

Access 8

School Photographs

Floodgate St. Infants'

**URBAN CHILDHOODS:
CULTURE, CONTEXT, IMAGES**

Urban Childhoods: Context, Culture, Images

Contents

Urban Childhoods: Introduction

Inside the Classroom

Remembered Moments

Disciplining the Body

Data Collection

Summary of Key Resources

Sources from Birmingham Archives and Heritage Collections

General Sources

Written by Professor Ian Grosvenor, 2009.

www.connectinghistories.org.uk/birminghamstories.asp

"E is an English babe,
ready to take
The yoke of the world
for humanity's sake,
So that every one knows,
be it dreary or bright,
When it's England
that leads him,
the road must be right."

Thomas Stevens, 1902.
'Babes of the Empire A to Z:
An Alphabet for Young England.'

Q: Who was Henry VIII?
A: Son of Henry VII.

Q. What was his character?
A. As a young man he was
bluff, generous, right royal
and very handsome.

Q. How was he
when he grew older?
A. He was bloated,
vain, cruel and selfish.

Carol Adams, 'Ordinary Lives', 1982.

"It is a sin to steal a pin.
Much more to steal
a greater thing"

"Sloth like rust consumes
faster than labour wears,
while the used key
is always bright"

"Laziness travels so slowly that
Poverty soon overtakes him"

'A Reading Book for Use
in Female Schools', 1864.

Urban Childhoods

Introduction

Urban childhoods is a very broad theme, but one area which significantly shaped the individual child was schooling. The classroom has been an increasingly important site of shared national experience since the early nineteenth century. By the end of that century its impact had become universal. The classroom was established as the locus of an effectively inescapable collective experience shaping the lives of each successive generation of Birmingham children from then until now. Yet, although classrooms are extremely important and central to many historical accounts, they have not been systematically explored. So what was past schooling like?



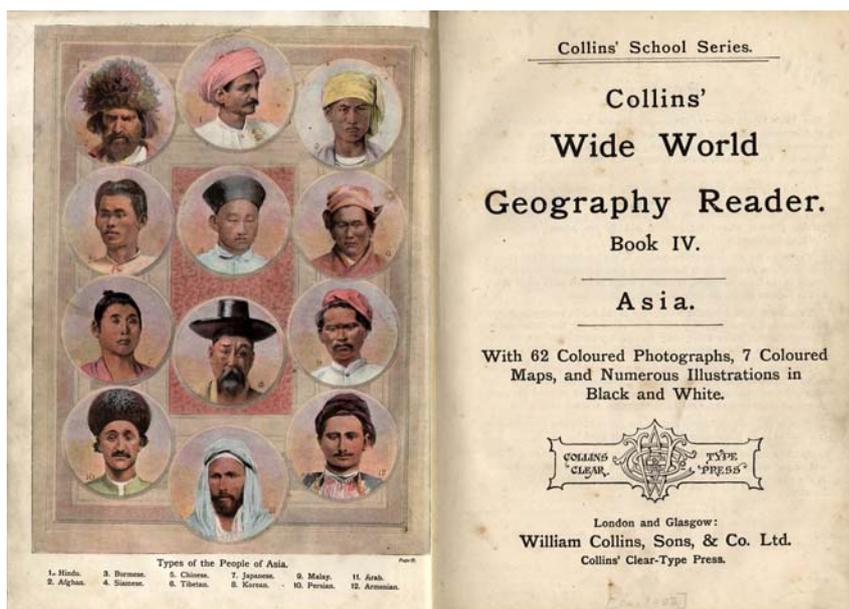
Shop publicity scheme. [Education Committee/Box 30 - 30/5/1/478]

61

Time Table

		2. 1/2 2.20	2.20 1/2 2.30
Monday	Class 1	Tables	Registers marked.
	2		
	3		
Tuesday	Class 1	Spelling	Registers marked.
	2		
	3		
Wednesday	Class 1	Arith. Aith.	Registers marked.
	2	Tables	
	3		
Thursday	Class 1	Songs Learned	Registers marked.
	2		
	3		
Friday	Class 1	Arith. Aith.	Registers marked.
	2	Tables	
	3		

