

Box 532/15

**1867**

*QUAKER SERVICE  
IN EAST LONDON*

**B.I.A.**

*Centenary Report*

**1967**

1867



An East End Boy at the turn of the Century

A distinction must be made between the Bedford Institute and the Bedford Institute Association.

The work of the Bedford Institute really began with the formation of a Sunday school in Spitalfields in 1849 (although the name Bedford Institute was not adopted until 1865), but owing to the growing need and demand for such work, an Association was created in 1867 which incorporated similar activities that were being undertaken by Friends at Peel and Ratcliff.

It is the centenary of the Bedford Institute Association which we are celebrating this year.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The main sources of information for this Report have been:

"Peter Bedford, the Spitalfields Philanthropist", by William Tallack, published in 1865.

Annual Reports, papers and pamphlets of the Association since 1867.

"Fifty Years' Story of the Bedford Institute", by A. T. Alexander—a booklet published in 1915.

"Quaker Street", the Bedford Institute Centenary Report 1849-1949.

An unpublished essay on the history of the Bedford Institute from 1849 to 1948, by Morris Glover.

"Walthamstow Educational Settlement" by Winifred Wildman (unpublished).

"Shakespeare came to Shoreditch", by W. H. C. Moreton, A.L.A., Borough Librarian of Shoreditch, published in 1964.

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# *The Bedford Institute Association*

1967

## *O U R C E N T E N A R Y*

For an organisation to endure for a hundred years argues at the least a sound constitution, but this in itself would be no justification for its continued existence if it had ceased to meet the challenge of the times. The Bedford Institute Association has a long and varied history to look back on and a record of service of which it has a right to be proud. But our Centenary is a time not only for the celebration of achievement, but for a consideration of what we can still usefully do in the sphere of social work today, and tomorrow.

During the past century there have been tremendous changes, both in technology and mental attitudes, and today moral and spiritual values are being questioned that were formerly thought to be as fixed as the poles.

The Bedford Institute came into being, from religious and humanitarian motives, to alleviate the appalling physical conditions under which masses of people then lived in the East End of London, and to bring a measure of education and spiritual enlightenment to those afflicted with dire poverty and gross ignorance; and it is undeniable that the work done in those early days by workers at the Bedford Institute, and by

other like-minded philanthropists, paved the way for many social reforms and sowed the seed for action in the future by the Government and Local Authorities. It is difficult to realise today the degradation and misery to which great numbers of the poor were then subjected and how little the law did to protect them. Property was sacrosanct and life was cheap.

The main social evils of the early and mid-nineteenth century were those of widespread poverty, disease, illiteracy and drunkenness, chronic unemployment, bad housing, bad working conditions, neglected children, and laws in defence of property of an atrocious severity. Charles Dickens, who died in 1870, the year in which the Education Act came into force, and in whose day many a Fagin, Bill Sykes and Oliver Twist existed in reality, focused attention, by his writing, on wrongs which cried out for redress, and influenced others to take active measures against them.

Though many of these former evils, if not altogether eliminated, have been greatly mitigated, the present generation is nevertheless confronted with grave problems of its own.

## Our Centenary

Despite our affluent society, or perhaps sometimes because of it, people have never been so uncertain of the direction life should take. Two world wars have shaken men's belief in the inevitability of progress; the Church, that speaks with an ambiguous and uncertain voice, has largely lost its hold on the lives and imaginations of the people; and the mushroom cloud hangs like a giant question-mark over the world. Youth has become sceptical of the wisdom of its elders and tends to create its own standards and values; the world is threatened with over-population; colour-prejudice, though increasingly challenged, persists; the clash between rival ideologies remains a threat to peace; the quest for power divorced from morality is still a driving force among nations; material success and benefits are all too often considered ends in themselves, regardless of moral and spiritual considerations; and prestige is frequently sought more diligently than truth. These facts are not irrelevant, for they form the background of our lives and cannot be disregarded by anyone engaged in social work.

We like to think that the Society of Friends and the Bedford Institute Association are concerned for individuals and that they recognise the importance of developing integrated personalities, treating people as important in themselves and not merely as "embodied jobs". Our Centres aim to give people of all ages opportunities to discover their latent talents and possibilities, to meet others on a basis of friendship and mutual interests, and to foster a sense of social responsibility. While this has been true of the Bedford Institute from the beginning, the approach now has to be on a different footing, for the paternal benevolence of a hundred years ago is not

acceptable today. With a more educated population, better wages and better homes, we no longer have to teach people to read and write, or provide them with blankets and soup kitchens. But the need remains for neighbourhood centres which can provide a variety of leisure activities, where people of all classes and ages can meet in a friendly atmosphere on terms of equality, and where they can learn to render service to the community as well as to accept services rendered.

If, as Friends believe, "there is that of God in every man", we must do everything we can to foster goodwill not only among people, but among peoples. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, in his remarkable book *The Phenomenon of Man*, suggests that if a stranger from Mars were to visit our planet, what would probably strike him most forcibly would be the web of thought that unites the whole globe, and he goes on to express the confident belief that, in spite of existing conflicts, the world is becoming ever more closely knit and integrated. The Bedford Institute Association recognises the importance of sympathy and contacts with people abroad, so that it places a strong emphasis on international relationships and understanding.

If the world is ever to be as good a place as it might be, we must build up a community where cheerfulness, sincerity, generosity, unselfishness, and a sense of Christian responsibility, are esteemed and practised. It was in this spirit that the Bedford Institute Association was formed, and it is in grateful recognition of their work in the past and our intention to maintain and develop it to meet the changing needs of the times that we are celebrating our Centenary.

# PETER BEDFORD

1780-1864

The Bedford Institute was named after Peter Bedford, a Quaker businessman and philanthropist, in recognition of the work he had done in the general field of social reform and more particularly for the relief and education of the poor and oppressed in the East End of London.

He was a sincere Christian and throughout his long life had a compassionate concern for the derelicts and casualties of a harsh society. He was a man with a genius for friendship, which enabled him to mix freely with all classes, even the criminal classes. He was known as the friend of thieves, and this earned him some side-long glances from the more puritanical members of the Society of Friends. He had an extraordinary sympathy with wrong-doers and a remarkable influence on them, for they respected not only his efforts to soften the unjust severities of the law, but his exhortations to them to reform.

He always took a lively interest in the welfare of the young men of the Society of Friends and it was his custom to invite ten or twelve of them to dine with him on Sundays at his home in Spitalfields and for them to spend the afternoon with him "in agreeable and instructive conversation", and, as a youthful acquaintance of his once remarked, "what a nice thing it is when folks are good without being disagreeable". He was born of Quaker parents at Old Sampford in Essex, went to school at Plaistow (presumably a Friends School), and



Peter Bedford talking to two thieves

when a young man, met Joseph Allen, a silk-manufacturer of Spitalfields, who was so impressed with his steadiness, industry and good temper, that he invited him to join his household. Peter Bedford became his assistant and this brought him into contact with many earnest, talented and

## Peter Bedford

influential people, Quakers and others, who later were to sympathise and help him with the philanthropical work he undertook. His employer retired in 1808 and Peter Bedford, then 28 years old, shortly afterwards became the sole proprietor of the business. He proved to be a shrewd man of affairs, but a generous employer, who took a personal interest in the weavers, mostly descended from the Huguenots, who worked for him in their own homes. There were at that time about 10,000 silk-looms in Spitalfields and its neighbourhood, though some 2,800 of them were wholly unemployed and about 3,000 only half employed. One can imagine what this meant in terms of human distress, and the weavers were generally considered to be the elite among the workers.

