the work being undertaken and tended to create a false impression in some people's minds. After long and careful consideration it was decided that a change of name would be beneficial and, on 24th April 1972, the name 'The Field Lane Foundation' was officially adopted. This is a change in name only; the emphasis and character of all 'Field Lane' services -present and future-remains unchanged.

X. An Unfinished Story

This then in briefest outline, is the story of Field Lane to 1972. It has pioneered many forms of social service in the name of Jesus Christ and has always sought to help those in need. It is no small thing to have been part – and sometimes the very tip – of the spearhead in the attack on human want, leading the way in such things as free education, school meals, children's nurseries, night schools, refuges and rescue work, trade and industrial schools, maternity welfare; and to have undertaken such service not merely as an attempt at social amelioration, but with the deeper motive of demonstrating the love of God as something active and practical.

Happily, the years since 1841 have witnessed tremendous changes in the social and economic life of the whole country. Much that was done by "Field Lane" in earlier days has become the responsibility of government agencies and local authorities. Yet there are still needs which can be met only by a social service which is avowedly Christian and which, while relieving some of the physical and mental needs of mankind recognises the 'wholeness' of man as body, mind and spirit. No matter how effectively physical needs are met there will remain a spiritual hunger – whether it is recognised as such or not – crying out for satisfaction. Man does not – cannot- "live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God". It is this, and this alone, which inspired the work of the past and which still justifies the work of today.

The Field Lane Story A continuation 1972 – 1984

Introduction

The Field Lane Story was first published in 1961 and was revised and brought up to date in 1972. It was an attempt to record both briefly the history of Field Lane from the beginning of the Field Lane Sabbath School on 7th November 1841, outlining the main lines of development over a period of 130 years.

History is a continuing process, however, and in consequence the story can never be completed. The following pages record the events of the 12 years from 1972-84. There is a difference, nevertheless, in the approach to the telling of the tale. The earlier publication was possible for the most part only by reference to minute books, old reports and other records, often not as complete as one could have wished owing to the destruction during the 1939- 1945 war years of much which would now be of great interest. In contrast, this addendum has been written with the benefit of recollections of personal involvement, the sharing of a task with friends and colleagues, as well as against the background of written records. That there is a story to tell is due to the fact that people prayed, people planned, people worked and people gave. This brief summary is above all a

tribute of thanksgiving to all those who have been involved in the continuing story of Field Lane.

The main branches of the work of the Field Lane Foundation in 1984 can be summarised as follows:

Four homes for elderly people – Dovers, Eastwood Lodge The Priory and Singholm – providing permanent residential care for those in need of help and special attention not otherwise available to them; short term care to help in times of emergency or special need or to enable relatives and others caring for elderly people in their own homes to have much needed relief from their responsibilities; and holidays for elderly people who, because of disability or other difficulties are unable to make use of normal holiday facilities such as hotels and guest houses.

A residential home for disabled people recently transferred to the Foundation by the Havens Guild.

The Field Lane Centre in central London which, in addition to other services, has as its main activity a Day Centre for the elderly which provides opportunities for social intercourse to people who for the most part would be housebound, allowing them to participate in a variety of activities, receive help and care, and enjoy a cooked mid-day meal.

Our homes and Centre aim at providing a happy Christian atmosphere in which residents can live their lives in congenial and homely surroundings, and where people are able to feel secure and wanted and can be helped to maintain the dignity of life.

When on 24th July 1972 the new name “The Field Lane Foundation” was adopted it was considered that the older name “Field Lane Institution”, in use since 1908, was no longer appropriate as it tended to convey a misleading impression of the work being undertaken. The word “Institution” had developed unfortunate connotations in the minds of some older people who tended to link it with recollections of old Poor Law establishments of dubious repute. Thus, this was a valid change of name in the light of Field Lane’s substantial concentration on the welfare of elderly people.

At the same time a much greater change was taking place in this sphere of activity. When the Field Lane homes were opened during the years 1946 – 1951, the greatest need for accommodation lay among people in the 70 – 80 age group and most of those seeking help were reasonably able-bodied and active. Owing to improvements in domiciliary services, better housing provision, advances in geriatric medicine, and greater public concern, the needs of the elderly steadily became more adequately covered by statutory services. By 1972 – 26 years after the first Field Lane home opened – those seeking our help tended to be much older and much frailer in health. Most were in the 80 – 90 age range and the celebration of 100th birthdays was becoming more common.