Timetable in School Log Book, 1876. [S 75/2/1]



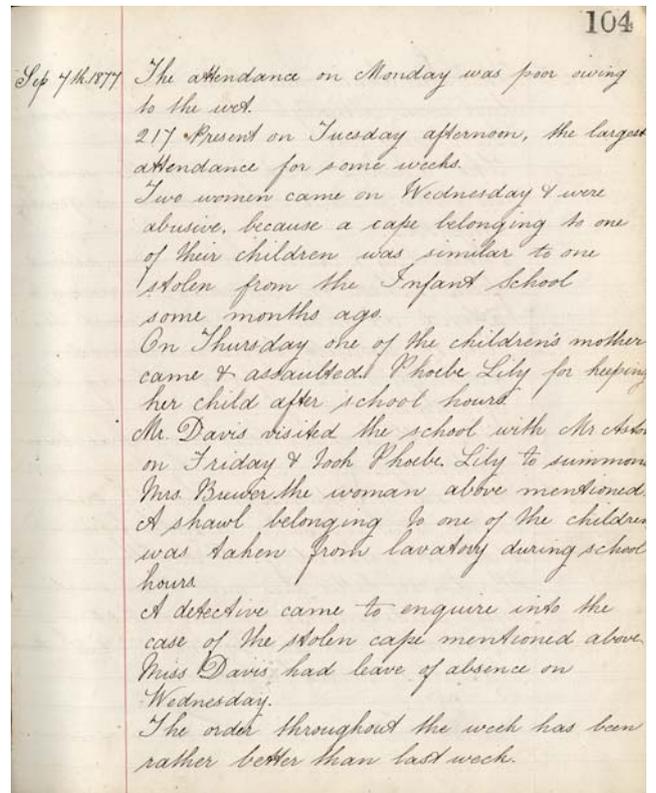
Frontispiece, 1902. [Arts, Language & Literature: Parker Collection/1902/A087.1]

Key Debate:
what was past schooling like?

Inside the Classroom

The Teacher

The teacher was a dominant figure in the construction of the collective experience of schooling. They both regulated and participated in the life of classrooms of the past. From the inception of a structure of formal training and certification for elementary school teachers in 1846, there has been no shortage of public and political pronouncements about the nature of teaching and the perceived characteristics of those who have undertaken it. Classroom teachers have historically had little to say about themselves. This reticence is itself a further significant factor in understanding the constructed character of teacher identity. In the present context, the salient point is that, because teachers of the past have been relatively silent about themselves and their work, this has made it easy for others to do their talking for them. To centre the focus of enquiry particularly upon the classroom teacher is to concentrate upon a surprisingly distant figure in an unexpectedly far-off landscape. However, one source which often provides tantalising evidence of life as a teacher in urban schools is School log books.

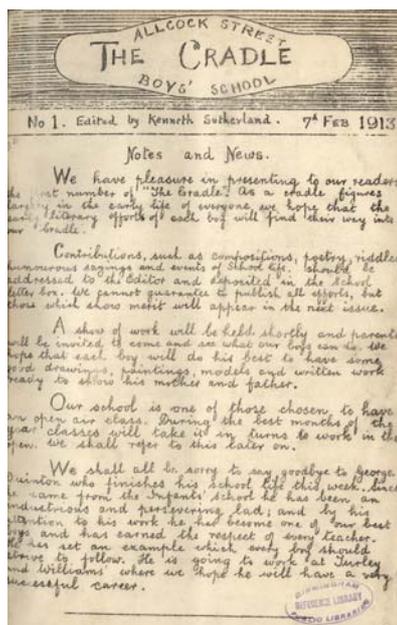


Garrison Lane School log book, 1873-1902. [S 75/2/1]