Concerned at the misery he saw around him, Peter Bedford visited the sick and the poor in his own neighbourhood, encouraged those who were striving to help themselves, and tried to persuade wrong-doers to turn to honest ways. But he soon realised that he could not cope alone with such a mass of ignorance and destitution, so he set about stirring into action what institutions there were for relieving distress, and enlisted the co-operation of his friends to form new ones for feeding the hungry, lessening the causes of juvenile delinquency, and easing unemployment, as well as promoting schools and refuge homes. The lack of education was appalling. His friend William Crawford, giving evidence before a Select Parliamentary Committee in 1815, stated that in one district of Spitalfields alone he had found over 2,000 families with more than 2,500 children over the age of six without any education whatever. And the neighbouring village of Kingsland and the district of Haggerston "abounded in bull-fights,

men-fights, cock-fights, intoxication and thieving, until schools began to be established, when a decided improvement took place". Punishments were barbarous; on February 16th, 1814, at the Old Bailey five children between eight and fourteen years of age were condemned to death for burglary and stealing a pair of shoes.

Peter Bedford was actively associated with many enterprises for relief and education. There was the Spitalfields Soup Society, which supplied the poor with meat soup at a penny a quart and at one time distributed 3,100 quarts daily; and the Spitalfields Association for the Relief of Special Cases of Distress Amongst the Industrious Poor, which helped those in need, after personal enquiry into their circumstances. He frequently visited a refuge for the destitute at Hoxton, and was on the committee of the Spitalfields Lancasterian School which built schools for 1,000 boys and 500 girls "to provide those who have but little to spare with an opportunity of having their children instructed in spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic; in the principles of piety and virtue; in the necessity of honesty, veracity and sobriety; and of having them at the same time inured to habits of subordination, industry and cleanliness". The children paid a penny a week.

At the time Elizabeth Fry was visiting female prisoners, he and some of his friends formed a Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents and another for the Reformation of Prison Discipline, and as the result of their efforts many young criminals were rescued and helped and considerable improvements in prison conditions were brought about.

He worked for the abolition of slavery and capital punishment and his views on the latter are particularly interesting:

I shall be glad to see thee again  
at Croydon. - With much Love  
From thy attached friend  
Peter Bedford

PS I hope your petitions for the  
abolition of Capital punishment, will  
do much service.

End of a letter from Peter Bedford to R. Allen

"A special mischief of capital punishment consists in its generally calling forth popular sympathy for the criminal rather than for the victim, in its rendering the chances of escape for the really guilty increasingly and deplorably frequent, and especially in its visiting with the most awful inflictions (an irrevocable and irreparable death) those wretched beings who, even when proved clearly guilty, are in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred themselves the victims of parental neglect and vice, of utterly neglected and per-

verted education, of withering poverty, and all but irresistible temptations. To restrain such even permanently, if necessary, may be most right and proper, with a view to securing society from further outrage, and at the same time to make them amends for past neglect by future instruction and care; but to punish such to the very uttermost by an ignominious death is inequitable and cruel."

He once went with a deputation to Lord Palmerston to plead against the extravagant outlay on the national defences, and to recommend less trust in armaments and weapons, and more reliance on the protecting care of providence. The Minister received the deputation very pleasantly, and replied "We merely wish to do what you may be in the habit of doing before you retire to bed at night—to go round the house and see to the bolts and locks", a method of dealing with objectors that is not unfamiliar to present-day peace-makers.

Peter Bedford was methodical and tidy, a diligent correspondent, and a great traveller both at home and abroad on business and pleasure and in the carrying out of his philanthropic work. His religious views were broad and liberal and his sympathies extended to persons of all denominations and parties. He took scarcely any share in party politics.

He had retired to Croydon thirteen years before the formation of the Spitalfields Sunday School and therefore does not appear to have taken a very active part in its work, apart from being on its visiting committee, but there is no doubt that the Bedford Institute came into being as a direct result of his tirelessness in doing good at a time when there was so much good needing to be done.

# Looking Back

One of the most moving documents in our possession is a report issued by the Bedford Institute in the summer of 1866, five days after the outbreak of cholera in the East End, which tells of its sudden onset and the calamitous consequences to the poor and hungry people who had no stamina to resist it: "If it takes us, what chance have we; there is nothing inside us . . . No. 49, Grey Eagle Street; a house containing 43 persons; 9 have been sick, of these 4 are dead and 2 are dying . . . of the destitution and misery that prevail, and of the discouragement and consternation of the poor creatures who are thus sitting in the shadow of death, it is not possible to give an adequate idea . . . in this pressing exigency we appeal to Friends for immediate help, that a system of relief may be at once established. Some young Friends have come forward to undertake the management of an Invalid Kitchen on these premises, which has already commenced operations. It is proposed to provide well-cooked, nourishing food and take it to the sick; visiting them from house to house as far as our means will allow. It is intended to continue this permanently, together with the introduction of a system of relief by tickets in which the gift of money shall form no part."

The appeal for immediate help was not made in vain. The epidemic shocked both public and charitable bodies into a realisation of the cesspool of evil and misery which existed, and stirred them to action. Sir Benjamin Hall, then in charge of the Ministry of Works, visited the East End, and his concern for the state of affairs in London led to the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works, the forerunner of the London County Council, which has now given place to the Greater London Council. It is interesting to note that Big Ben is



Street Arabs about the time of the Cholera epidemic

named after him, as the famous clock was erected in the tower of the House of Commons during his period of office at the Ministry.

The Bedford Institute was one of the first organisations to enter the field of relief work and the following year it combined with Peel and Ratcliff, where similar work was being done by local Friends, to form the Bedford Institute Association, in order to grapple more effectively with the many problems which were recognised in the general awakening of the social conscience at that time.

As there is a direct relationship between the work of Peter Bedford and his friends, the formation of the Bedford Institute, and the later establishment of the Bedford Institute Association, it seems appropriate to make some mention of the work of the original Institute.

It was started as a Sunday School for boys in the spring of 1849 on rented premises at 46, Quaker Street, Spitalfields, by a group of young Friends from Devonshire House Meeting, then in Bishopsgate, of which Peter Bedford had been a member. Its purpose was both evangelical and scholastic, to give religious instruction and to teach the boys to read and write. Six months after its opening the average attendance was sixty-four boys and eleven teachers. About this time a girls' school was added, also a Thursday evening class for



boys, with no charge for admission and conducted entirely by voluntary teachers. As a reward for good attendance and behaviour, pupils could borrow a book for a week. The girls borrowed far more books than the boys. Parents were visited and a report on boy absentees revealed that three had come "to have a lark, but you was all so serious it was no go", some had been kept at work beyond school hours, and others had not attended for lack of clothes. One mother had so many children she had turned them out and didn't know where they were.

The work grew too large for the dilapidated accommodation—"When we reflect upon the worn condition of the premises we feel cause for thankfulness that the building was not blown down during the storms of the past month"—and funds were raised for a new and larger building in Quaker Street. This was opened on the 1st January, 1865, and named the Bedford Institute after Peter Bedford. It was shared by the School and a new club for working men. At the formal opening on the 14th February, when "a numerous and influential company" assembled in the school room, the Chairman expressed the conviction that "the Institute ought to be a catholic one, both in the mode of collecting the means and also in its mode of operation"—a principle which has been maintained ever since.

By the end of the year the Sunday School attendance had doubled to 200 boys and girls, and there were in addition an Evening Meeting of about 100 and an Afternoon Class in the club room for "roughs". During the week there was an Evening School (70), a Band of Hope (50), and a Mothers' Meeting (100).