The greater number of frailer folk admitted to our care meant that the facilities in the homes which had been planned with more active people in mind were no longer adequate. Structural alterations were needed; additional equipment was required. This had already been foreseen prior to 1972 and a considerable amount of work had already been carried out to effect the improvements required. Much of the work undertaken in the past 11 years has been a continuation of this programme.

II

By far the largest project in this process of development related to Singholm at Walton-on-Naze. This home, built in 1910 as a holiday home for younger and physically active people, had been transferred to Field Lane in 1953 and adapted for use as a residential home. It had become apparent that, despite miscellaneous improvements such as the installation of a lift in 1963, the premises were no longer suitable for use by the far more infirm people seeking admission. Plans were prepared which involved the extension of the main building so that 42 residents could be accommodated in single rooms. In addition, the kitchen and dining room were redesigned, provision made for a new laundry and additional storage space, and lounge and sitting room facilities increased. The annexe to the home to be converted into improved staff accommodation. This work was planned in 1972 and building work began in April 1973 – just at the time when the effects of inflation were beginning to be felt. In consequence, the cost of this project rose from an estimated £100,000 to an actual expenditure of £152,600. This of course, created a serious financial difficulty. We persisted and were rewarded by the possession of a fine home which was officially opened on 11th October 1975 and which has been described on many occasions as one of the best homes in the country.

Inflation had other effects as well. The running costs of the Foundation's work increased by 20 per cent in 1973/74, 34 per cent in 1974/75, and by a further 26 per cent in 1975/76. There has been a continuing increase in expenditure, although to a lesser extent, in the years which have followed. In 1947 it cost roughly £3 a week to maintain a resident in a home. In 1974 the cost was nearer £30 a week; in 1984 it is £90. Not all of this stems from the effect of inflation; in part, the extra cost is a measure of greater degree of care and attention needed by our Field Lane 'family'. The two together however, have added a heavy financial strain.

Relief came through what appeared to be an unwelcome diminution of the Foundations' work. Holly Hill at Banstead, Surrey, had been established in 1950 to provide a half-way house – half way between hospital and home – a place where elderly people who had been receiving hospital treatment could be sent for recuperation and further rehabilitation to help them return to their own homes. In

a period of 25 years, over 3,000 elderly people benefited from the care provided, enjoying the homely atmosphere and the beautiful garden of Holly Hill. By 1974 the situation had changed. Most of those hospital patients needing further care required long term nursing which Holly Hill was not equipped or staffed to provide. Then an inspection of the home by the Fire Prevention Officer, made in the light of new safety standards which had been introduced, indicated that substantial expenditure would have to be incurred in order to carry out additional fire precautions work. Even then, however, the premises, although suitable for the care of those for whom the home had been originally intended, were not considered safe for the immobile people then in residence, especially as, in the event of a fire, the Fire Brigade would have taken approximately 20 minutes before they could reach the scene in order to provide help! After very careful consideration and prolonged discussions with the Health Authority and the Social Services department, it became apparent that there was no way in which Holly Hill could continue the service it had been rendering and there was no alternative use to which the premises could be put which fitted into our Foundation's pattern of service. In consequence the home was closed on 30th June 1975. It was a sad occasion for it meant saying farewell to the staff many of whom had worked with us a number of years. The sale of the property, however, did much to ease the financial pressure we had been experiencing.

III

There have been a number of other developments which, while not substantial in themselves, were either enlargements of our activities or led to improvements in the quality of our service.

On 18th October 1972, a small Day Centre was opened at Dovers, Reigate, in co-operation with the Reigate Voluntary Association for the Elderly. This venture enabled a number of older people living in the Reigate area to visit the home, enjoy social contacts with older people, participate in a variety of handicraft activities, and benefit from a good mid-day meal. Our contribution has been the provision of the accommodation and facilities, heating, lighting, and so on, while the Reigate Voluntary Association for the Elderly provides the management and staffing. This has been a valuable partnership from which much benefit has been derived. The Day Centre facilities were improved in 1978 by the provision of new toilet accommodation, and additional storage and working facilities.