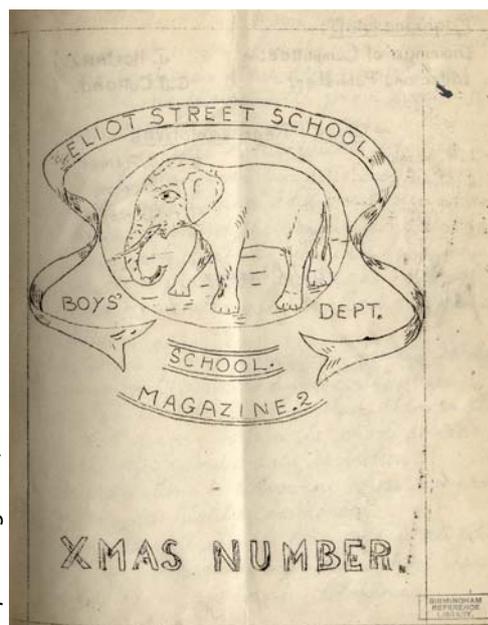
The Pupil

We know from school records the type of texts pupils read from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards. In Birmingham schools, children were told about the empire, its history, heroes and heroines, and its various peoples. Some school textbooks contained views that we would now see as blatantly racist and xenophobic. In children's fiction - black children and non-Western peoples were often presented as negative

examples, symbolizing 'wrong' or 'inappropriate' conduct. Some classroom and playground rhymes were often laden with racist and sexist ideas. We also know from texts on pedagogy that certain learning strategies were recommended in the classroom. How did pupils respond to such texts and teaching methods? Can we find out about the pupil feelings and thoughts? Pupils' exercise books, where they survive, reflect the teaching system and curriculum. School magazines, again where they survive, can also offer insights into children's attitude to schooling.



The Cradle, 1913. [L48.33]



Pupils' Magazine, Allcock Street School. Elliot Street School Magazine, 1928-30. [L48.33]

Key Debate:

how did schooling shape individual and collective identities?

Remembered Moments

Autobiographies

Autobiographical writings and oral testimony can offer insights into feelings. Kathleen Dayus produced several books about her life in and around the Jewellery Quarter. Her stories of rubbing down benches with paraffin, of washing inkwells on Friday afternoons, of the teacher bringing flowers into school every Monday morning, and of stealing chalk from the classroom to play games in the street are rich in detail, but like all such texts drape themselves across the space between history and fiction. The adult who is writing 'now' is contained within the child they write about; events are retrospectively told from the standpoint of the present, the moment of telling. In consequence, the story is ordered and read as if this life could have been lived no other way.



Nelson Street School class photograph, 1913. [MS 2219/2]



Floodgate Street Infants School. [Misc Photos/School Photographs]



Gym class. [Misc Photos/Birmingham Schools]

"The only activities I was good at were dancing, gym and covering books. My own textbooks were covered with samples from a wallpaper book. We all had a textbook each to cover the various subjects. I was very good at book covering, being neat and quick, and I would help those less adept – this made me popular."

Ann Marsh, 'The Book Coverer Par Excellence' in 'Through the Classroom Window', 1998.