FRIENDS' FIRST-DAY SCHOOL,  
AND  
WORKING MEN'S INSTITUTION,  
SPITALFIELDS.

The First Bedford Institute 1865

With the establishment of the Bedford Institute Association in 1867 the work expanded, being at first largely concerned, in addition to its Sunday and day school work, with relieving general poverty and the distress caused by the cholera outbreak. The sick were visited, meals provided, food tickets issued; arrears of rent were paid and articles redeemed from pawn; an invalid kitchen was started and clothing clubs organised. To combat unemployment, sewing classes were

# *The Bedford Institute,*

QUAKER STREET, COMMERCIAL STREET,  
SPITALFIELDS.

## *SPECIAL* **Jubilee Services**

TO COMMEMORATE THE OPENING OF THE  
FRIENDS' SUNDAY SCHOOL IN QUAKER STREET IN 1849,

WILL BE HELD ON

**SUNDAY, 23rd APRIL, 1899.**

MORNING, 11 o'clock,

**PRAISE AND PRAYER MEETING.**

AFTERNOON, 3 o'clock,

**Pleasant Sunday Afternoon**

MUSIC BY HELMSLEY ORCHESTRA

AND ADDRESS:

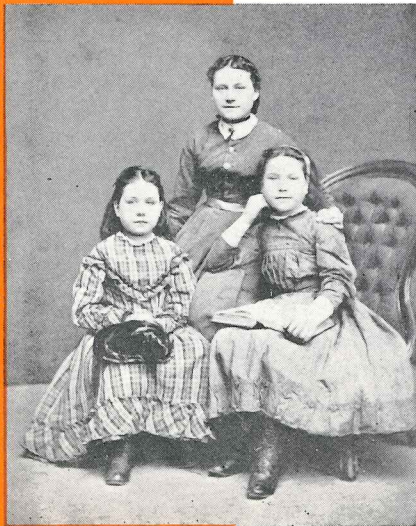
EVENING, 7 o'clock,

**GOSPEL SERVICE**

**W. C. BRAITHWAITE**

AND OTHER SPEAKERS.

Singing by the Bedford Institute (Jr)



arranged where women and girls were paid for their work; others were trained for domestic service; some were transferred to Lancashire to work in the cotton mills; and families were helped to emigrate to Canada. A Labour Exchange was set up and a workshop opened where men could learn carpentry or earn a few shillings by chopping wood.

From 1869 a breakfast of bread and coffee was provided every Sunday morning to destitute men and women, followed by an hour's religious service, and this practice was continued for over forty years, at one period as many as 400 sitting down at table.

The creation of the Bedford Institute and the Bedford Institute Association must be seen in the context of the time when they came into being. They were part of the emerging pattern of resistance to the worst evils of the Industrial Revolution and of a new awareness of the importance of the individual. John Wesley, who died in 1791, had given a new impetus to religious enthusiasm and moral zeal, which in its turn emphasised the need for social reform. The abolition of slavery (1863), the rise of the Trade Unions, legally recognised in 1871, the passing of the Education Act in 1870, which brought in compulsory education, the writings of Charles Dickens, who died the same year, and the work of William Morris and the early Socialists, were all evidence of a new concern for the hungry, the illiterate, those who were workless, and those who were worked to death. In 1865 William Booth and his wife began Mission work in the East End which led to the creation in 1878 of the Salvation Army. Reform was on the march and the Bedford Institute was part of the forward movement. The concept of help for those on the lower rungs of the social ladder was still essentially paternalistic, and it was not until more recent times that social benefits were granted as a right.

3 young match box makers found crying by the dead body of their mother.  
Sent to the home and later emigrated to Canada.

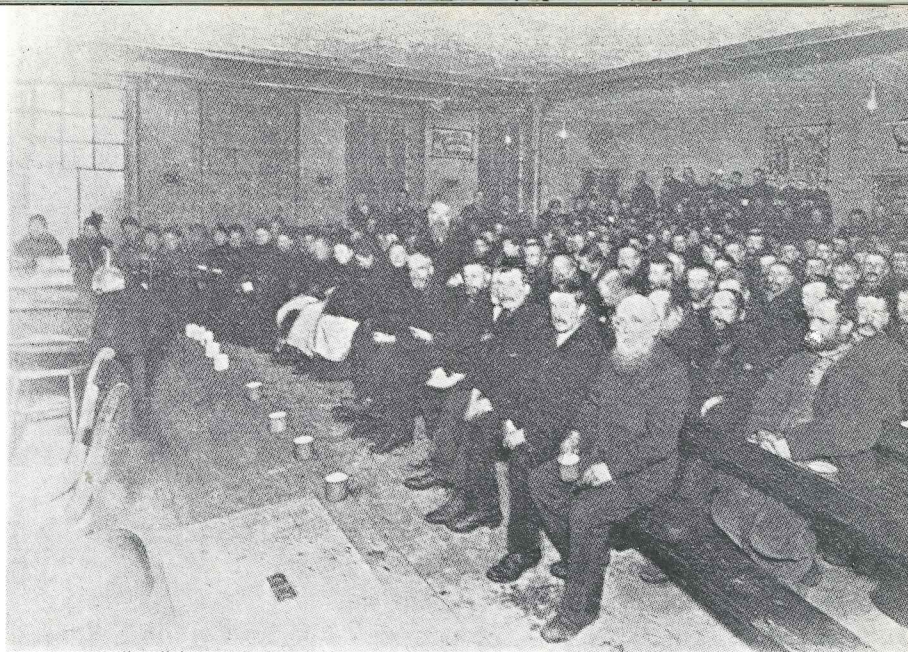
With the passing of the cholera epidemic, many organisations which had come into being to feed the hungry and minister to the sick remained to deal with the material needs of the poor, and the Bedford Institute Association soon restricted this kind of relief mainly to those who had direct links with its own centres.

But the religious, educational and general social work of the Association expanded rapidly. To the initial three Centres, five more had been added by the end of the century; Deptford in 1870, Bunhill in 1874, Bethnal Green in 1874, Barking in 1891 and Hoxton in 1895. To meet the needs of the outlying suburbs that by then were "increasing the population with marvellous rapidity", a further centre was established at Walthamstow in 1900, and another at Forest Gate in 1903. A Centre at Stoke Newington had a brief life of four years from 1947 to 1951, when the Wardens left to take charge of the work at Barking.

The branch at Deptford, the only branch south of the Thames, had to be closed down in 1907 owing to the ruinous state of the premises.

From its formation in 1867 to the outbreak of war in 1914 was a period of continual growth and development for the Bedford Institute Association and by the end of that time it had nine centres. The Friends Meeting and the Sunday School were the foundations on which the work was built, a care for the physical and mental well-being of people arising naturally from a concern for their spiritual good.

The first Bedford Institute building having proved too small and inconvenient for the rapidly extending work, a new building was erected on the same site. In his address at the opening ceremony on the 12th March, 1894, A. T. Alexander, the Honorary Secretary of the Association, pointed out that "About the middle of the century there was a stirring of the dry bones in the Quaker church to a more aggressive action, which took form especially in the establishment of Sunday Schools both for children and adults, where in addition to Bible instruction, reading and writing were taught", and he gave the attendance figures at the Institute



Sunday morning Breakfast for the destitute

on the previous Sunday for all ages from infants to adults as:

Boys, girls and infants (morning and afternoon)	394
Adult department (afternoon)	175

He went on to list the other activities of the Institute: Religious Services, Bands of Hope and Temperance Societies, Lectures and Entertainments, Sewing and Elocution Classes, Mothers' Meetings, Clothing Clubs, Savings Bank and Sick Fund, Reading Room, Library, Gymnasium and Chicket Club. There was in addition a Medical Mission under the charge of a qualified doctor, with lady visitors and nurses. The aggregate weekly attendances at the Institute exceeded 2,000. He concluded with the words "We have no desire to rob Church or Chapel to fill our seats, but if you see on our programme or find within these walls anything that supplies a want in your life or will be of service to your children, we bid you and them a hearty welcome"—an invitation from our Centres which still stands today.

