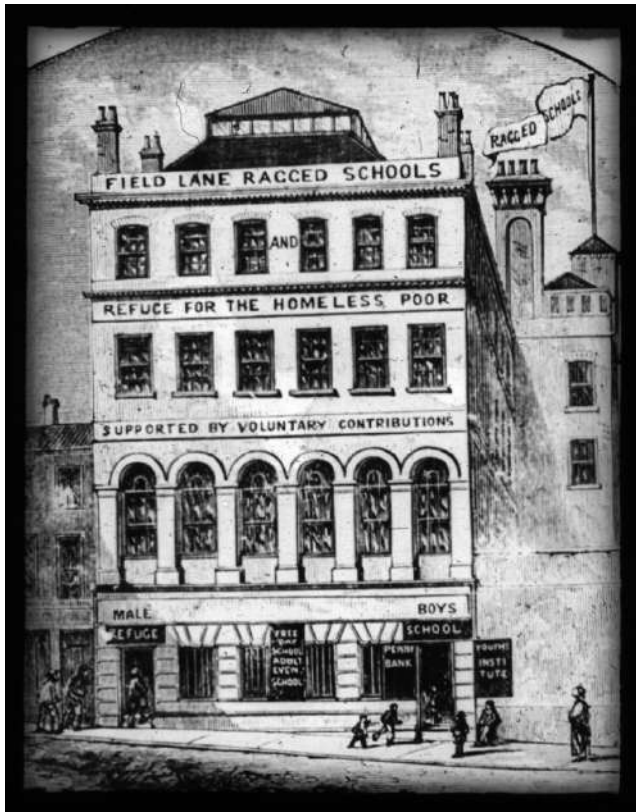


# The Field Lane Story





## FOREWORD

More than fifty years have passed since the first edition of "The Field Lane Story" was published. It was a modest attempt to outline the development of Field Lane from its humble beginnings in 1841. This updated version contains some additional details from the past and brings the story up to date.

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

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

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

## I. THE BEGINNING

In the Autumn of 1841 Andrew Provan, the newly appointed London City Missionary to the Field Lane District of Central London, walked the streets of his area with a heavy heart. The district, of which Field Lane, West Street and Saffron Hill formed the main thoroughfares, was a notorious one and had been long known as a criminal quarter. Charles Dickens was only portraying reality when in "Oliver Twist" he set Fagin's House on the corner of Field Lane, and the fictional Bill Sykes, Charlie Bates, Artful Dodger and their associates had many counterparts in the life of that part of London in those days. Small wonder, therefore, when Andrew Provan was dismayed as, taking care to avoid the dirt and filth which littered the pavements, he surveyed dilapidated buildings – dark, insanitary, pest-ridden – which housed the miserable homes of London's poor. There were dismal attic rooms which accommodated two, three and sometimes even four families; and lodging houses where as many as thirty men, women and children crowded into one foul, unventilated room for a night's sleep. He saw men and women poorly clothed, degraded and dirty, temporarily forgetting their misery in the cheap intoxication offered by the gin shops. He braved the hostile stares of bystanders as he nosed into narrow courts and alleys, the haunts of pickpockets, prostitutes, and other criminal classes;



*Field Lane about 1841*

places into which the police only dared to venture in daylight and in pairs. But above all he saw the children – neglected, half-naked, hungry – led into crime and vice by the struggle to survive.

Andrew Provan quickly realised that even if the means of education had existed in the district, these children were far too dirty and ragged to enter any ordinary school. Feeling that something should be done to bring a little learning to them he procured the use of a small back room in Caroline Court. There, on the afternoon of Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1841, he held the first session of the Field Lane Sabbath School. Forty-five boys and girls of various ages crowded into that room and, as there was no furniture, sat on the floor and listened to his teaching.

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

After a few weeks in Caroline Court, the school was moved to a narrow dirty and secluded lane known as White’s Yard, Saffron Hill. Here, Andrew Provan was assisted by a few friends. Unfortunately, their efforts to educate raised the suspicion and hostility of many of the people they sought to help and they were subjected to every sort of insult and petty persecution. The school was moved again, this time to a room on the first floor of the same house, in

the hope of avoiding some of these annoyances but unfortunately it proved little better.

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

"Such scenes lasted more or less for several months until the following circumstance brought matters to a crisis. The school at this time was open on Tuesday evenings for females, and Thursday for males. One Tuesday evening, being at the school prior to the arrival of the superintendent, I was engaged in admitting the young women and girls, when I was surprised by a woman coming hastily into the passage of the house, and beckoning me to close the door. As soon as she had recovered her breath she informed me that she had overheard a number of young men state that they intended coming to the school that evening to have a lark,

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

Despite such experiences the teachers persisted and by June 1842 Andrew Provan had a staff of seven voluntary teachers working under his guidance. They formed a Committee of Management, and developed plans for the future.