One would not really expect help in our work from as far away as Singapore, but this, in fact, is something which happened. The Bourne School in Singapore had been established by the British Military Authorities as a school for the children of servicemen stationed in the Far East. Following the granting of independence to Singapore and the withdrawal of British service personnel, the school was handed over to the new Singapore Government. Various amenity funds held by the school were transferred to London and, at the request of the Headmaster, staff and pupils, were to be used for an appropriate charitable purpose. The Field Lane Foundation was selected as the beneficiary of this gift, and on 6th

September 1972, the then Director of Army Education, Major-General H.H. Evans, C.B, presented the Field Lane Centre in London with an ambulance purchased with the “funds donated by the Headmaster, staff and pupils of the Bourne School, Singapore” – a most useful addition to the facilities of the Centre. The ambulance was in daily use until 1976 when it was replaced with a larger vehicle. The “Bourne School” ambulance was then transferred to Eastwood Lodge where it proved to be a most useful amenity.

Other developments, which do not require detailed description, can be listed as follows:

- 1973 Improvements to the entrance drive at Dovers, Reigate, to provide safer vehicular access to the home and day centre.
- 1974 Extensive fire precautions work at the Priory, Worthing.
- 1975 Similar fire precautions work at Dovers Reigate.
- 1976 Reallocation of accommodation at Dovers to improve bedroom accommodation and to provide a more suitable staff flat. A “moving stair” lift was also installed to make some bedrooms more easily accessible for residents experiencing difficulty in climbing stairs.
- 1977 Improvements to bedroom facilities at Eastwood Lodge.
- 1978 Improvements to toilet accommodation and other facilities at the Field Lane Centre.
- 1979 Improvements to the central heating installation at Eastwood Lodge.
- 1980 Reconstruction of the Laundry facilities at Eastwood Lodge. Improvements to the central heating system at The Priory.
- 1981 Provision of additional ground floor toilet accommodation at The Priory.
- 1982 Alterations to and the complete re-equipping of the kitchen at The Priory.
- 1983 Provision of additional toilet facilities at Dovers.

Throughout this time there has also been the need to carry out extensive maintenance work to keep the fabric of the homes in good order and expenditure to ensure that furnishings and equipment are adequate.

Another important development has been co-operation with the Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and the W.R.V.S. in the provision of meals by Dovers, Reigate, for the local Meals-on-Wheels service. By arrangement with the Borough Council, the kitchen at Dovers was improved and re-equipped so that, in addition to providing meals for the residents in the home and for those attending the day centre, up to 170 mid-day meals can be provided daily for distribution by the W.R.V.S. to elderly people living in the area. This service began in October 1981.

In 1980 the Foundation received a gift of a large house in Sevenoaks, Kent, subject to certain commitments during the life-times of the donors. This in due course, may provide an opportunity for further new development.

In 1982 the Rt Hon The Viscount Brentford intimated that he felt he should relinquish the office of President of the Foundation, a position in which he had served for 30 years, an appointment in which he had followed his father who was appointed a Vice-President in 1923. We were exceedingly sorry when Lord Brentford died on 25th February 1983, just a few months after his retirement from the Presidency. We are grateful, however, that Lord Brentford's son the 4th Viscount Brentford, has succeeded his father as President, thus continuing a family association which has already lasted 60 years and, we trust, will continue for many more years to come.

IV

A new direction was given to our work when, in 1982, the Foundation became responsible for a small home for disabled people known as the Havens Guild which had been founded in 1964 by Mr H.H.C. Blake, M.B.E. Mr Blake had been a good friend to the Foundation since 1951 when he was instrumental in transferring the Priory, Worthing to the Foundation. The Havens Guild was founded by Mr Blake to provide a home for people disabled through such crippling diseases as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and arthritis. A house at 95 Hendon Lane, London, N3 was purchased and adapted for this special purpose. It accommodated 19 residents.

We had had informal links with the Havens Guild since it was founded but, in 1980, it was proposed that in order to secure the future of the Guild's work it should be amalgamated with the Foundation. After the completion of the legal formalities The Havens Guild became part of the Field Lane Foundation on 1st July 1982, thus giving the Foundation an opportunity for wider service in a new field of activity – the welfare of the disabled.