Up to the outbreak of the 1914-1918 war there was no essential change in the nature of the work, though the number of Centres and the variety of

activities increased. A return for the year ending 31st October 1914 gives the following average weekly attendances for the whole of the nine Centres:

Religious Meetings :		
Adults	2,665	
Children	734	
	<hr/>	3,399
Children's Schools :		
Boys	938	
Girls	1,160	
Teachers, male	83	
Teachers, female	173	
	<hr/>	2,354
Social Clubs and Reading Rooms		1,695
Sick Funds and other Benefit Societies		1,355
Popular Entertainments		1,345
Physical Culture		1,217
Bands of Hope		901
Mothers' Meetings		719
Other Classes		574
Adult Schools :		
Men	334	
Women	202	
	<hr/>	536
Adult Temperance Meetings		477
Children's Breakfasts		300
Bands and Choirs		242
Medical Missions		60

And from the libraries' stock of 9,994 books, 7,064 were issued in the year to 390 (presumably omniverous) readers.

Religious meetings and Sunday Schools still head the list. Social Clubs, Benefit Societies, Entertainment and Physical Culture attract substantial numbers. Adult Schools and other classes are beginning to make headway. There is still a lively interest in Temperance Work, though not to be compared with the fervour of earlier years, when, for instance "in 1882, a year of remarkable work throughout the country by the Blue Ribbon Gospel Temperance Movement, George Wood, from America, was an

effective worker at all the Centres of the Association; in a series of meetings held at the Bedford Institute people crowded the room night after night in a manner never before witnessed; and during that year reports from the different Centres showed that 2,660 adults and young people and 550 children signed the temperance pledge". The mention of 300 children's breakfasts (there were no school meals then) reminds us of the continuing poverty. Even as late as 1911 we read in the Association's Report for that year "our poor are sheltered in places beyond description, so foul and vile are they" and that "although drinking is on the decrease in this part, it is terribly noticeable, for crowds of women with babies hang about outside public house doors, or, worse still, have drinking bouts in their homes and invite their neighbours to bring in their beer too".

During the first war all the Bedford Institute Centres continued to be active, though under trying conditions and with diminished numbers. A great many of the young men were in the Armed Forces and, after the introduction of conscription in 1916, a number of others either undertook relief work or went to prison as conscientious objectors. There are constant references in the reports to falls in attendance because of the air raids, first by Zeppelins and later by planes, and because of the darkened streets. Mothers were naturally unwilling to allow their children out at night and the elderly were often persuaded by their relatives that they were safer at home. In some cases it meant the temporary closing of certain sections of the work. The bombing of towns and civilians in the first war, though trivial compared with the wholesale destruction of cities and lives in the second, was the first experience of this kind of warfare and therefore, apart from the real and immediate danger, held the fear of the unknown. But the work of the Centres went quietly on, with their Morning and Evening Meetings, Sunday Schools, Bible Classes, Mothers' Meetings, Adult Schools, Lectures, Children's Outings, Sewing Classes, Social and Sports Clubs, and undertook in addition, certain activities to try and bring some comfort and help to those affected by war-time conditions. Sunday Breakfasts for the destitute continued to be provided—10,986 breakfasts were given in 1915. "The poor men and women, and some children, enjoy(!) the piece of dry bread and mug of tea which comes to them very acceptably once a week, but hardly any men of military age are now present." Coal and bread tickets and secondhand clothes were provided for many families in the winter months. Working parties were held to make clothes for war victims, parcels distributed to the Belgian refugees

## Back

who arrived in great numbers at the beginning of the war, and bundles were forwarded to the warehouses of the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee for the sufferers in France and Holland. At Bethnal Green a Sewing Meeting was started at which garments were made and payment given for the work, and in this way and by the sale of garments to members at cost price, help was given to women whose husbands were out of work or in the Forces. A Soldiers' and Sailors' Wives Club, organised by Mrs. Gillett at Peel, gave such women a welcomed opportunity to share their experiences and problems.

In 1915, despite the war, the Association celebrated the Jubilee of the opening of the Bedford Institute building in Spitalfields in 1865. A thanksgiving service was held at the Bedford Institute in January and an exhibition of hobbies and amateur handiwork in March, when 460 exhibits—drawings, paintings, photography, needlework, models, cookery, etc.—were sent in. It was so successful that a special display of some of the exhibits was put on for Yearly Meeting, and at Yearly Meeting the Jubilee was referred to in a minute from London and Middlesex quarterly meeting:

“That event (the opening of the Bedford Institute building in 1865) and the work that followed had an important influence not only upon this Quarterly Meeting, but on the movement of that period in the Society at large which resulted in the present activity in Home and Foreign Missions, and it was through the action of the Bedford Institute Association that the Yearly Meeting's own Home Mission and Extension Committee came into existence.”

When the war was over and the men who had been in the army; doing relief work; or in prison as C.O.s, returned to civilian life, there was a gradual but fairly rapid return to a full and vigorous life in the Centres. The fighting ended on the 11th November 1918 with the signing of the armistice, and the Bedford Institute report for 1919 speaks of it as a busy year and of the growing intensity of the religious and social problems, “towards the solutions of which we are keenly desirous of doing our part”. Four years of a terrible and devastating war had naturally had an effect on those who were fighting it and had weakened the belief in formal Christianity; the same report mentions that “several who previously were most active in Christian work are now quite indifferent to spiritual things. In most cases the spiritual tone of the men's lives has been destroyed by what they have been called upon to do at the front.”



Young Bedford Instituturs in the country, 1928

Though Religious Meetings and Sunday Schools continued to play a great part in the life of the Centres between the two wars, there was a noticeable shift of emphasis to the more secular activities and to a broader interpretation of religious teaching. There were more educational classes and a flowering of interest in the arts—music, drama and painting. The promotion of physical well-being through gymnastics, Swedish drill, country dancing, and outdoor games was more widely catered for. Folk Dancing, Net Ball and Tennis Clubs came into being, Film and Wireless Clubs (members at Hoxton were charged a penny an evening to listen in), Camping and Rambling became popular, and there were a few tours abroad. There was an increased awareness of political issues and social injustice, and public meetings and Centre Conferences were held on current problems. As a result of Dick Sheppard's appeal which led to the formation of the Peace Pledge Union, active Peace Groups were formed at some of the Centres.

A Bedford Institute Association Leaders' Conference was held at Hampstead in 1934 on "The approach to the adult in view of the drift from religion". We do not know what conclusions they came to, but obviously there were then, and there are today, a number of reasons for people's indifference to the Church: that it does not practice what it preaches, or that superstition is confused with religious belief; that where the Church was once the main centre of social activities, this is no longer so; that the teachings of Darwin, Marx and Freud, whether we like it or not, have had a profound influence on people's attitude to orthodox religion. But Christ's own message still rings down the centuries with a challenging assurance, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself", and it is in that spirit that we endeavour to carry out our work.

In 1919 a new Constitution was evolved which effected two major changes—the inclusion of non-friends as well as members of the Society on the governing body (The Association Council), and the affiliation of other Quaker organisations to it.

