Joseph Lancaster and Improvements in Education

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Good evening ladies and gentlemen. It is my very great pleasure and privilege today to deliver this lecture as part of the Lancasterian Bicentenary celebrations. Thank you for that very kind introduction. I found it particularly reassuring because when I announced to one of my colleagues that I had been chosen to give this bicentenary lecture and waited for him to reply - along the lines of "You are the obvious person" or "There could not have been a better choice" - he paused for a while and then replied: "It could be because you are the only practising historian of education who looks as if he might be 200 years old".

I am most grateful to Dr Gillian Collins and to the Committee of the Society for their invitation. I am also most conscious of the very considerable responsibility which rests upon my shoulders this evening. Across the years Joseph Lancaster and the movement which he inspired have been the subject of many fine studies by eminent scholars and in this lecture I can do little more than try to stand upon the shoulders of others - those who have already provided such a secure basis of scholarship in the field.

These include a fine collection of studies, ranging from the volumes by David Salmon (1904) and H.B.Binns (1908) in the first decade of the twentieth century, to such recent biographies as those by Mora Dickson (1986) and Joyce Taylor (1996).

In addition to drawing upon such important secondary sources as these, my understanding of the disputes which surrounded some of Joseph Lancaster's work has been much enhanced by acting as the supervisor for the research of Pauline Heath, whose Ph.D. thesis is on the life and work of Mrs Sarah Trimmer (See Heath, 2010). But I am sure that you will all understand if I make special mention this evening of the work of the late George Bartle, who died so tragically, but a few months ago. I was privileged to know George for many years as an external examiner for the history course at Borough Road and as a researcher at his Richmond Historical Research Group. In turn he was a much-admired visiting lecturer on our MA course in History of Education here. Over the years our masters and research students gained much from their visits to the archive centre then under his care. In my own teaching and writing I have drawn heavily upon his great stream of articles about Lancaster and the movement, and upon his A History of Borough Road College (1976).

But though I must defer in terms of Lancasterian scholarship to the achievements of others, I should like to say that my connections with the movement, and particularly with its Southwark base, have been very strong indeed. I was born in Charlton, but my
grandparents and parents were from Southwark. My maternal grandfather, Albert Edward Barnes, was the Mayor of Southwark, and Albert Barnes House, named after him, stands but a few yards from Borough Road. My father, George, was a pupil at the Borough Polytechnic Institute, where he attended the technical day school for boys, and came under the influence of the well-known mathematics teacher, Dr W.N.Rose. The Borough Polytechnic, of course, was housed in the buildings of the former British and Foreign School Society's Training College in Borough Road.

My aunt, Nell Barnes, mother of Patricia Denman who was the youngest Mayoress ever of a London borough, at the age of 21, was also a pupil at the Borough, in the day trade dressmaking school. Much later, in the 1950s, my father returned to the Borough Polytechnic, at the invitation of Dr Rose, as a part-time lecturer in mathematics himself, a matter which for him was a source of great pride. My mother, Kathleen, attended West Square School, Southwark, where for a whole year she had to sit next to a pudgy little boy called George Brown, who went on to become the Foreign Secretary. I have judged that her accounts of that experience and the great majority of her rich fund of George Brown stories which she was wont to tell, are sadly inappropriate for this evening’s occasion.

My own close connections with Borough Road College have been as an external examiner, as a participant in many conferences and events held there, and through research. Indeed, even my own pedagogical hero in the field of history of education, Joseph Payne, though born in Bury St. Edmunds in 1808, obtained his first real teaching post in Southwark in 1827 at Rodney House Academy, a private school for boys, in Rodney Buildings at the west end of the New Kent Rd, but a short distance away from the Borough Road institution.

This lecture, which is entitled ‘Joseph Lancaster and Improvements in Education’, is divided into six parts: Foundations; Schools and Pedagogy; Teacher Training; International Dimensions; Hitchin; and Conclusions.

Foundations

Joseph Lancaster was born on 25th November 1778 in Kent Street, Southwark. His father, Richard, served in the army and also developed a cane sieve business, which was based on a small shop kept by his wife, Sarah, by St George's Fields. In 1784 at the age of 42 Richard Lancaster retired from the army with an enhanced pension. Joseph, his youngest son, was then six years of age. Kent Street, off the Borough High Street, was not a very salubrious environment, and the large family lived in considerable poverty.