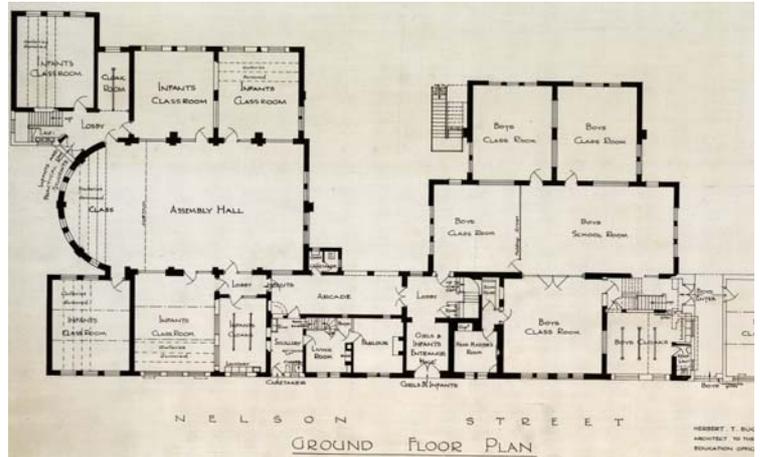
School Photographs

Just as it is hard to visualise the classroom without the black (or latterly white) board, it is difficult to imagine schooling without the school photograph and thus the camera has become a significant if silent part of the narrative of school. There are many images of schooling in Birmingham although like most education photographs they tend to be passive images of children posed for a whole class photograph rather than active images inside the school. Yet, even these images can connect us to 'what it was like' to be a school child. Occasionally, there are photographs which capture moments of emotion on a child's face which again bring us closer to the past.

Key Debate:
can historians redeem the experience of past childhood from the adult gaze?

"The poor kiddies... had free breakfasts, which was always bread and jam. Thick steps it used to be, and a mug of cocoa."

*Oral testimony
quoted in Karen Hull and Peter Jenkinson,
'A Taste of Change. Some Aspects of Eating in the
Inner City, Birmingham 1939-1985'.
(BM&AG, 1985)*



Architectural Ground Floor Plan for Nelson Street School. [BCC Plans]

Disciplining the Body



Blue Coat School Dining Room, 1910. [Stone/Box8/20]

Designed spaces

How children learn is influenced by the spaces they inhabit and sometimes to enter the child's mind we have to take a leap of the imagination. Building plans and school administrative records enable us to reconstruct the embedded system of values and rhythm of life in past schools. Schooling in such designed spaces was timetabled into a series of systematised activities, exercises and movements from start to finish of each school day, in each week of the school year, for each year of compulsory education. Inside the classroom the timetable, the clock and the bell regulated work.

Rules and regulations

What happened in these organised classrooms and schools when someone misbehaved? Some schools kept special Punishment Ledgers which record both the nature of pupil misdemeanours and the punishments delivered. These records all point to rules and regulations; but how did pupils respond? Sometimes there are telling remarks in the ledgers, for example, at Prince Albert School, Aston: 'During the caning this boy was impudent and shouted out in school in defiance'. There is a clear sense here, both actual and imagined of pupil voice – an example of pupil resistance to adult defined order. Such moments bring us closer to the child in the past.

PUNISHMENT					BOOK.			
No.	Name	Offence	Date of Offence	Punishment	Awarded	Date of Punishment	Name of Teacher who Awarded the Punishment	REMARKS
1.	Adelaide Smith	Disobedience	2. 12. 00	Smacking on hands		2. 12. 00	Edith Jones	
2.	Betty Wood	Disobedience	4. 1. 01	Smacking on hands		4. 1. 01	Edith Jones	
3.	Scottie Perry	Disobedient attitude after a reading	10. 1. 01	Smacking on hands		10. 1. 01	Edith Jones	
4.	Billy Sawyer	Continued naughtiness	16. 1. 01	"		16. 1. 01	Edith Jones	
5.	Annie Foster	Disobedience & defiance	24. 2. 01	"		24. 2. 01	Edith Jones	

Extract from punishment Ledger, Aston Lane School, 1900-01. [S9/6/9]

Key Debate:
how did the rules and regulations of schooling shape gender identities?

Knowing the child

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century there was an information explosion as governance, both nationally and locally, became dependent on the processes of surveillance, data collection and information ordering. Children's lives were scrutinised by the myriad apparatuses, bureaucratic systems and personnel that managed them. Administrators engaged in information exchange, inputting, extracting and reassembling data and then circulating reconfigured data sets along a series of discrete information flows. In the process of information exchange record types multiplied as data travelled and was then reassembled in different locations within administrative structures by different individuals for different and overlapping purposes. Children inhabit these records and by collecting elements of their life stories from them we can make their lives, individually and collectively, more visible. Unlike novelists we cannot enter into past minds, but by assembling the landscape of past childhoods we locate them within the chaos and confusion of life.