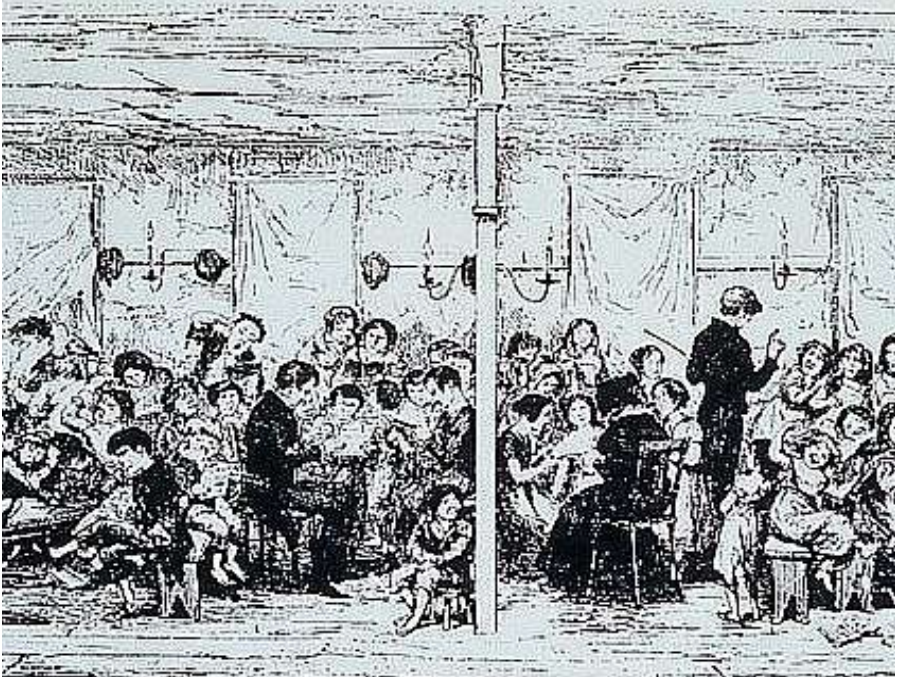
Andrew Provan was a Scotsman and so it is not surprising that in seeking to recruit teachers he had turned to the Presbyterian Churches in London. In September 1842, the Field Lane School joined the "Sabbath School Union in connection with the Scotch

churches in London". However, this association lasted for less than two years because the Union was dissolved with the intention of re-forming as a Presbyterian Sabbath School Union. The Field Lane teachers had already decided that "their work could best be established if they acted on the broad principles of Christianity without reference to sect or party" and they found this invitation to link themselves with a denominational association unacceptable. Nevertheless, the lessons of such co-operation were not wasted. It is probable that this experience fired the imagination of Mr Starey, at this time the Treasurer of the Field Lane School, for within a few weeks he had gathered together staff from other schools and formed The Ragged School Union of which he became the first Secretary. The Ragged School Union (which later become known as the Shaftesbury Society and in 2007 merged with John Grooms to form the charity Livability) was to play a considerable part in the early growth and development of the whole Ragged School movement.

The Field Lane School had celebrated its first anniversary by moving to new accommodation – a front room at 65 West Street, West Smithfield, which had been secured at a rental of 3/- a week. Shortly afterwards two smaller back rooms were added. Here, by the end of the year, the school activities had grown into a Sunday morning class with an attendance of fifteen children, a Sunday afternoon class of between forty and sixty children and a Thursday evening class with a similar attendance. The only equipment used by the teachers, apart from six chairs and a few desks, were six New Testaments, thirty-six reading books, and six hymn books.

During the early days the school was maintained almost entirely by contributions from the teachers, but the growth of their work placed a heavy strain upon their limited resources. In February 1843 the Committee decided that they needed to seek financial help and they inserted an appeal in the columns of "The Times". Little did they realise what the result of this venture would be. The advertisement caught the eye of Lord Ashley (subsequently





*An impression of Field Lane School about 1843*

the Seventh Earl of Shaftsbury), who immediately visited the school and for the rest of his life was actively associated with it. "I never read an advertisement with greater pleasure," wrote Lord Shaftsbury. "It answered exactly what I had been looking and hoping for. I could not regard it as other than a direct answer to my fervent prayer." It was not long before he was invited to serve as President of the School, an office which he held until his death in 1885.