The young Joseph had a smattering of schooling - at dame schools where he learnt to read, and at a school run by a former soldier. At about the age of 12 he began working full time in his father's business. By that time the young Joseph had become a Quaker, a development which appears to have occurred as the result of his witnessing a Quaker funeral. Curiously enough, Richard Lancaster had been born a Quaker, but had not remained committed, and had not had his children brought up as Friends.
With the money that his father gave him for working in the business, Joseph indulged his great passion for reading, and soon began buying and selling books. He also tried to write for publication: newspaper paragraphs, anecdotes, pamphlets. Unfortunately, none was published. By the age of 16 the young Joseph had become an assistant to a local teacher, an intelligent, able man who ran a common day school and relied upon the fees which poor parents paid, to make a living. Joseph saw the very great fluctuations in attendance caused by straightened circumstances, bad weather, illness and other factors. On some days there were hardly any pupils and individual attention could be given; on others there were so many that the master and Joseph could barely cope.

Joseph Lancaster learnt two things from this experience. The first was, that he wanted to be a teacher; the second, that some better means of organizing classrooms and pedagogy were required.

Lancaster followed this experience with a post as an assistant teacher at a boarding school for the children of Friends at Colne, in Essex. Here, he adopted the simple dress and particular language forms of the Quakers. By 1797 he was back in Southwark, working in his father's business and continuing with his own buying and selling of books.

At the end of that year, Joseph asked his father if he could open a school in one of the rooms in the family house. On January 1st 1798, the 19 year old opened his school with two pupils. He made the desks and forms himself, had bills printed and distributed, and charged his first pupils 4d per week.

Children came in ever increasing numbers. He moved from the room into one of his father's workrooms and then into a large workshop in Borough Road. By 1799 his school had some 130 pupils and was open between six and eight hours per day. One reason for this increase was that Lancaster had become so convinced of the value of schooling for the children of the neighbourhood that he often waived the fees altogether. In order to make up the deficit he came to rely on donations from benevolent supporters.

When, in the autumn of 1799, he moved to yet another location - a large building just off the Borough Road - which came to him free of all rent and taxes and with a grant of land, a board was fixed over the door which read

   All that will, may send their children, and have them educated freely: and those that do not wish to have education for nothing, may pay for it if they please.

The winters of 1799 and 1800 were hard. The school roll slumped to as low as 30. Lancaster saw that the most urgent need was for food and warm clothing for his pupils. So he set out to raise money - from Quakers, from others, from anyone who would listen to the eloquent story that he had to tell. In November 1800, for example, he had handbills printed declaring that he intended to serve at least 25 pupils with a hot meal four times a week for three months. There were new groups of recruits, including the children of debtors in the King's Bench prison. Lancaster lived in the
school building with a housekeeper who looked after him. Some of the older boys came to live there too.

Joseph Lancaster was not one to share; he had no teaching assistants. But he did, as was customary at the time, employ some of his older boys as monitors. This process was facilitated by the fact that some of them stayed late after school or even lodged in the house with him.

By 1800, it had become apparent to him that were he able to raise a reasonable sum of money, he could educate large numbers of children at a very minimal cost by the training and employment of monitors. He therefore not only advertised reading, writing and arithmetic for 6d per week, but also established a subscription list asking subscribers to contribute a minimum of one guinea per year. Most of the early subscribers came from the Society of Friends, but prominent philanthropists soon came to his aid, including such famous names as Zachary Macaulay, Henry Thornton and William Wilberforce.

By 1805 the list of subscribers for a fund which now not merely provided for schooling, but also for a range of other purposes, including, building, printing, slate manufacture, the training of teachers etc, included archbishops, bishops and clergy of the Anglican Church, and lay members of both houses of Parliament.

In August 1805, came the crowning glory when Lancaster was commanded to attend upon the King. George III not only personally agreed to subscribe £100 annually, but also commanded Queen Charlotte to subscribe £50 and the five princesses £25 each.

This was, in many ways, to be the high point of Lancaster's professional career. His personal defects - in terms of vanity, bouts of depression, inability to manage money, and inappropriate behaviour towards some of his apprentices - made him unfit to lead the movement which he had founded. Accordingly, the cause of the improvement of education which Joseph Lancaster alone had begun, was placed on a firmer foundation by the Royal Lancasterian Society of 1808 which in 1814 became the British and Foreign School Society.