Birmingham Education Census. Photo by I. Grosvenor

Distant classrooms

What though of those school days before cameras were so common place. Even here we can find ways of gaining access to past classrooms and children's lives. Alfred H. Green's 1855 painting of Ann Street Infant School vibrantly brings schooling to life. We can see children sewing, reading, listening, watching, falling asleep, crying, putting on coats, staring into space, falling over, and dancing. Close your eyes and imagine the noise of 90 small children, close your eyes and inhale and smell their unwashed bodies; open your eyes and imagine a winter's day and a large schoolroom where there is only one stove heating the whole building. Finally, in the bottom right corner there is a piece of paper next to a pile of slates on which is written Mrs Smith Class. The artist celebrating the classroom teacher – we have come full circle back to the teacher.



Painting of Ann Street Infants School, by Alfred H. Green, 1855. [Courtesy of BM&AG]

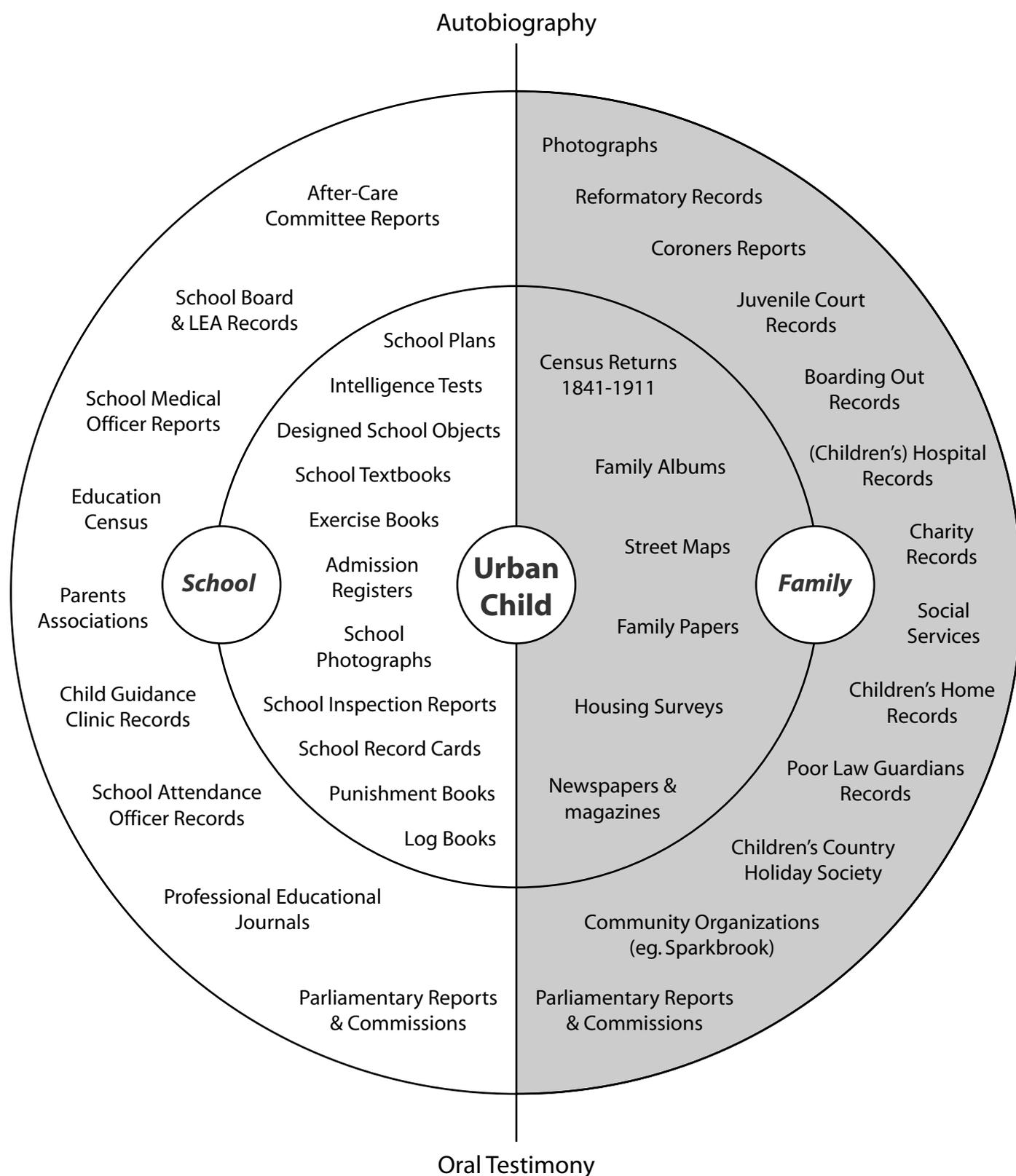
“Lessons came and went. It was easy: the teachers just turned up on cue. You sat there and produced the appropriate textbook. George found his mind wandering as each period went on: he tried to make his telling contributions early, so the teachers, satisfied with his preparation, turned their radar elsewhere.”