The early 1930s were years of acute industrial depression and unemployment and our Clubs did what they could to provide facilities and help for those who were out of work. Hoxton found them suspicious and unco-operative; but at Forest Gate, Barclay Hall was used as an Occupational Centre for five days a week, with an average attendance of 56. They also organised a very successful Club for the Unemployed, which included a Gym Class, A Dramatic Society, First Aid, Music, Male Voice Choir, Wireless Group, Indoor Games, Table Tennis, Boot Repairing, a Canteen



Young Bedford Instituturs writing letters from Camp in the '30's

and a Library. The large hall at Walthamstow was also used as a Recreation Centre.

In 1936 there were clashes in the East End between Fascists and Communists, and insults and threats against the Jews by Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts. Both our Bethnal Green and Ratcliff branches were represented on the Council of Citizens of East London which was formed to combat anti-Semitism and to restore friendship and good-will among all classes and races.

Despite the lure of entertainments like the cinema and the radio, greyhound racing and dirt track riding, the Centres up to the outbreak of war in 1939 attracted large numbers who required something more than passive amusement.

The second war was far more devastating than the first in its effect on the Association's work. Home life in London was disrupted by the exodus of children and mothers to safe areas, by the call up for the armed forces, and by the terrible air raids which caused a formidable loss of life and the destruction of property on a vast scale. But despite the strict black-out and the continual air attacks, first by bombers, then by pilotless planes (fly-bombs), and finally by rockets which exploded before you could even hear them coming, work of some kind continued at most of the Centres. As well as running a number of classes, Walthamstow ran a youth club and a nursery school throughout the war. Youth work was also carried on at Hoxton and Ratcliff, with constant interruptions from air raids. Classes and groups would often disintegrate and re-form several times in the course of the evening. When the warning sounded most of the youngsters would rush for the nearest shelter, leaving stoic Wardens and Leaders with a faithful few to await their return after the all-clear.

The Bunhill premises were almost completely destroyed; so were the older buildings of Peel, but the Boys' Club survived. The Bedford Institute was requisitioned as a Rest Centre, though the Head Office continued there on sufferance. The top floor was used by Friends' Relief Service as a clothing store for bombed-out people, and the first team to enter Belsen (Friends Relief Workers) spent some weeks in the same building while they were fitted out and equipped.

The Association was exceptionally fortunate in having the help of numbers of Young Pacifists, some of them members of Friends' Relief Service. One of them, Dennis James, became Assistant Warden for a time at Hoxton and is a member of our Executive Committee today; the present booklet and many of our Annual Reports have been designed by him and he is the popular tutor of several art classes at Walthamstow. John Hobbs also came to us in this way and is still a member of our Council; and Edwin Amos, who gave valuable service as Acting Secretary during and until shortly after the war.

When the war was over, there were many problems to be faced and difficult decisions to be made, and we were fortunate to have John Hoare as our General Secretary to pilot us through some rough water. Bunhill had been destroyed by bombs; the Bedford Institute building in Quaker Street was sold in 1947 because there seemed little prospect of reviving the work in that area on a sufficient scale to justify the maintenance of so large a building; and the Forest Gate branch, which had been largely given over to groups which had only a slender connection with the Association, was sold the same year to the Local Education Authority to be developed as a Community Centre.

The work at the six remaining Centres was taken up again with varying degrees of success. Walthamstow and Peel made a quick recovery. Hoxton gradually but steadily built up a thriving Neighbourhood Centre, with May Scott as Warden, which became a vital part of the community and established excellent relations with the local and educational authorities, which it still maintains. Barking, Bethnal Green and Ratcliff experienced fluctuating fortunes and had a succession of Wardens and Club Leaders. Ratcliff had no premises of its own until 1960. It was therefore very disappointing that soon afterwards the site was needed by the L.C.C. for road widening and in 1965 they acquired it, but with generous compensation. Bethnal Green became a recognised Youth Centre in 1960 and has remained so since. Barking had a lively Club from 1951 to 1960, but was then threatened with acquisition for road widening, which severely limited the possibilities for active work there.



Hoxton Junior Club Boys on a bomb site

London today is a very different place from what it was before the war. In the East End modern blocks of flats have replaced the grimy slums of former days. The children are well dressed and well fed. There is no actual destitution, though there is still too much poverty or near poverty. The majority of families have television sets and many have refrigerators. Unemployment pay, which was introduced shortly after the end of the first war, did something to relieve the acutest anxieties of those who were out of work. And today higher wages give young people a freedom and independence they have never enjoyed before. Holidays abroad have become a commonplace. The Government and Local Authorities have accepted an ever increasing responsibility for social and educational amenities, for children and old people, for Evening Classes and Youth Clubs.

What then is there left for the Bedford Institute branches to do? The job of the social reformer is to do himself out of a job and his chief delight should be to feel that there is no longer any need for the work he was doing. What special contribu-

## Looking



Modern Flats and Children, Bethnal Green

We have considered briefly the past history and the present position of the Bedford Institute Association. What of its future? What are its aims, its hopes, its problems?

In a changing world the role most suitable for a voluntary organisation such as ours calls for re-appraisal from time to time and a Centenary seems a fitting occasion to take stock.

What service can we best give? Should we continue our present work, change it, or expand it? Or should we aim at a combination of existing activities with new ventures? Should we consciously seek new fields or wait for the need to reveal itself?

Many of the social evils and distresses which brought the Bedford Institute into being have either been abolished or are now dealt with by Government agencies and Local Authorities, and we receive both financial assistance and practical help from such sources. This public responsibility for social welfare in place of relief by charitable bodies has altered to a great extent the nature of the work for which the Association was originally formed, and for many years, both before and since the second world war, the emphasis has been on providing at our Centres, a variety of activities for bringing people together in fellowship, in a community imbued with Christian values, for study and enjoyment, for mutual service, and for those friendly, personal relationships which are perhaps the truest education for a full and satisfactory life.

But today we are asking ourselves, is this enough? Social work, whether public or voluntary, does not exist in a vacuum. It is related not only to a particular neighbourhood, but in a very real sense to national and international problems. War, poverty, hunger, racial discrimination, drug addiction,

tion have we to make today that could not be equally well provided by the Authorities? For one thing, we are not so bound by statutory regulations, which makes it easier for us to co-operate with other sympathetic bodies and to initiate work in untried and experimental fields. The Authorities recognise this and are often willing to subsidise such experiments. They probably also recognise the existence of something less tangible, but even more valuable, in our organisation, a fellowship of shared convictions and social responsibility. The Bedford Institute is firmly rooted in the affections of a wide network of people whose lives have been profoundly influenced by it and who give it loyal service, knowing how much it has contributed in the past, yet believing that it will not be too much bound by the past to have an adventurous and constructive future.



# Forward

teenage delinquency, the tyranny of money and prestige, industrial conflict—some or all of these have an effect on our individual lives and spring from the nature of the society in which we live. In the past some of the Bedford Institute Centres have been in the forefront of the struggle for peace and social justice, and there would seem to be a strong case today for the Association to be more closely linked not only with the Society of Friends, but with other sympathetic organisations for the amelioration of social evils and the outlawing of war. We are now associated with the Friends Race Relations Committee in the recently formed Islington Project. Its purpose is to promote greater harmony and understanding among the very varied immigrant population there, to help them with their problems where help is needed, and to enable them to meet socially in a friendly and informal atmosphere. The Bedford Institute Association has bought the premises which are to be the centre of the undertaking, and Vernon Martindale, who comes from Barbados, has been appointed Warden from the 1st of April this year. His wife, Lorraine, comes from Port Elizabeth, and has been working as a nurse at Great Ormond Street Hospital. We wish them every success in what must be largely an experimental venture, for little has so far been done in this very necessary field of social co-operation.