**Schools and Pedagogy**

Joseph Lancaster contributed the inspiration and the example which led to the work of the Royal Lancasterian and British and Foreign School Societies. But he also contributed something else - a statement of his organizational and pedagogical principles, in a slim volume first published in 1803 and entitled *Improvements in Education*. This is a very important work, indeed, in the history of education and is incorporated in the title of this lecture. A special bicentenary reproduction of the first edition has been produced and is on sale for the very reasonable price of £5. Advertisements for the work promised improved teaching methods and results at greatly reduced costs.
The Improvements is divided into three parts. The first part provides a description of the current state of schools. In this section Lancaster identified six problems which beset the schools of his own day. These were

- Improper and immoral persons having youth under their care
- The poverty often distinguishing many teachers of this class
- The uncertainty (for parents) ... as to the character of the teacher they send their children to
- The bad accommodation common school rooms afford to the poor children who attend them
- The almost total want of system, and a proper stimulus to action in the minds of teachers and scholars
- The diversity of teaching methods used in different schools.

The second part advocates and develops the theme of a 'Formation of a Society for improving the State and facilitating the Means of Education among the industrious Classes of the Community'.

The third part provides

> Some Account of the Rise and Progress of an Institution for improving the Plan, and facilitating the Means, of attaining primary Education amongst the industrious Classes of the Community, established in the Borough Road, Southwark; wherein near Three Hundred Children are educated, and trained to habits conducive to the Welfare of Society.

Lancaster was not expounding an untried theory. His remarks here represented a basic description of what he had been doing in Southwark for the last five years. The main elements of the system were two fold.

1. Order, Discipline and Progress

- All children working at the same time - not one reading to the teacher while the others waited their turn
- The use of older boys as monitors. Lancaster wrote: 'My school is attended by near three hundred scholars. The whole system of tuition is almost entirely conducted by boys.'
- The monitors who ruled the books, cut the pens, kept good order in the class and made daily, weekly and monthly reports of attendance and progress
- The teacher's desk stood on a slightly raised dais. He instructed the monitors, and kept an eye over the whole
- The boys in the first class sat nearest to the teacher
- They sat at a flat table which incorporated a sand tray in which they could make their letter. Then they progressed to slates
- The desks faced the master, but reading stations were established around the walls. They stood with their feet placed on the semi-circular marks in order of merit. Reading boards were affixed to the walls with letters and words in large type.
2. The use of Emulation and Rewards

- Systems of promotion from class to class once a lesson was learned
- Leather merit tickets which could be suspended by a small piece of ribbon from the button of the wearer's coat
- Paper tickets for good work: three No 1 tickets earned a half penny prize; 12 No 5 tickets earned a sixpenny prize
- The prizes, consisting of bats, balls, tops, kites etc. were slung in a net above the schoolroom.

One reason for the success of the Improvements was the very humane, sensitive, modest and generous temper of the work. These are not characteristics which would be associated with Lancaster in later life, and it is therefore important to emphasize their contribution here.

In his introduction to the work, Lancaster regretted the sectarian spirit that had too often attended attempts to advance education, and declared instead:

That education, as respects those who are unprovided with it, ought to become a national concern...

A national evil requires a national remedy....let your minds expand free from every narrow principle, and let the public good become the sole object of your united Christian efforts...

I cannot close this introduction, without calling the public attention to a distinct and almost friendless part of the community. I mean the poor children who are in parish workhouses, who are often friendless and immured in those receptacles of poverty, depression, and vice; without education and without hope; children, for whom it may be said, the sun never shines; to whom curses and ill treatment are too often substitutes for parental families or maternal care.

What can be more agreeable, more amiable, or pleasing, than a large school of orderly and docile youth, whose minds are daily expanding by their own efforts, under a master's paternal care?

It is difficult to speak or write with becoming moderation or propriety, on topics to which we are biased by prejudice, interest, or even principle ... I wish to write with becoming diffidence, and not intentionally to express myself more positively than facts warrant me in doing.

I ought not to close my account, without acknowledging the obligation I lie under to Dr. Bell... He published a tract, in 1798, entitled "An Experiment on Education..."... From this publication I have adopted several useful hints.
Teacher Training

The early success of Lancaster's school meant that he needed assistance in controlling and in teaching the children. But he had neither the wherewithal nor the inclination to appoint assistant teachers - instead he relied upon some of the older children - to whom he applied the term 'monitors' - to assist him in the teaching.