Wesley Stace, 'By George' (2007)

Data Collection

Key Debate:
how did professional knowledge about children in the past circulate?

Locating the Urban Child in Birmingham Records



This is not a definitive list, but examples of the most useful categories of records.

Certain types of records (eg. school records, courts and the education census) have access restrictions or need special permission to access, so please check with Birmingham Archives and Heritage service before visiting.

Urban Childhoods: Context, Culture, Images

Sources from Birmingham Archives and Heritage Collections

*Birmingham's collections relating to childhood are extensive and the list below is indicative. Users should consult Birmingham City Archives (2001), Grosvenor and Watts (2003) and Birmingham Archives and Heritage catalogues for further details. Records that are listed below with an * are all subject to 100 year closure and require users to apply for permission.*

Archives:

After Care Reports, 1906-1921* [BC/BH/5/2/5/1]
Aston Lane School Punishment Ledger *[S9/6/9]
Birmingham School Board records, eg Minute Books, 1870-1903 [SB/B/1/1/1-21]
Birmingham City Council Education Committee records, eg Minute Books, 1903-1972 [BCC/BH/1/1/1/1-39]
Birmingham Infant School Society Minutes and Annual Reports, 1825-66 [300090, 300098 / ZZ32]
Blue Coat School Records, 1722-1989 *[MS 1622]
Education Committee Miscellaneous Files [Box 30 – 30/5/1/478]
Garrison Lane Board School Log Book, 1873-1902 [S75/2/1]
Hostels and Boarding Out Committee Minute Book, 1930-1949 * [BCC/BH/14/6/1/1-9]
Marston Green Homes Minute Books, 1930-1933 *[BCC/BH/5/5/1/1-11]
School plans [BCC Plans]
Miscellaneous photographs of Birmingham schools [Press 7]
Photographs of the Blue Coat School by Sir Benjamin Stone [Stone/Box 8]
'A souvenir of the Children's Bricklaying Ceremony, arranged and carried out under the direction of Mrs J. E. Player. 29 July 1913. Containing Photographs of the Little Bricklayers. Photographs by H. J. Whitlock and Sons Ltd, Birmingham'. Children's Hospital Brick League [MS 2219/2]
School Attendance Books, 1896-1903 * [SB/13/6/3/1/1-9]
School Magazines [L48.33]
Special Schools Sub-Committee Minute Books, 1903-1949 * [BCC/BH/5/1/1/1-39]

Primary Printed Sources:

Annual Report of the Birmingham Education Society (1867-1870)
Annual Reports of the School Medical Officer – serial publication
H. Austin, An appeal to commemorate fifty years service in social work for children by Frank Mathews (1947)
Education Pamphlets: HMSO – serial publication
Children First: organ of the Birmingham and District Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations (1948-53)
Children's Court: Report of the Visiting Justices' Committee (1906-1941)
Kathleen Dayus, Her People. (1982)
Kathleen Dayus, The best of times. (1991)
W. Gover, Our Work. Remarks upon the results of 'An Inquiry into the state of education of the children of the working classes in Birmingham (1857)
E. F. MacCarthy, Educational work in Birmingham 1885-1888. Address to the Birmingham School Board (1888)
A. W. Matthews, Life of Sarah Bache of Islington School, Birmingham (1900)
J. Morris and P. Morton (Eds.), Through the Classroom Window (1998).
Mrs Hume Pinsent, Training of the mentally defective. Presidential Address, Ladies' Literacy and Debating Society, Birmingham (1904)
R. H. Sherard, The child slaves of Britain (1904)