Charles Dickens, always interested in social improvement, has left a graphic description of the school at this time. "I found my first ragged school in an obscene place called West Street, Saffron Hill, pitifully struggling for life under every disadvantage. It had no means; it had no suitable rooms; it derived no power or protection from being recognized by any authority; it attracted within its

walls a fluctuating swarm of faces – young in years, but youthful in nothing else – that scowled hope out of countenance. It was held in a low-roofed den, in a sickening atmosphere, in the midst of taint and dirt and pestilence; with all the deadly sins let loose, howling and shrieking at the doors. Zeal did not supply the place of method and training; the teachers knew little of their office; the pupils, with an evil sharpness, found them out, got the better of them, derided them, made blasphemous answers to Scriptural questions, sang, fought, danced, robbed each other, seemed possessed by a legion of devils. The place was stormed and carried over and over again; the lights were blown out, the books strewn to the gutters, and the female scholars carried off triumphantly to their old wickedness. With no strength but its purpose, the School stood it all out and made its way. Some two years since I found it quiet and orderly, full, lighted with gas, well white-washed, numerous attended and thoroughly established.”

## II. SOMETHING MORE MUST BE DONE

The progress of the Field Lane Sabbath School – small though it might seem – posed its own problems. It was of little value to teach these rough youngsters the basis of the Christian faith unless they could also learn to read the Bible for themselves. If something more was to be done then the school needed to do it as no one else was prepared to help – and certainly not the Government (The National Budget in 1845 totalled £55,000,000. Grants to voluntary schools – compulsory state education was still twenty-five years away – totalled £40,000. In the same year £70,000 was allocated for the up-keep of the Royal stables!). Yet every step forward meant an increased strain on the Committee’s meagre resources of cash and personnel. Every advance was a real venture of faith taken in trepidation and only after prolonged prayer.

New activities grew as willing volunteers stepped forward. Towards the end of 1843 two lady teachers offered to open the school on two afternoons a week to teach girls writing and “other useful

matters". About the same time washing facilities were provided, a gift from Miss Burdett Coutts. A Dorcas Society was formed to provide and repair suitable garments for the most ragged of the pupils. A Sewing Class was started and a Clothing Fund introduced. In return for modest contributions the children were able to purchase clothing – a pinafore for 2d., for example, and a frock for 9d. In 1845 a Sunday evening class was started. Instructions in reading and writing were given on weekday evenings. But in the view of the teachers the greatest need was a free day school. "When I consider the destitute, neglected and ignorant state of these children when they first came to the school," wrote one of the teachers towards the end of 1846, "and also the pernicious influence to which they are subjected the moment they leave to go to their miserable homes, I feel very thankful to Almighty God for what has already been done for them, but I feel assured that if they could be offered instruction during the day much greater results would, with the blessing of God, be speedily seen. I therefore humbly beseech the Lord to bless the efforts that are being made in His Name for the establishment of a Free Day School in this destitute and long-neglected district."

This prayer was answered when, early in 1847, the Field Lane Free School was opened under the leadership of Miss Stevens, the first salaried member of staff, who was appointed for an initial period of six months at a salary of £30 per annum. The School was opened from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon and from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The average attendance was forty: within a year, this had grown to seventy. Shortly after this the name Field Lane Ragged School was adopted, largely on the advice of Lord Ashley. "Keep to the gutter", was his frequent challenge; for the school was there to teach children who were too poor to obtain any education elsewhere; boys and girls who, but for the School, would receive no teaching whatsoever. The level of education offered was not high by present day standards and the curriculum was limited – reading, writing, spelling, grammar, geography, arithmetic, occasional lessons on other matters of interest and a Bible lesson every day.

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

In addition to the Day School, other activities were being explored. Six years after the small beginnings in Caroline Court, the regular meetings held included: Monday evening – Parents' Meeting;



*One of the Ragged School scholars*

Tuesday evening - Writing Class for Boys; Wednesday evening – Girls' Sewing Class; Thursday evening – Girls' Reading Class; Friday evening – Boys' Reading Class; Sunday – Bible Schools in the morning, afternoon and evening. Plans were also developed to train some of the boys in a trade "to keep them from picking and stealing now and enabling them at some future time to earn a respectable living."

By this time the school had outgrown its accommodation and larger premises were sought. A large room on the corner of West Street was taken at a rent of £35 a year,

towards which the Ragged School Union promised an annual grant of £15. The new school-room could accommodate four hundred children.