We are also considering using the Centre at Barking as a sheltered workshop for thirty handicapped people, but this possibility is still under discussion and investigation.

If we should widen the scope of our work, this would not necessarily mean that we should curtail the activities that are already going on in the various Centres. We might even extend them.

Two Youth Club members from Bethnal Green



But if we are to look to a period of vigorous growth, we cannot do so without the sympathy and support of Friends. We are grateful to all those who have helped and are helping us with money or service, but more of both is needed, for the upkeep of buildings alone is a constant drain on our resources, and although we have qualified teachers provided by the Education Authorities for many of the classes, we welcome voluntary helpers for the general running of Clubs, and other activities. Our new Secretary, Tom Hood, has already visited and addressed a number of Friends Meetings to tell them something of the work we are doing, and has an extensive programme of further visits. We feel this is an effective way of bringing to the notice of Friends what we are attempting to do in the way of providing opportunities for the adventure of learning and fellowship.

Although the problems with which Peter Bedford and his friends had to grapple have been largely overcome, we cannot afford to be complacent. Despite the Welfare State, the recently formed Child Poverty Action Group has revealed that an alarming number of families are living below a reasonable subsistence level. Every day many people are killed and maimed on our public highways and little is done to deal with the situation, which is as evil and menacing as the plagues of earlier days. Drug addiction among young people is on the increase. There are more people in mental hospitals than ever before. Large scale organised robbery has become a permanent feature of our social landscape. Racial discrimination, which is increasingly challenged in the United States, is not unknown in our own country. And in the field of world affairs, a vile and vicious war in Vietnam is threat-

ening a small nation with total destruction; a large proportion of the people of the earth live near starvation level; and the relative gap between rich and poor nations is increasing. We have a long way to go before men live by the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. The Society of Friends is concerned to translate spiritual truths into practical realities and the Bedford Institute Association is of the same mind.

We can only be of lasting help to our immediate neighbours if we implant in them a sense of responsibility for others. That this has been done in the past is witnessed by the number of those whose active interest in social problems, aroused in our Centres when they were young, has continued throughout their lives.



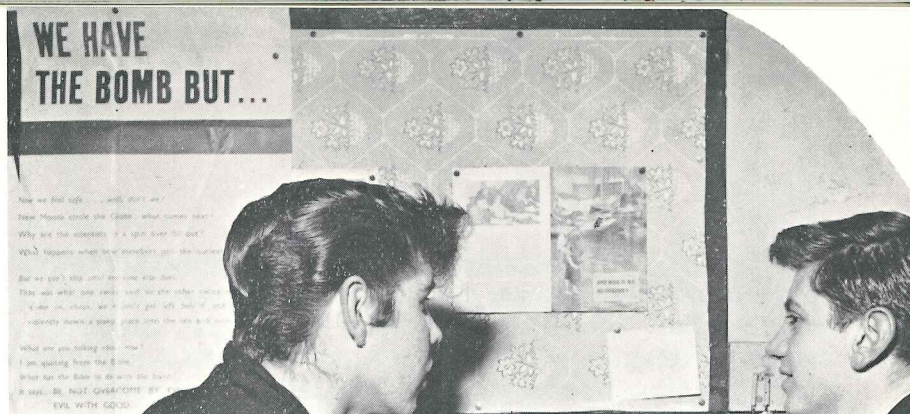
Street scene, Islington

# Barking

The Barking branch of the Association came into being in 1891, when the town was still a small countrified place, its streets lighted by oil lamps. Except for funerals and occasional meetings, the ancient Meeting House had been closed for sixty years when John Hilton of Ratcliff and others felt a concern to bring it back into use. A Friends Meeting for Worship was again established, with a Mission Meeting and a Sunday School. As the work prospered, a corrugated iron room adjoining the Meeting House was added in 1895 and enlarged in 1898. Later a branch was opened in another part of the town a mile away in what had formerly been a cowshed, but thanks to the generosity of two or three members of the Monthly Meeting, this was subsequently replaced in 1902 by a new building known as the Kennedy Institute. In 1908 the old Meeting House which had fallen into decay was demolished and the present spacious building erected on the site. Work was thus carried on at both ends of the town.

During the first war, owing to the proximity of the docks and Woolwich Arsenal, the lighting restrictions were particularly severe, and long hours on munition work left the people of the area with little inclination for anything but sleep. However, though the numbers were smaller, religious meetings, a mothers' meeting and gymnasium classes for boys and girls continued at both the Meeting House and the Kennedy Institute. Coal, clothing and Christmas clubs, and the Penny Bank, were well supported. During air raids the Meeting House was always open and this was greatly appreciated by the local people, who would sing hymns and choruses and find mutual encouragement in each others' company.

Between the wars the Centre continued on orthodox lines,



We have the bomb

with the main emphasis on Sunday schools and religious meetings, but with considerable attention to sports and games; and at one time allotments for the unemployed were organised from the Kennedy Institute.

In common with the other branches, there was a noticeable change in the activities after the 1939-45 war, with increasing attention to youth work and cultural activities.

William and Dorothea Strevens, who were joint wardens from 1951 to 1960, ran a play centre and Clubs for young people of all ages, with music, singing, games, art, drama, discussions, camps and holidays.

It was not possible to find a full-time worker to succeed them and work continued on a small scale. Apart from this, the Centre has for many years been under the threat of demolition for road widening, so that there has been no chance of maintaining the vigorous programme of former years. Recently, however, we have been informed by the Local Authorities that there is no immediate prospect of demolition and that the Centre can plan for a further twenty years of active life. This, of course, radically alters the situation, and we are now considering how the premises may be most effectively used.

# Bethnal Green

In 1874 the Association obtained the use of a small Temperance Hall in Harts Lane (now Barnet Grove) and opened it as a Sunday School, soon adding a Mission Meeting, a Mothers' Meeting, and a Men's School. Eleven years later a plot of ground was acquired on the opposite side of the street on a ninety-nine years lease, on which the present building was erected. It was opened in 1886 and in a few years its Sunday schools became the largest in any of the Association's branches.

Before the first war there was a vigorous Literary Society at the Bethnal Green Centre and William Kean Seymour, one of the young people who belonged to it, afterwards became Chairman of the Poetry Society and is today one of its Vice-Presidents. Another enthusiastic member was Arthur Hadley, who had a long and close association with the B.I.A. and was Chairman of the Council from 1944 to 1946. In his later years he used to relate with zest how this Literary Society, because of its advanced ideas, which did not meet with the approval of the Warden, was eventually obliged to hold its meetings in a nearby coffee-house.

In the early 1920s a Friend, Alfred Henry Brown, came to Bethnal Green as a voluntary Warden for several years. He was a forceful speaker, with a strong and attractive personality, and through his influence a Meeting for Worship was started and a number of young people at the Centre joined the Society of Friends; among them James Burman, a member of our Executive, who, with his wife Emily, has been connected with the Bethnal Green branch for almost fifty years; it is largely due to their quiet and unwavering faith

that the Centre has survived its many vicissitudes.

For some years before the 1914 war there was constant difficulty in obtaining teachers and responsible workers from the immediate neighbourhood, and appeals were made to young Friends in the outer suburbs to come to the help of this needy Centre.