As his enterprise expanded - a girls' school under the control of his sister Mary, a slate factory and a printing office - he began to think of his older monitors - his lads as he called them - not only as monitors within his own school - but also as missionaries for his cause - young men who could go out and found other schools around the country based on Lancasterian principles. We know the names of some of these early monitors, apprentices, lads or masters from the register of masters of 1804. These included Thomas Harrod who looked after the Borough Road School during Lancaster's frequent absences, John Veevers who became master in charge of a monitorial school in Birmingham, and John Pickton who, in 1811, succeeded Harrod as superintendent of the Borough Road establishment - both the school and the training element.

One of the earliest of the female monitors was Ann Springman who served at the Borough Road girls school and, after periods as mistress in charge of monitorial schools in Birmingham and Chichester, returned to Southwark to superintend the girls’ school and to oversee the female training department. Springman, who married another of the early apprentices, Kenneth Macrae, remained in charge of the female training department until 1861, when it was moved to Stockwell.

By 1808, following the formation of the committee of trustees by William Allen, William Corston and Joseph Fox, the training was put on a more systematic basis. Originally the monitors were chosen from amongst the Borough Road pupils, but the principle of sending young men to Borough Road, to lodge there and learn the system for a period of a couple of months or so, soon developed. The Duke of Kent sent some soldiers, with a view to their establishing regimental monitorial schools. In 1812 the Protestant Kildare Place Society of Dublin sent a dozen youths over for training. Black students came from West Africa and from the West Indies. There were many problems, not least about the financing of the students who were supposed to be admitted and trained at the expense of the Society. The early experiences also showed that not all of those who came were suited by temperament or ability to be schoolteachers.

In 1817, following another massive fundraising exercise in which William Allen and Joseph Fox were to the fore, a new building was constructed in Borough Road. This was large enough to accommodate a training establishment and 500 boys and 300 girls and was opened by the Duke of Sussex in 1817 and enlarged in 1834.
Given the frequent comings and goings and the short periods of training it is difficult to be precise about numbers of teachers trained, but a special report published in 1842 gives the totals trained - both men and women as 44 in 1818, 87 in 1828, 183 in 1838 and 207 in 1840.

One reason for the increasing success of the training dimension was the work of Henry Dunn, appointed secretary to the BFSS in 1830. Dunn had learned the system at Borough Road, taught briefly in Guatemala, 1827-8, then returned to Borough Road to succeed Pickton as its master, and then became secretary. Dunn's annual reports stressed the importance of the training work, and also stressed the importance of recruiting good candidates. It was no use simply recruiting those who had failed in previous occupations, especially those who had failed as teachers. In this endeavour he was supported by John Crossley who served as head of the training department and school from 1830. The discipline which Crossley and Dunn established within the training school in the 1830s and 1840s is indicated by the Borough Road students’ timetable as reported to the Select Committee on Education of 1834.

5am. Rise and spend an hour in private study

7am. Bible class

9am to 12 noon. Employed as monitors in the school

2pm to 5pm. Employed as monitors in the school

5pm to 7pm. Instruction in arithmetic etc, and particularly in subjects in which they are deficient

8pm to 10pm. Preparing exercises for the following day
Dunn said 'Our object is to keep them incessantly employed from five in the morning until nine or ten at night.' This was justified on the ground of the very short length of training, 3-6 months. Students were not allowed to leave the building without permission and males were not to talk with the female students or servants. All were required to attend church twice on Sundays. In 1842 another new building was opened, by Lord John Russell. This had accommodation for 45 male and 30 female students, and had a lecture theatre, dining room, classrooms for the students, larger school rooms for pupils, class teaching galleries and offices for the BFSS and its secretary.

When, in 1845, the College received its first government annual maintenance grant of £700, James Cornwell, who had been a tutor for the male students since 1835, was given the title of Principal. The regime was still fierce, but the new building made possible a development which featured strongly in the history of Borough road - the criticism lesson. A student would give a lesson to about 100 pupils, and the other students would observe, make notes, and subsequently critique the lesson, with the final critique of the lesson and of the critiques coming from the tutor. These lessons formed one part of the course - other key elements included gaining a sound knowledge of the information in the textbooks produced by Dunn, Cornwell and Crossley. These included some large and dry volumes. For example Cornwell's Geography text book was a solid tome of 338 pages crammed full of facts which the students were required to learn by heart. Cornwell also gave a daily lecture on pedagogy - a course of 60 lectures which lasted over three months and attended by all students - with the men students sitting at the front and the women at the back.