### III. WIDENING OPPORTUNITIES

The opening of the day school and the move to larger premises soon revealed further problems. The difficulty of finding employment was a significant one and much effort went into the task of obtaining work for those who had left lives of petty crime. In 1850 tailoring and shoemaking classes for boys were started. In 1851, at the time of the Great Exhibition, the school co-operated with other Ragged Schools in forming the Ragged Schools Shoe-Black Society. Boys enrolled in the Shoe-Black Brigade earned £500 by cleaning 101,000 pairs of shoes during the period that the Exhibition was open.

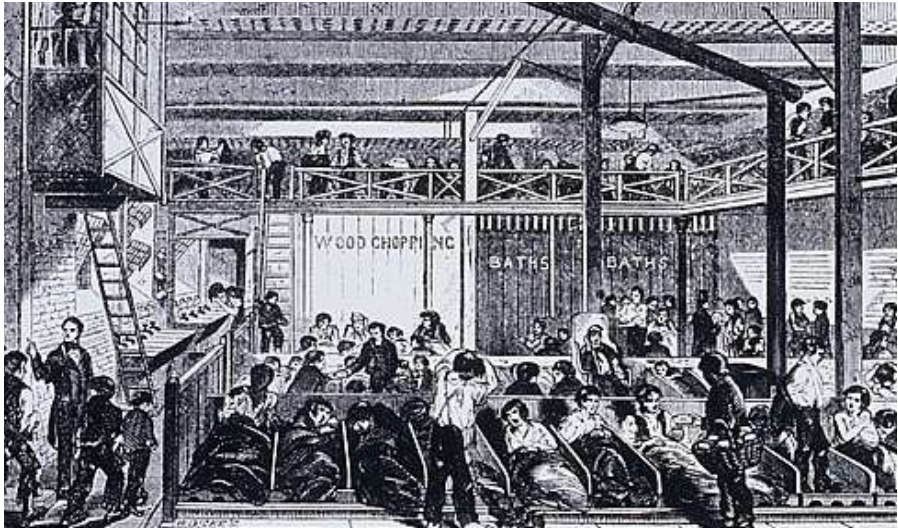
Efforts were also made to assist poor mothers by providing suitable clothing and bedding for babies along with extra food. It was not unusual for babies to be born in damp, unheated rooms already crowded with children, the mother receiving no medical assistance. The help given by the Maternal Society, as this branch of work became known, was invaluable and saved the lives of many mothers and their babies.

One constant challenge was the need to do something for the homeless and destitute men and boys. Thanks to the generosity of Miss Portal part of the



*One of the homes*

premises was converted into a dormitory and on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1851, the Field Lane Night Refuge was opened into which these men and boys could be admitted. There was sleeping accommodation



*The Field Lane Male Refuge*

for one hundred and this was later increased to one hundred and thirty. A similar refuge for destitute women and girls was opened on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1857 in nearby Hatton Yard, off Hatton Garden.

About this time Field Lane's activities came to the attention of a Mr Nicholas Wood. To the Committee's surprise, as Mr Wood had not disclosed the reason for his enquiries, on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1858 the Times contained an article written by Mr Wood entitled "Our Homeless Poor". In this he described the two refuges and some of those who sought admission. "Old men and little boys, street sweepers and orphans in every grade of misery and loneliness, who struggle through some years of bitter want and maybe crime, until they creep into a hole to die," youngsters like "four children, all orphans, all destitute and living upon the streets, without home and without friends in the world. One has a pair of tattered

canvas trousers and the remains of a grown man's fustian jacket hanging about his little limbs. Dirt and sores disfigure his body, his eyes are swollen, his face puffed and fevered-looking for, though spokesman of the party, he can scarcely draw his breath from inflammation of the lungs..."

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

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

The wisdom of this was shortly revealed when it was discovered that the construction of an approach road to the new Smithfield market would involve the demolition of the school's premises. It was decided that new buildings should be specially designed to accommodate all the activities undertaken



*The Field Lane building opened in 1866*

at the time. A piece of land was purchased with a frontage on Saffron Hill and Hatton Wall. In June 1865, Lord Shaftsbury laid the foundation stone and the new building was opened on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1866. It was a "strong, warm, fireproof structure with lofty rooms, plenty of light and air. It had four storeys and a basement. One side was devoted entirely to the refuge for women and the other for men and boys. The Matron's and Master's rooms were in the upper storeys, with rooms for teaching and sewing and instruction in reading and writing. In the basement were baths, lavatories and kitchens, while the whole of the top floor was used for a very large and very lofty Ragged School room capable of accommodating a congregation of nearly one thousand people".