Mr Blake kindly accepted appointment as a Vice-President of the Foundation at the time of this amalgamation. It was with deep regret that we record his death on 4th August 1983 at the age of 89.

V

For a long time the Committee has been concerned about the best use to which we could put land surplus to our requirements at Dovers, Reigate. After extensive enquiries it was agreed in 1978 that we should explore the possibility of erecting a block of small self contained flats for elderly people. This, we knew, would be an expensive and fairly long-term project for there were various legal and technical problems to overcome – and the question of funding would have to be resolved. As a result of an approach to The Housing Corporation the Foundation was registered with the Corporation as a Housing Association and thus became eligible for loan finance. Work went ahead with the planning work involved and ultimately the promise of a loan was given by the Corporation. At

the time of writing building work has started and we hope to have a block of flatlets available for occupation at the end of 1984. There will be 12 single bedroom flats and seven flats for two people – accommodation for a total of 26 elderly folk. There will be a communal lounge, a visitor's room and laundry facilities.

Adjacent to the Field Lane Centre in Central London a new Council housing development has been undertaken by the London borough of Camden. This has brought a large number of new residents of all ages into the area immediately adjoining the Centre. This gives us an opportunity of extending our ministry to this new community and it is hoped that this will grow steadily over the next few years. Already steps have been taken to adjust staffing arrangements at the Field Lane Centre so that this aspect can receive special attention.

VI

The continuing story of Field Lane is one of the unfailing love of God and of His beneficent provision for all our needs as our work has progressed. What of the future? We have before us four lines of activity: First the work for the elderly which, with further modifications as circumstances change, will continue for many years to come to meet an increasing need. The number of elderly people in our population will increase steadily for the next 10 to 15 years. Second, our interest in the disabled will continue with the maintenance of work of the Havens Guild. Third, there is the enlarging of the sphere of activity of the Field Lane Centre. This will not be easy but we have an important opportunity for Christian witness and evangelism. Fourth the housing development at Dovers could be the beginning of a much larger housing programme involving other groups, as well as the elderly, with special needs.

This work must be undertaken against the background of statutory provision and of co-operation with local and other authorities. We have a distinctive Christian contribution to make, however, for Field Lane is a Christian response to human need, an expression of Christian concern.

Since it began in 1841, Field Lane, like every other corporate endeavour has succeeded only because people have made their own distinctive contributions in co-operation with the endeavours of their colleagues. A very long list of names of those who have been involved over the past 11 years could easily be compiled. Yet, like those who pioneered our work in the 19th Century, we are all destined to fade into anonymity. Those few who are remembered by name will probably be recollected by some unimportant detail like Robert Mountstephen, who superintended the Field Lane Ragged School from 1850 to 1866, and who was “a ruddy faced corn chandler from Smithfield's”; or Peregrine Platt, Secretary for 36 years from 1874 to 1910 who lived in the boyhood memories of someone who wrote, “I called him Uncle Pelican. He was a short man with a large corporation!” About so many others there are no records; not even of names.

Yet this is as it should be for we work not for our own glory but for the glory of God, seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness.

So as we face the future we have a clarion call – Go out and possess this land which God has given you; take the elderly and the disabled to your hearts, love the young so eager for life, older folk who are anxious in the evening of life, and those others – far too many – who feel themselves defeated by life. Give them yourselves; for in giving yourselves you are giving them hope, purpose, Christ himself, reconciling them to God just as God in Christ has first reconciled us to Himself.

2008 Update.

One hundred and sixty seven years after the humble beginning in a slum house in an obscure court, the Field Lane Foundation finds itself providing care and nursing for elderly dementia sufferers at Dovers in Reigate and The Priory in Tarring. The Foundation provides care and nursing to people with learning difficulties in two homes with another three planned to be operational by 2010. Field Lane continues its work and witness in Central London through the supported residential services for homeless families at Andrew Provan House, the premises being named after its founder. Some services have changed in their focus but never in their Christian endeavour. Yet this Field Lane story is an unfinished story. There is always the need to make our ministry to the less fortunate both wider and more effective; and remain vigilant to the plight of all age groups, to the friendless loneliness of so many among the swarming crowds of London's life, to the potential casualties of modern society, for whom, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ought to care. All this must inevitably, lead to new developments calling for more workers, more premises and more funds.