In 1846 the situation at Borough Road, as in other colleges, was transformed by the introduction of the pupil-teacher system, Queen's scholarships and teachers' certificates. The five years of pupil teachership meant that students would arrive at the training college at the age of 18 or greater with five years of instruction in basic information and five years of teaching experience under their belts. Queen's scholarships meant that they would be financed throughout their training at colleges which would also be in receipt of government grants. Upon completion of their training, which would be for a minimum of one year and might even extend to three, the certificated teacher would be entitled to a government augmentation of salary, and for those who retired after 15 or more years of service a state pension scheme.

In the short term these changes made for a considerable improvement as regards the training of teachers. But they also marked the final demise or at least the institutionalised re-drawing of the monitorial system which Lancaster had devised. Now the courses at Borough Road would have to come under close governmental supervision and lead, like those of every other college in the land, to the teacher's certificate. The most tangible indication of these changes was that pupil teachers were apprenticed in the schools at Borough Road - in 1848 12 to the boys' school and eight to the girls' school. To accommodate this, the large classrooms were partitioned off to allow smaller class teaching to take place.

By 1860 the short courses which had been the mainstay of the College's activity for so many years had disappeared. All students were now training for at least one year, and some for two. These substantial changes caused considerable pressure upon space, and the increasing difficulties of keeping male and female students apart - holes were
being bored through the wooden partitions and notes passed between them - led to the establishment of a new women's training college at Stockwell, opened in 1861, once again by Lord John Russell. A new girls' and infant practice school was also opened there, but the Borough Road school continued to take girls as pupils for some years.

This increase in accommodation, however, came at an unfortunate time. The introduction of the Revised Code from 1862, had a substantial effect upon the training process. Money dried up - both for pupil teachers, Queen's scholarships, grants to training colleges and augmentation of salaries. Payment by results now dominated the system. In 1867, although there was accommodation for 100 male students at Borough road, there were only 61 in residence. Relaxation of the regulations in 1867, coupled with the Elementary Education Act of 1870 and the establishment of School Boards and their schools, however, reversed the situation. By 1871 numbers in training had risen to 105 and plans were under way to move the girls school out of the College and to build an extra storey on the existing building.

In the latter years of the nineteenth century two developments may be taken to characterize the direction in which Borough Road was moving. The first was the appointment of P.A.Barnett, an Oxford graduate, as principal in 1888, a man barely 30 years of age. Barnett, though principal for a mere four years, marked a considerable change of ethos. A man of great distinction as a scholar and administrator, whose multiplicity of talents included translating Robinson Crusoe into Latin, he admired the public school values of manliness and leadership, and had no time for the mean and demeaning elementary tradition.

The second was the move from Southwark. The Borough Road site in Southwark, from which Joseph Lancaster had led his boys in jaunty progress through St. George's Fields and out into the countryside, was now an urban slum, and Kell Street which ran alongside the College was the location of several vendors of cats' meat.

In 1889 the LCC, looking for space for its new polytechnics, offered to purchase the lease of the Borough road site and in the following year the College moved to the buildings of the International College built in the 1860s at Spring Grove in Isleworth. The boys' school was closed, the BFSS offices were moved to Temple Chambers, and 139 students and tutors moved into the new premises which were surrounded by the playing fields upon which Borough Road's sporting prowess was to be built. Academic standards also improved dramatically and by 1893 one third of the students were preparing for a university examination.

It is not possible to follow the rest of the story in great detail. Following the series of amalgamations consequent upon the great changes of the 1960s and 1970s, Borough Road was subsumed into the West London Institute and is now part of Brunel University, its students, male and female, studying for degrees and postgraduate qualifications.

Although Borough Road is not at present a separate institution, its place in the history of the training and education of teachers is secure. Borough Road was the first of the modern training colleges in England, and it stemmed from the training of monitors and assistants which began almost from the first, under Joseph Lancaster's personal direction at the Borough Road School.
International Dimensions

The British and Foreign Society was aptly named. Much of its work, indeed, was carried on outside of the United Kingdom. Indeed, almost from the beginning Lancaster, and some of his most ardent supporters, including William Allen, had international aspirations. Just as the school founded by Pestalozzi at Yverdon on the Lake of Geneva, Borough Road attracted visitors from around the world. For example, in 1810 visitors included Simon Bolivar, who was to become the Liberator of South America from the Spaniards. In 1812, the Tsar of Russia, Alexander I, was shown round by William Allen. Others, who had heard of the work, wrote for more details. One such was Thomas Eddy from the USA, who corresponded with Lancaster in 1804, and founded the Free School Society in New York City in the following year.