This larger accommodation provided space for the opening of a Day Nursery for babies and small children. A Youth's Institute was also started for the benefit of "hard-working, hard-living youths who, when removed from the discipline of the schools, needed rooms in which they might meet after the work of the day was over, and where they might enjoy harmless games." A Servants' Home, in which younger women and girls could be given training for domestic service, was opened as an annexe to the Female Refuge.

Once again new premises meant greater opportunities.

#### IV. CHANGES

The introduction of the 1870 Education Act, the first significant step towards universal and compulsory education, had serious repercussions for the Ragged Schools. The Field Lane Ragged School was placed under the management of the London School Board. For a time it continued to use the same premises and it was managed by a joint Committee consisting of four members appointed by the School Board and four members from the Field Lane Committee. However, when new Board Schools were opened the pupils were transferred and Field Lane's association with day



school activities ended. However, special Bible Ragged Schools were opened by the Field Lane Committee on Sundays and on Friday evenings.

As one door of educational service began to close another opened. In 1871 two Certified Industrial Schools were started, one for boys and another for girls. These residential schools were designed to educate and train orphans, destitute and deserted children. The



*Field Lane School room*

children remained in the schools until they reached the age of sixteen, when suitable employment was found for them. The Home Office made a grant of £15 a year for each child admitted to the schools.

About this time, too, efforts were made to relieve distress in the district through the distribution of food. "Broken" food – the surplus provision from restaurants and from meals supplied to the staff of some of the larger warehouses – was collected and used to provide meals for poor children and for distribution to needy families.

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

Another difficulty resulted from the decision by the Home Office that the Certified Industrial Schools must be moved out of the Central London area. The schools were transferred to premises in Hampstead – the boys to Hillfield Road off Fortune Green Lane and the girls to 9 and 9a Church Row. The boys' school could accommodate one hundred – later increased to one hundred and forty – and training was given in trades such as tailoring, shoe-making, carpentry and baking. Eighty eight girls could be educated in the Church Row establishment, most of whom received training for domestic service.

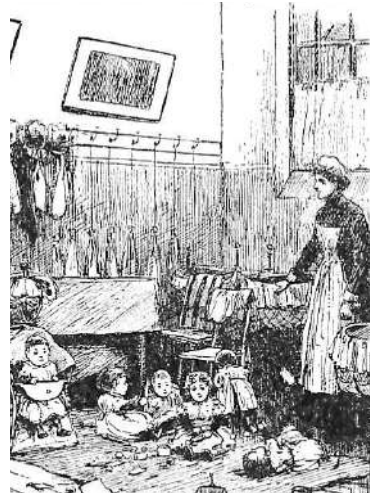
In order to help boys leaving the Industrial School a working boys' hostel was opened in 1878 but unfortunately, this had to be closed due to lack of funds.

## V. A HAND TO HAND STRUGGLE

With the opening of the new premises in Vine Hill and the moving of the Industrial Schools to Hampstead, the pattern of Field Lane's activities was set – apart from minor adjustments – for many years to come. These activities included Bible Ragged Schools, a Library, a Boys' Night School, a Mutual Improvement Society, a Band of Hope, a Penny Bank, "Broken" food distribution, Ragged Church

services, Sunday evening services, Boys' and Girls' Industrial Schools, Mother's meetings, the Maternal Society, the Crèche, a Servants' Home and the Male and Female Refuges.

Up to a thousand children attended the various meetings and activities arranged for them and a substantial proportion of them were clothed and fed from the organisation's resources. Time and again investigation of the family circumstances of the children revealed appalling poverty: "E.W. six



*Day Nursery*

in family, including a girl aged 15 and three boys aged 13, 7 and 2, living in one small room; W.S eight in family, including a girl aged 18, a boy aged 15, a boy aged 12, a girl aged 9, a boy aged 8, and a boy aged 1, all living in one room; C.E.S, four in family, comprising father and mother and two sons aged 21 and 10 and only one bed in the small room in which they lived, the sons sleeping on the floor; M., ill, according to the doctor, through lack of food, living in a miserable garret, with his mother and four brothers and sisters, deserted by their father, and all living on five shillings a week earned by the eldest girl – the mother being to ill to go out". Between three and four hundred of these children were sent on holidays to the country each year.

An average of three hundred women attended the Mothers' meetings. Up to twenty people a night were accommodated in the Men's and Women's Refuges and a steady stream of these were assisted in obtaining employment.