By 1920 attendances were so poor that the closing of the branch was contemplated, but in the following year, when the work had been completely overhauled and re-organised under the control of a Workers' Council, which met monthly to review all aspects of the work, the numbers attending the regular organised meetings and classes averaged 1,200 a week. By 1922 the Centre had become "a hive of industry bubbling with life and renewed activities", and continued satisfactorily, with occasional "downs" as well as "ups", until 1939.

Charles Howarth was appointed Warden in 1936 and he and his wife Harriet were at Bethnal Green throughout the war. Many children were evacuated and the Children's Clubs and the Sunday School dwindled, though they were never closed down. The Lower Hall was used as a shelter by people in the neighbourhood, and members of Friends Relief Service and young conscientious objectors took refreshments to local shelters and to fire fighters, often while air raids were going on. In the later stages of the war, when the raids had somewhat subsided, some of the children returned and Clubs got under way again; and the Friends Relief Workers cleared a bomb site near the hall for allotments which were successfully cultivated by Club members and some of the neighbours.

A notable event at Bethnal Green over a long period was the Annual Fair to raise money for the work of the Centre, and this Centre has the distinction of being the only one still to have a Penny Bank.

Since the war the main stress has been on youth work, al-

## *The Policy and Aims of the Bedford Institute Association*

A summary of the statement of policy approved by the Council of the Association on the 20th November, 1965

The aim of the Bedford Institute Association is to express the concern of the Society of Friends, and particularly of Friends in London, for service in East London and in other areas as need and opportunity arise.

It is very necessary that there should be a close connection between the Association and the Society, as Friends have a distinctive contribution to make in the sphere of religious social service with their emphasis on the importance of personality and the individual approach.

While it is hoped that Friends may be found to act as full-time workers, if others are appointed they should be in full sympathy with the Christian basis and purpose of the Association.

The activities of each of the branches should encourage the development of the individual, physically, culturally and spiritually, for it is the complete person, with balance and poise, who can give most to society and do most to transform it.

When fresh decisions have to be made about the work to be done in a Centre, the general principle should be to choose a service which is manifestly needed in the neighbourhood and which requires an organisation like the Bedford Institute Association to provide it.

Hoxton Boy Play Reading



# THE BEDFORD INSTITUTE ASSOCIATION

## The Bedford Institute Trustees

Appointed by London and Middlesex General Meeting

James Burman	Eustace S. Gillett	Frederick A. Holmes	Alan H. Penney
Jack Fenning	Ronald E. Goodrich	Joseph Morland	Stephen J. Thorne
	Percy W. E. Woods		

## THE COUNCIL OF THE ASSOCIATION

Members appointed by the following:

The Trustees	Barking	Bethnal Green	Hoxton
*Eustace S. Gillett ( <i>Treasurer</i> ) Ronald E. Goodrich *Frederick A. Holmes Joseph Morland	Hetty Kemp Cyril Millin *Mary Osmond Edward Osmotherly	Emily Burman	May Scott C. Gerard Wakeman
Peel	Walthamstow	London Young Friends Group	The General Meeting
Dorothy E. Campbell George Campbell Fred Draper Rosa Henderson	Frank Davies Eric B. Frith Ray Lamb *Stanley H. Lamborn ( <i>Chairman</i> ) Winifred Wildman	Brian Parker Edwina Roberts *Peter Robson	S. Patrick C. Alexander Alex Bryan Ronald E. Goodrich Cyril L. Hills Winifred M. Lamborn Brenda C. Maddocks *Ronald Prentice Ivy L. Still
Members co-opted by the Council			
Brenda Bailey *James Burman Francis Crockett *J. Archibald Donaldson	Hilda Evans Alfred Francis John F. Hobbs *Dennis James	Donald Jones *Ron Keating Elfrida Kemp John Maule	Beatrice Skinner Edward Skinner *Lilian Walker Alan Yardley

Those members marked \* constitute the Executive Committee

General Secretary Tom Hood

Assistant Secretary W. Reg Latham

## HOW THE ASSOCIATION IS ADMINISTERED

### THE COUNCIL

This is the governing body of the Association and consists of:

- 4 Bedford Institute Trustees
- 8 Representatives of London and Middlesex General Meeting
- 3 Representatives of London Young Friends
- 5 Representatives of each of the Branch Committees
- 24 Co-opted Members

It meets at least three times a year and is responsible for all major policy decisions

### THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee is appointed by the Council and consists of about 15 people who are chosen for their general suitability for carrying on the detailed work of the Association. They have a special responsibility for workers, buildings, finance, the raising of funds, and publicity; and they keep in touch with the work at each branch.

### PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

A small committee appointed by the Executive to deal with the engagement, service and payment of workers.

### THE GENERAL SECRETARY

### THE BRANCHES

Each Branch has a Local Committee which works with the appointed Leader and shares responsibility for the work and the carrying out of Association policy. The Leaders keep in touch with, and are responsible to, the Secretary and the Executive Committee.

HEAD OFFICE

128a HOXTON STREET, SHOREDITCH, N.1  
Telephone 01-739 5431



Barnet Grove Junior Group 1945

though the Women's Friendly has continued to flourish, and there is a Meeting of Old Age Pensioners every week. The Youth Club has enjoyed and suffered fluctuating fortunes in common with other similar Clubs in the district and the Local Authorities recognise that it is not an easy area in which to find a ready response from young people. At present we have a club of some eighty members, but the Club Leader who had been with us for the past two years has recently left to take up another post. For the time being the Club is open twice a week and is run by one of the Club members, but other possibilities are being explored which may enable us to make a more satisfactory use of this large building which in recent years has been quite extensively repaired and attractively decorated.

## Peel

Peel is the oldest of the existing Centres and was one of the three which combined in 1867 to form the Bedford Institute Association.

It gets its name from a wooden instrument called a "peel" which was used by bakers to place their bread in large ovens, and these were manufactured in Clerkenwell on the site that was afterwards acquired by the Friends Meeting House, which existed for three centuries until it was destroyed in an air raid in 1940.

Relief and social work started there in a small way in 1865 and from the time Peel joined the Association two years later it developed for many years on similar lines to those of the other Centres.

The Institute now has attractive club premises at 33, Lloyd Baker Street, and provides a Centre for young people with a varied programme to maintain their interest. Sports and games play a prominent part in their activities—football, cricket, swimming and table tennis. They have three football clubs. There are Clubs for junior and senior boys, a Young People's Mixed Social Club, and an Old Boys' Club which helps to raise funds. There is also a Club for Old Age Pensioners and a Women's Fellowship. Other activities are chess, photography, folk dancing, and gardening in the summer.

One of the outstanding achievements of the Peel Institute was the acquisition in 1928 of a 10½ acre playing field at Ilford, which was extended considerably in 1934, and which has been extensively used and appreciated both by its own members and outside organisations.

Before the war Peel had a silver band which played in the

Finsbury Squares and open spaces and in the L.C.C. parks, and an orchestra of fifty players which gave performances in the open air as well as at Sunday afternoon meetings and at other branches.

In 1929 meetings were organised and held at Finsbury Town Hall every Sunday afternoon throughout the year where eminent speakers, singers and musicians drew large audiences.

Names that Peel will always remember are those of Bert Campbell, enthusiastic and indefatigable Warden for many years until his death in 1958; George Gillett, later Sir George Gillett and a Member of Parliament, who gave consistent encouragement and support to the Institute and was affectionately described by one of the Club members as "the finest man I ever knew"; and the present Club Leader, Fred Draper, who has been associated with the Institute for the past fifty years.

Although Peel is represented on the Bedford Institute Association Council, it is responsible for its own administration and finances and publishes its own report.