Lancaster travelled throughout the British Isles extolling the virtues of his system, for example, to Scotland in 1804 to visit Robert Owen and his establishment at New Lanark; to Waterford and Dublin in Ireland in 1806; to Swansea and Carmarthen in Wales in 1807. In 1811-1812 Lancaster, accompanied as usual by a group of his lads, undertook a substantial tour in Ireland, lecturing, fundraising, encouraging the foundation of new schools according to his pedagogic principles.

As ever, Lancaster was carried away by his own enthusiasm, writing from Cork to William Allen that

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\text{Schools are springing up like shamrock ... national education will probably be paramount in Ireland as a result of this journey.}
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He then moved on to Scotland, writing in April 1812 to Allen:

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\text{I shall come home to propose the union of the three kingdoms in education.}
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By 1812 there were some 137 known Lancasterian schools across the United Kingdom, with more than half of the pupils from Anglican families.

In June 1818, Joseph Lancaster, accompanied by his wife, Elizabeth, 12 year old daughter, Betsy, and one of his young teachers, Richard Jones, set sail for America, arriving in New York on 24th August 1818. He was befriended by the Governor, De Witt Clinton, and toured the state in style, giving lectures and raising funds. By October he was in Philadelphia, where Model schools were to be opened on Lancasterian principles, and early in 1819 he moved on to Washington, where he was received by the President and permitted to lecture in the hall of Congress. Elizabeth Lancaster died in Baltimore in December 1820.

In 1824 Betsy married Richard Jones and a month later, in May 1824, Lancaster, Jones and Betsy took ship for the new republic of Colombia. There in Caracas, they took over the running of a Lancasterian school. In 1825, Jones and Betsy moved away to set up a new Lancasterian school in Mexico City. Two years later, Joseph, himself, returned to the United States.
In the autumn of 1827 he established a school in Trenton, New Jersey; but by October 1829 had abandoned that in favour of another new school in Montreal in Canada. In 1834 Joseph was back in New York, and in the following year running a school in Philadelphia. By 1838 the Philadelphia Board of Control decided that Joseph Lancaster should be allowed to visit and inspect the city's schools, and he published an open letter entitled On Teachers in the Public Schools in Philadelphia. But on 22nd October 1838, on a visit to New York he was knocked down and severely injured by a horse drawn vehicle. He died the next day, a month short of his 60th birthday, and was buried in the Friends' burial ground in Houston Street.

The last 20 years of Lancaster's life, therefore, were spent in the New World. But it would be wrong to argue that his personal commitment in these later years added greatly to the spread of Lancasterian schools. That spread had already gone before him. The internationalization of Lancaster's work depended to a considerable extent upon Lancaster's writings, and upon his example and fame. But it also depended upon the very assiduous world-wide public relations campaign of the British and Foreign School Society. Members of the Society travelled within Europe to advance the cause - for example, in Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece, Russia and Sweden. Indeed, almost every European country tried the system at one time or another.

Studies of European countries where the system was virtually universal can be found in the work of Hollingsworth (1966) on Lancasterian schools in Russia, Stefan Hopmann (1990) on Denmark, Schleswig and Holstein, and Daniel Lindmark (2004) on Sweden. Lindmark has recently shown how in Sweden, adoption of the Lancasterian system and Lancasterian pedagogy helped, initially at least, to legitimise the old ecclesiastical curriculum. Not until the Royal Letter of 22nd April 1864 were Lancasterian pedagogical methods in Sweden abandoned in favour of "immediate" instruction through teachers.

The British system, indeed, spread not only throughout Europe, but throughout the world and was used in several countries in Africa - for example Cameroon, Gambia, Gold Coast, Mauritius and Sierra Leone. In Asia schools were established in Ceylon, China, India, Hong Kong and Siam. British schools were also established in several parts of Australia and Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania). In North America there were British schools within all the cities and large towns of Canada and New England. In 1891, for example, J.P.Gordy remarked of the situation in the USA:

*I allude to the organisation of schools on the Lancasterian or monitorial plan. - For many years it was almost universally adopted in the large cities - for example in New York, Albany, Hartford, New Haven, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington.*

There are many North American studies of Lancaster and of his work - both local and general. For example, Charles Ellis wrote a University of Philadelphia thesis on 'Lancasterian schools in Philadelphia', while Edward Wall takes a broader canvas in his Columbia University thesis entitled simply 'Joseph Lancaster and the origins of the British and Foreign School Society'.