The Industrial Schools, described in a report of the Industrial Schools Committee of the London School Board as among "the best of the industrial Schools with which the Board has

agreements”, accepted children committed to their care under Orders of Detention issued by Magistrates. These youngsters were frequently children of beggars and thieves – like ten year old E.H. whose mother used her as a decoy to entice other children so that she could rob them of their clothing, and a boy, not yet nine, sent out by his father to steal coal.

An elderly lady set down some of her memories of Field Lane in the 1890s:

“Our Sunday night Bible Class Teacher was Miss Billings. She came a long way (or so it seemed to us) from as far away as North London. I loved her gentle teaching of Jesus. What a lovely room it was – the largest, we were told, of its sort in London. The building was beautifully designed. The wide staircase seemed to welcome you. There were wide corridors, and stairs which led down to the part where we knew the poor men used to go. The stairs had a fascination for us for we never went down there.

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

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

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

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

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

The enthusiasm which was brought to Field Lane is well illustrated by two workers (one of whom, Mr H. W. Bush, subsequently became a Vice President) who sought to gain first hand experience of the life of London’s homeless by “living rough” for a week.

Dressed in his oldest clothes and suitably dirtied up, Mr Bush set out from his office for the agreed rendezvous. His friend, however, never turned up and so for a week he carried out the planned programme on his own, sleeping out or in hostels, picking up whatever money he could earn from casual jobs. Subsequent enquiries revealed that his colleague had been arrested by a suspicious policeman who could not be convinced that the ragged rascal he caught emerging from such respectable business premises was, in fact, the proprietor of the firm!

Looking back, one who came to Field Lane as a child and went on to give years of faithful voluntary service wrote "How grateful we are that we were led to Field Lane, for God was truly in that place."

## VI. INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1885 Lord Shaftsbury died, and with his passing Field Lane lost its President and a true friend. A frequent visitor to the school, an active advisor behind the scenes, a great encourager, he was the acknowledged leader of the whole Ragged School movement. Lord Shaftsbury was succeeded as President by the Earl (subsequently the Marquis) of Aberdeen who held the office until his death in 1934. In 1937 his place was taken by his son, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Aberdeen. Lord Aberdeen died in 1965 and the Viscount Brentford (who had been a Vice President since 1935) was invited to assume the Presidency, an office he accepted.

After thirty years of useful work difficulties were encountered in 1901 in the management of the Girls' Industrial School. Home Office standards governing the issue of registration certificates had been raised and the school premises were found to be inadequate for the care of eighty eight girls. A reduction in the number of pupils was considered but it was decided that this would place a heavy financial burden on the organisation, since income would be reduced without a corresponding reduction in expenditure. Unfortunately, there were no funds available to provide alternative

accommodation and, after discussion with the Home Office, it was reluctantly decided that the school must be closed.

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

In 1908 Field Lane was incorporated under the Companies Act.

1913 saw the closing of the Female Refuge, the demand having fallen steadily during the preceding years as suitable accommodation was available elsewhere. This gave the opportunity for certain structural alterations to be made to the premises and allowed the enlarging of the Men's Refuge and the Day Nursery.

The First World War between 1914 and 1918 led to significant upheaval and difficulties. Problems of poverty, hunger and distress were accentuated by war conditions, and there was more need for the support Field Lane sought to provide. The years which followed 1918, with the widespread unemployment of that time, added to the demands for help which so many looked to the organisation to provide.

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

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



*Children's Party, 1936*

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

The Second World War created much more upheaval than the war of 1914-18. Evacuation brought most of the work amongst children to a standstill for the time being. The Crèche was moved out of



London but, after a time, it was re-opened at Vine Hill to meet the needs of many small children who had been brought home again by their parents during the “quiet months” of 1939 and 1940. The Male Refuge was also closed, although for a time it was used for the reception of Belgian and French refugees. Extensive bomb damage meant the removal of many people from the district but, fortunately, the organisation’s premises suffered practically no harm.

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

## VII. SERVING THE ELDERLY

The end of the Second World War in 1945, and the introduction of the Welfare State, led to considerable changes in the organisation’s work. Many of the services which had been pioneered by Field Lane and similar organisations now became the responsibility of the State, while the introduction of the National Health Service, and developments in Social Security benefits, meant that much of the former distress had disappeared. However, other needs were coming to the fore and among these were the acute difficulties which many elderly people were facing. Loneliness, failing health, inadequate and unsuitable housing, these and many other factors, contributed to what only too often proved to be the tragedy of old age. The Committee decided, therefore, that the organisation could best serve God in the post-war era by helping the aged.