These are the challenges which arise from the work of yesterday and of today. It is our response to these challenges which will determine the future of Field Lane and will write the story tomorrow.

Appendix A

The Home Workers' Aid Association

In Contrast with the development of Field Lane, which is the work of many whose names are unrecorded and largely forgotten, the founding of the Home Workers' Aid Association was due entirely to the enthusiastic leadership of one man. Mr Thomas Holmes, who was born in 1846, became one of the earliest of the London Police Court Missionaries – the forerunners of the Probation Service of

today. He was a man of wide sympathies, with a deep love for people, and he could not but be sickened by the sights awaiting him behind the scenes at the Lambeth Police Court to which fresh from the Shropshire countryside, he was first attached "I see again", he wrote years later, "men shorn of all their glory; womanhood clothed in shame. I see vice rampant. I see misery crawling. I see a long procession of drink and vice stricken souls as they tramp to the place of wrecked lives and slain souls. I see the children old before their time, looking up with pale and piteous faces. I see young women sometimes fair and sometimes foul to look upon, but whether fair or foul, half beast and half human. I see old men and women whose tottering limbs have borne them from the work-house to the public house that they might drink and forget their misery once more before they die. I breathe again the sickening whiff of stale debauch. I am faint with the unspeakable atmosphere." Small wonder that at the end of his first day as a Missionary he made his way into Kensington Park and cried like a child!

He threw himself untiringly into his labours on behalf of those he tried to serve, often taking thieves, prostitutes, alcoholics, and others into his own home simply because there was nowhere else to send them. He published three books about his experiences and these helped to make him a well-known London figure.

His work as a Police Court Missionary brought him into contact with many of that large group of women who eked out precarious livings by working at home in 'sweated' industries – box makers, brush pullers, seamstresses, tie makers, blouse and shirt makers, and many others. He told of a widow who, left alone to support four young children, worked fourteen hours a day seven days a week in her squalid one-room home making match-boxes for which she was paid $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. a gross. Her ninety-eight hours of labour a week earned her a total of $9\frac{2}{4}$ d. Out of this she had to pay 3/- a week for the rent of her 10 feet by 8 feet room, leaving a little over 6/- a week to maintain herself and four sickly children! After four years of this continuous struggle she tried to end it all by jumping in the River Lea. It was this action which brought her into the Police Court and into the care of Mr Holmes. He re-clothed her family, sent the children to the country for a holiday and medical care, and with his wife, took her on holiday to Walton-on-Naze. With her he took other home workers who had both broken down from sheer hard work and hopelessness – a fur-sewer who had thrown herself in front of a train and a blouse maker who had taken laudanum (who but a Thomas Holmes would have taken three suicidal ladies on the family seaside holiday?) The box maker was too weak to walk so they placed a chair for her on the sands. There she would sit hour after hour with a hopeless, apathetic look on her face quite still and impassive except that her hands continued mechanically the motions of the box making which filled so many of her waking hours.

From this beginning grew the dream of a holiday home for home workers, a dream fulfilled in 1901 in one of the two villas formed the Singholm Annexe. This home, which was established entirely by the efforts of Mr Holmes with the assistance of gifts from a few friends, soon proved quite inadequate. In 1904, in

order to better organise his efforts on behalf of home workers, and to pave the way for a larger home, the Home Workers' Aid Association was established. The aims of the Association were defined as "To improve the lives of London Home Workers and the condition under which they lived and labour; to visit sick and other Home Workers in their homes; to relieve by gifts of clothing and money or by other means deserving and necessitous Home Workers; to encourage younger Home Workers to enter domestic service or other suitable occupations and to provide the necessary training and outfit; to establish and maintain Holiday Homes for Home Workers needing rest and recreation."

Almost immediately a lease was taken of the adjoining villa in order to enlarge the Walton home, negotiations entered into for the purchase of more land, and after an abortive attempt to secure a building at Gorleston, plans began to take shape for the building of a large home at Walton. Mr Holmes resigned from the London Police Court Mission in 1905 in order to give more time to his work as Honorary Director of the Association although from 1906 until 1916 he also held the part-time appointment of Secretary to the Howard League of Penal Reform. One of his dreams was the establishing of a model village for Home Workers which would provide suitable accommodation and work-rooms (including offices for the use of employers!) and towards the end of 1907 negotiations were entered into for the purchase of a sixty-one acre site in Tottenham in North London at £300 an acre. This village which would have enabled a thousand Home Workers to leave homes not worthy of that name and live in comfort and in health, never materialised partly because of doubts on the part of the gentleman who promised to finance it but mainly because of the pathetic reluctance of the Home Workers themselves to leave their rooms in drab but familiar streets. Negotiations and discussions continued for several years, however, but the outbreak of war in 1914 gave a final death blow to this scheme.