Urban Childhoods: Context, Culture, Images

General Sources

Secondary Reading:

- Carol Adams, *Ordinary Lives*. London: Virago (1982)
- Richard Aldrich, (ed.) *A Century of Education*. London: Routledge (2001)
- Norman Bartlam, *School Days around Tinker's Farm*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing (2003)
- Birmingham City Archives, *The City a Light and a Beacon. A Guide to Birmingham Education Archives* (2001)
- Catherine Burke and Ian Grosvenor, 'The progressive image in the history of education: stories of two schools', *Visual Studies*, 22, 2 (2007) 155-168
- Catherine Burke and Ian Grosvenor, *School*. London: Reaktion (2008)
- Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner, *Becoming Teachers. Texts and Testimonies 1907-1950*. London: Woburn Press (2004)
- Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor. Home, School and Street in London, 1870-1914*. London: River Oram (1996).
- Kathleen Dayus, *Her People*. London: Virago (1982)
- Kathleen Dayus, *The best of times*. London: Virago (1991)
- Robert Goodenow and William Marsden, (eds.) *The City and Education in Four Nations*. Cambridge: CUP (1992)
- Ian Grosvenor, 'There's no place like home: Education and the Making of National Identity', *History of Education*, 28, 3 (1999) 235-50
- Ian Grosvenor, "All the Names": LEAs and the making of pupil and community identity. *Oxford Review of Education*, 28, 2&3 (2002) 299-311
- Ian Grosvenor, *The Art of Seeing: Promoting Design in Education in 1930s England*. *Paedagogica Historica* 41, 4&5 (2005) 507-534
- Ian Grosvenor, "Seen but not heard": researching past city childhoods. *Paedagogica Historica* 43, 3 (2007) 405-429
- Ian Grosvenor, *Geographies of risk: an exploration of city childhoods in early twentieth century Britain*. *Paedagogica Historica* 45, 1&2 (2009)
- Ian Grosvenor and Martin Lawn, *Days Out of School: Secondary Education, Citizenship and Public Space in 1950s England*. *History of Education Journal*, 33, 4 (2004) 377-389
- Ian Grosvenor and Kevin Myers, *Progressivism, control and correction: Local Education Authorities and Educational Policy in 20th century England*. *Paedagogica Historica* 42, 1&2 (2006) 225-248
- Ian Grosvenor and Ruth Watts, 'Schooling and Education in Birmingham' in Carl Chinn (ed.) *Birmingham. Bibliography of a City*. Birmingham: Birmingham University Press (2003) 181-199
- Eric Hopkins, 'Working-Class Education in Birmingham during the First World War', *History of Education Society Occasional Pamphlet No. 8* (1981)
- Martin Lawn and Ian Grosvenor (eds.) *Material Cultures of Schooling*. London: Symposium (2005)
- William E. Marsden, *The School Textbook. Geography, History and Social Studies*. London: Woburn Press (2001)
- J. Morris and P. Morton (Eds.), *Through the Classroom Window*. Studley: Brewin Books (1998)
- Jacob Middleton, 'The Experience of Corporal Punishment in Schools, 1890-1940', *History of Education*, 37, 2 (2008) 253-275

Contact us:

**Birmingham Stories Project Office
Central Library
Chamberlain Square
Birmingham
B3 3HQ**

(+44) 0121 4641608

**Birmingham School of Education
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT**

(+44) 0121 4144866

**Birmingham Archives and
Heritage Service
Floor 6, Central Library
Chamberlain Square
Birmingham B3 3HQ**

(+44) 0121 3034217

Shoob's skeleton, Tukes fair all