In South and Central America the system was widely used - in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela and in the West Indies. In
Chile, indeed, it was used as the state system of education. Once again, there are innumerable Latin American studies of Lancaster's work, including the monumental two-volume work of Edgar Vaughan, *Joseph Lancaster en Caracas*. The combination of Lancaster's original action and fame, coupled with the Society's zeal and organizational skill allowed Lancaster, himself, in 1826 in Caracas to organize his pupils there to take part in a procession carrying the flags of the no fewer than 21 nations that had by then adopted the Lancasterian system.

**Hitchin**

As many in this audience will know, Hitchin in Hertfordshire is the site of a most important and exciting project - the Hitchin British Schools Trust (now known as the British Schools Museum, Hitchin). When history of education was taught here to PGCE students, Margaret Bryant, Dennis Dean and I would take students to Hitchin, where Jill Grey would cycle down with boxes of books to the British Schools site and we would attempt to re-live something of the Lancasterian experience. Joseph Lancaster visited Hitchin in 1808. Two years later, a Hitchin lawyer, William Wilshere, inspired by Lancaster's visit, founded a Boys' School which could take 150 pupils.

In 1837 the British and Foreign School Society made a grant of £175 towards the erection of a new schoolroom capable of taking 300 pupils, which matched a similar grant from the government. That schoolroom still stands and is indeed believed to be the only surviving example of a Lancasterian schoolroom in the whole world. A now rare gallery classroom was built in 1853. Both of these buildings are now listed Grade 2 and are used for demonstration lessons in the style of the 1880s for school and adult parties.

The building which was the girls’ and infants’ school is in use as a café, a museum of everyday life in Victorian times and for temporary exhibitions. Jill Grey collected some 34,000 items including rare children’s books over some 25 years and her collection is housed on the upper floor of this building. Children can play with hoops and tops in the playground and the Master’s house has been furnished in the style of 1880 as it might well have looked in the long reign of William Fitch, headmaster throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.
The following photographs show the Monitorial Schoolroom and the Gallery Classroom.

The Monitorial Schoolroom

The Gallery Classroom

Conclusion

And so, this year, we celebrate the bicentenary of the foundation in 1798 of what came to be known as Borough Road, and particularly associate with it the Improvements in Education, published in 1803. In his introduction to the reprint of the work in 1973, Francesco Cordosa argued that Lancaster contributed fundamental improvements to six dimensions of education. These were the following:
• development of school work as an active social process and progress
• training of teachers
• careful, flexible, classification of children
• development of classroom construction and design
• study of classroom management and the mechanics of instruction
• development of classroom routines.

Many other dimensions could be added ranging from the use of praise instead of blame, reward instead of punishment, even to added value for money. I shall not seek to construct a definitive list; each of us will have his or her own perception of the importance and dimensions of this bicentenary. But it is clear, as I hope that I have been able to demonstrate this evening, that it is right and proper that we celebrate the work of Joseph Lancaster and the improvements which he began.

We recognize today that Joseph Lancaster was indeed, in the words of Joyce Taylor (1996), "The Poor Child's Friend" and, in the words of Mora Dickson (1986), a "Teacher Extraordinary". We acknowledge the openness of Lancaster - to children of all creeds and backgrounds, and the universality of his approach, which made it possible for Lancasterian schools and methods to spread, literally, throughout the world. And we commend the work of those who have sought, and continue to seek, to preserve and convey to later generations that sense of purpose and improvement.

These include past and present officers of the British and Foreign School Society. They include those who have maintained the work of the archive centre at the West London Institute - George Bartle, Bryan Seagrove, Gillian Collins, Brian York. And it also includes all those of the Hitchin British Schools Trust, currently led by Robert Dimsdale, who have laboured so assiduously to recreate and restore a Lancasterian experience at Hitchin, where a worthy home may also be found for the outstanding collection accumulated over many years by the late Jill Grey.

It has been my great privilege this evening, to have had the opportunity of contributing to this bicentenary event. I thank the organizers for their invitation, and I thank you for your attendance and attention.
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