At the same time plans for a large home at Walton were proceeding. Building commenced in 1909 and on 31st May, 1910 the new home was officially opened by Adeline, Duchess of Bedford. Designed by Mr Morley Horder, the new building had cost £3,800. A substantial part of the cost was met by Mr Paris E Singer who was a generous supporter of the Association and in recognition of his help, the home was given the name 'Singholm' (a combination of the two names – Singer and Holmes!) By this time the Association had over one thousand, seven hundred members and published its own magazine 'The London Home worker'.

The Association's work was not limited to the provision of holidays and the relief of poverty and distress. Much was done to publicise the conditions under which home workers laboured and the gross exploitation practised by employers. The passing by Parliament of the Trade Boards Act of 1909, which did much to improve conditions of work and rates of remuneration, was largely due to Mr Holmes's zeal and advocacy.

With the outbreak of war, holidays at Walton had to be discontinued and the Home was used as a convalescent hospital for soldiers under the control of the British Red Cross Society. This disruption of part of the Association's work did not prevent further planning for the future and in 1915 more land was purchased at Walton for the eventual building of a Nursing Home for sick home workers – (a dream which was to be no more than a dream for the Nursing Home was never built). Funds were scarce, however, and many of the members of the Association who were undertaking war work were asked to resign so that more help could be given to older members. One thousand members resigned and, although some rejoined when the war ended, the majority ceased working at home and so were no longer eligible for membership. On the 26th March, 1918 Thomas Holmes died at the age of 72; with him died much of the drive and enthusiasm which had created and sustained the Association.

When the war ended Singholm was re-opened, but instead of the six hundred or more holiday makers of pre-war days there were only two hundred in 1919. Social conditions slowly improved, more and more of the home workers' crafts were taken over by machines and factories, and there was less need for people to work at home and less opportunity for them to do so. Membership declined and those members who remained were growing older. Many were helped financially by the granting of small pensions, and all who wished to go were provided with holidays. Much valuable work was done by regular visitation but conditions under which the Association had been brought into being, and the appalling needs it had set out to meet had gone. The 1939-1945 war brought further disruption of activities and Singholm was requisitioned by the military authorities. After the war ended it was re-opened and a holiday programme resumed, but it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Association had neither the membership nor the means to continue long in being.

In 1953 therefore, the affairs of the Association were wound up and its property handed over to Field Lane. Singholm was converted into a residential home for forty-three elderly people, several of those admitted being old members of the Association. Field Lane also undertook to keep in touch with the remaining members of the Association and to provide holidays free of charge for those who were still able to enjoy them – a promise which was faithfully fulfilled.

The work which Thomas Holmes established and directed and which, largely through the efforts of his sons, had continued for thirty-five years after his death thus drew to a close. Singholm continued as a memorial to a great Christian gentleman and one cannot but feel that he would be well pleased with the service it gave to so many.

Thomas Holmes recorded an occasion on which a well-known lady invited him to her house to meet a famous religious philanthropist in order to tell him about his work. He later wrote, "I could not tell him of the souls I had saved, or of the very much good I had done. But I told him of my opportunities of the humanity that I

loved, of the wants of the poor, of their temptations and sufferings, and of their patience and self-denial. I think I was just getting a bit eloquent when he burst in, and in a knock-down manner, said 'Do you give them Christ?' I am afraid that I was vexed, for I replied, 'Sir I cannot carry Christ in parcels and distribute Him. I can only do as I think He would have done.' 'How's this?' enquired the philanthropist. 'I give them myself.'"

There can be no more fitting tribute to those who by their lives and work have established the traditions of service, both of Field Lane, and of The Home Workers' Aid Association which is now merged with it, than to say that they did as they thought he would have done. They gave themselves.