Youngsters and Cubs from Peel, In town and in the country, 1928



Old Age Pensioners enjoying a Hoxton Stage Show

## Hoxton

Shakespeare would feel at home at Hoxton Hall, though he would find the district, with its blocks of modern flats, greatly changed from when he lived in Bishopsgate less than a mile away; for the theatre plays a vigorous part in the life of the Centre today. Plays are often put on by professional actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Mermaid Theatre, and the E.15 and Rose Bruford Schools of Acting, as well as by amateur companies. The enthusiastic co-operation of the Hoxton children as the animals in Obé's "Noah" will long be remembered by them and by the audience. There is a free and easy coming and going of Hoxton folk at rehearsals, and the children, their imaginations stimulated by what they see and hear, frequently invent plays of their own and act them on the stage. Hoxton has the





The cost of producing this Report has been met by a special donation



Mothers Painting Group

unique distinction of incorporating in its premises a Victorian Music Hall which is over a hundred years old and which we are attempting to have scheduled as a historic building. Shakespeare himself may well have acted in the district, for the first theatre in England was erected at Shoreditch close by, and when it was pulled down the materials were carted away to build The Globe on Bankside. There is in Shoreditch Church a memorial tablet to a number of his fellow actors.

The Music Hall was the original home of the Hoxton Centre. It had been used from 1878 as the headquarters of The Blue Ribbon Temperance Mission, conducted by William Noble, but in 1895, after the death of its main supporter, William I. Palmer, it was offered by his executors, together with a gift of £500 for necessary repairs, to the Bedford Institute Association to carry on work of a similar kind. Fifteen years later an adjoining dairy and cowshed were replaced by a commodious extension to the premises, and the structure has

remained substantially unaltered since then.

It was once said of Hoxton that it was the leading criminal quarter of London and that if it could be walled off from the rest of society you would wall off nine-tenths of the crime of London. But nowadays enterprise of this kind is more evenly spread over the metropolis.

The Girls' Guild of Good Life, founded in 1884 by Sara Rae, played an important part at Hoxton Hall from the beginning of the work there up to the second world war, but when the war ended and many adjustments had to be made, they continued their work separately in part of the adjoining Queen Mary Hostel, which is now mainly used as a residential hostel for nurses.

There has always been a varied programme at Hoxton, but since the last war, in common with the other Centres, the activities have been mainly educational, cultural or social, rather than formally religious.



Since 1946 our Warden, May Scott, has built up a Neighbourhood Centre which caters for people of all ages. Apart from the interest in drama, there are classes in painting, pottery, fabric printing, toy making, dancing and shoe-repairing; there are clubs for children, teenagers and old people; there is a playroom five mornings a week where small children are looked after while their mothers go shopping; there is a meeting for housewives where they hear about and discuss matters of mutual interest and concern; there are outings to places of interest and summer holidays for children. Working parties from Friends Work Camps and International Voluntary Service sometimes come and help to decorate the premises, and for the last few years we have had, what has proved to be extremely popular, a Holiday Club for School-children during the whole of August run by about a dozen United Nations Association volunteers of very mixed nationalities, who take the children to parks and museums, to the swimming baths, play games with them, teach them all sorts of arts and handicrafts, and put on entertainments for them. Hoxton Hall in August is a very lively place indeed, and we feel that the activities are not only valuable in themselves, but bring people of different races together in a spirit of friendship and enthusiasm which helps to build bridges, instead of erecting walls, between nations.

Hoxton Young Painters

## Walthamstow

Friends Hall, Walthamstow, was built as a one-storey Mission Hall in 1903 and a larger two-storey building was added in 1906. Backed by a small Friends Meeting, it became a thriving social and religious Centre, with a large undenominational Sunday school and meetings and clubs of all kinds.

In 1921 Arthur Gage, the newly appointed Superintendent, started some W.E.A. classes. About the same time a neighbouring settlement, Winchester House, in Shernhall Street, which also ran a few classes, had to close down, and asked whether their work could be moved to Friends Hall, with Arthur Gage as Warden. This was agreed to and a committee set up to deal with the joint activities. There was continual friction between the evangelical Friends Hall and the newly arrived Settlement people and, in the words of Arthur Le Mare "After having a hell of a time, Arthur Gage cracked up, and Maurice Rowntree came in 1922, stuck it for a year and then went with his family to Constantinople to do refugee work".

In 1923 Arthur Le Mare, a master at Leighton Park School, was appointed Warden, and to quote him again, "the Settlement was in pretty rough water for the first two or three years after I arrived, and the Bedford Institute thought of dropping the pilot (i.e. me), but George Gillet (an influential member of the B.I.A.) and others protested, and the matter



The Orchestra  
Walthamstow

was left in abeyance. Then the Settlement began to gather way and never looked back”.

He was a quiet scholarly man, who had the ability to gather round him a band of exceptionally talented and enthusiastic workers, and although regarded by many in the earlier days as somewhat aloof, he eventually came to inspire a deep loyalty and affection, and the farewell gathering when he retired in 1937 will always be remembered by those who were present.

There were a number of outstanding personalities who for many years contributed to the vitality of the Settlement. The life and water colour classes run by Haydn Mackey and Walter Spradbery, both official artists in the first world war, produced work of exceptional merit, some of which was exhibited in the Royal Academy. Walter Spradbery also produced many striking posters for the Railways and the London Passenger Transport Board and had a large share in the establishment of the local William Morris Art Gallery.

His wife, Dorothy D’Orsay, a well-known singer, devoted her tireless enthusiasm to the Opera Group, which gave many delightful performances; Fred Parsons was an institution in himself and with his wide ranging knowledge, his zest and friendship, roused in others a devotion to literature equal to his own; and exquisite work was done in the classes of gentle Miss Foad in art needlework and advanced design.

Drama has continued to occupy a prominent place in the work of the Centre and Dick Williams’ productions have for many years been admired for their excellence and originality. The Association of Students and Friends, started in 1929 to provide a social link between the two, was extremely successful and its many activities were shared by all age groups.

It was a bridge which led a number of young students into the Society of Friends, where they play a prominent part today. The bound volumes of the Settlement magazine *Friendship*

from 1930 to 1938 are still good reading and give a vivid picture of a lively and vigorous community seething with ideas.

A Peace Group was formed in 1936 and fostered many public meetings addressed by well-known people, including Bertrand Russell and George Lansbury, who had been one of the early workers at the Bedford Institute.

Owen Clover, who succeeded Arthur Le Mare, had many difficulties to contend with, including those of the early war years, and resigned in 1941.

When the war started, some classes were cancelled, some met at weekends, and Dorothy D’Orsay’s Music and Opera Classes were transferred to her own home; public lectures were arranged from time to time and A Weekend School was held on “Progress, its fate and its future”, with Professor Joad as the chief speaker.

From the time Owen Clover left to the appointment of Ray Lamb as Warden in 1942, the Local Committee undertook the running of the Settlement, including the formation of a Youth Club of 150 members and a nursery school.

Ray Lamb quickly established good relations with the local Education Authorities and, despite bombs and blackouts, 368 students were enrolled in his first year (there had been 800 before the war), and Weekend Schools, Public Lectures, Concerts and Plays were organised.

Ray Lamb boldly tackled the problems with which he was confronted, until today the Walthamstow Adult Education Centre, as it is now called, is a flourishing community of a thousand students.

In 1959 H.M. Inspectors gave a very encouraging report on the work of the Centre, paying a special tribute to the Warden. They were, however, critical of the deficiencies of the building itself, so a scheme was launched to raise funds for the extension and improvement of the premises, and this work was completed, at a cost of £30,000, in 1965.