The large premises in Vine Hill which had housed the organisation’s activities since 1878 now proved to be too large for the work which had survived the war years, and were far too expensive to maintain. Towards the end of 1946 part of the building was sold,

with the rest being retained as a Mission Centre and as office accommodation. Alterations were made in 1963 to provide much needed additional office space.

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

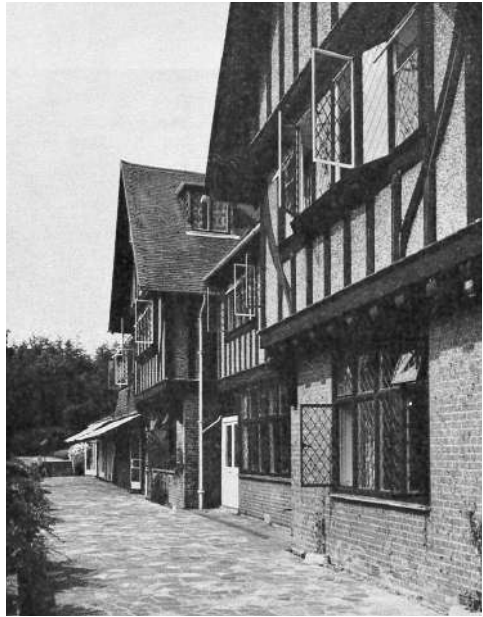


*Eastwood Lodge, Essex*

In 1947 a lovely old house, Dovers, in Reigate, Surrey, was purchased and opened the next year as a residential home for twenty one able-bodied elderly people. Shortly afterwards, in 1950, Holly Hill, Banstead, Surrey was opened. This home purchased with the assistance of the National Corporation of the Care of Old People and of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, was established as one of the first "half-way" houses in the country – half-way between the hospital ward and normal home life. The home, which worked in co-operation with the geriatric departments of the St Helier and St George's hospitals, received most of its patients after a period of hospital treatment.

In the happy, home-like atmosphere of Holly Hill many of them quickly responded to further care and became fit enough to return to their own homes.

In January 1951 the organisation was invited to take over The Priory, West Worthing, a holiday home for elderly people from the London area which had been established by Sea-Air Ltd. Under the organisation's management The Priory became a residential home for twenty elderly people.



*Holly Hill, Banstead*

1953 saw a further development when the organisation took over the Home Worker's Aid Association's holiday home at Walton-on-Naze and converted it into a residential home for forty-three elderly people.

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

First, Eastwood Lodge was extended, the holiday programme abandoned, and the home used to provide accommodation for forty two people who needed nursing care and attention.

This extension was opened by the Marquis of Aberdeen on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1957. One of the main features of the enlarged home was that most of the accommodation was at ground floor level. A further extension at Eastwood Lodge, opened in 1963, provided a new lounge and dining room, improved kitchen facilities and additional bedroom accommodation so that all forty two residents could be accommodated on the ground floor. First floor bedrooms, previously used by residents, were converted into staff accommodation.

In 1958, an extension to The Priory in Worthing was opened to allow an increase in the number of residents from twenty to fifty, and to provide facilities for the accommodation of frailer elderly people needing nursing care. In recognition of the financial help received locally a substantial proportion of the accommodation was allocated for the use of elderly people from the Worthing area. A further small extension was completed in 1964 providing more single and double bedrooms, a new lounge and other facilities.

At Holly Hill alterations including the installation of a lift, the building of a new sun lounge, the enlarging of the dining room and substantial alterations to the kitchen facilities were completed by 1967.

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

## VIII. THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The concentration of efforts on homes for the elderly did not mean a reduction in interest in social work in Central London. A fifty

year lease for a derelict, war-damaged chapel – Ampton Street Baptist Church, near King’s Cross – was secured, the premises rebuilt and re-opened in 1952 as a new centre bearing the name “Field Lane Community Centre”. Here Field Lane’s earlier work was continued although, once again, it was found that the greatest social need was among the elderly. Most activities, clubs, meetings, a meal service, visitation, and so on became orientated to the needs of older people.



*The Community Centre*

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

An attempt was also made to develop work among the youth in the area around the Community Centre. A youth leader was appointed in 1965 and a youth club organised. Although much

useful work was done problems arose, mainly through lack of sufficient helpers and the consequent difficulties of maintaining order and discipline, especially with gang warfare in the vicinity. In consequence, the club had to close in 1968.

## IX. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Following the completion in 1967 of building works at the homes and the Community Centre there was a necessary period of consolidation which provided an opportunity for reviewing activities and planning for the future. The Management Committee appointed a Development Sub-Committee which, in 1971, recommended a number of developments. Some of these became possible as a result of a generous gift from a long-standing friend of Field Lane and the profitable sale of property in Doughty Street, London, WC1.

On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1972 the new name "The Field Lane Foundation" was adopted. It was considered that the previous name "Field Lane Institution", in use since 1908, was no longer appropriate as it tended to convey a misleading representation of the work being undertaken. The word "Institution" had developed unfortunate connotations in the minds of some older people who tended to associate it with old Poor Law establishments of dubious repute.

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

range and the celebration of 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays was becoming more common.

The greater number of frailer people admitted to Field Lane's care meant that the facilities, which had been planned with more active people in mind, were no longer suitable. Structural alterations were needed and additional equipment was required. This had been foreseen prior to 1972 and, as a result, a considerable amount of work had already been carried out.

## X. SINGHOLM AND INFLATIONARY PRESSURES

By far the largest project in this process of development related to Singholm in Walton-on-Naze. This home, which was built in 1910 as a holiday home for younger and physically active people, had been transferred to Field Lane in 1953 and adapted for use as a residential home. It had become apparent that, despite various miscellaneous improvements, including the installation of a lift in 1963, the premises were not fit for purpose for use by the far more infirm people seeking admission. There were plans prepared which involved the extension of the main building so that forty two residents could be accommodated in single rooms. The kitchen



*The new extension at Singholm*

and dining room were redesigned, provision was made for a new laundry and additional storage space, the lounge and sitting room facilities were increased. The annexe to the home was to be converted into improved staff accommodation. The work was planned in 1972 and building work began in April 1973. However, it was at this time that the effects of inflation were beginning to be felt. As a result, the cost of this project rose from an estimated £100,000 to an actual expenditure of £152,600. This resulted in serious financial difficulties. Nevertheless Field Lane persisted with the project and were rewarded with a fine home which officially opened on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1975 and which was described on many occasions as one of the best homes in the country.

Inflation had other effects as well. The running costs of the organisation's work increased by 20 per cent in 1973/74, 34 per cent in 1974/75, and by a further 26 per cent in 1975/76. There was a continuing increase in expenditure, although to a lesser extent, in the years which followed. In 1947 it cost roughly £3 a week to maintain a resident in a home. In 1974 the cost was nearer £30 a week and in 1984 it was £90.

Relief came through what appeared, initially, to be an unwelcome reduction in Field Lane's work. Holly Hill in Banstead, Surrey, had been established in 1950 to provide a place where elderly people who had been receiving hospital treatment could be sent for recuperation and further rehabilitation to prepare them for return to their own homes. In a period of 25 years, over 3,000 elderly people had benefited from the care provided, enjoying the atmosphere and the beautiful garden of Holly Hill. By 1974 the situation had changed. Most of those hospital patients needing further care required long term nursing which Holly Hill was not equipped or staffed to provide. There was also an inspection of the home by the Fire Prevention Officer which in the light of new safety standards that had been introduced, indicated that substantial expenditure would have to be incurred in order to carry out additional fire safety work. After very careful consideration



and prolonged discussion with the health authority and the social services department, it became apparent that there was no way in which Holly Hill could continue to provide the service it had been delivering. There was no alternative use to which the premises could be put and, as a result, the home was closed on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1975. It was a sad occasion. It meant saying farewell to the staff, many of whom had worked with Field Lane a number of years. The sale of the property, however, did much to ease the financial pressure the organisation had been experiencing.

## XI. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Conversely there followed a number of other developments which, while not substantial in themselves, were either enlargements of Field Lane's activities or led to improvements in the quality of service.

On 18<sup>th</sup> October 1972, a small day centre opened at Dovers, Reigate, in co-operation with the Reigate Voluntary Association for the Elderly. This venture enabled a number of older people living in the Reigate area to visit the home, enjoy social contact with older people, participate in a variety of handicraft activities, and benefit from a good mid-day meal. The day centre facilities were improved in 1978 by the provision of a new toilet, additional storage and working facilities.

One perhaps, would not readily expect help in this work from as far away as Singapore, but this, did in fact occur. The Bourne School in Singapore had been established by the British Military authorities as a school for children of servicemen stationed in the Far East. Following the granting of independence to Singapore and the withdrawal of British service personnel, the school was handed over to the new Singapore Government. Various funds held by the school were transferred to London and, at the request of the Headmaster, staff and pupils, were to be used for an appropriate charitable purpose. Field Lane was selected as the



*The "Bourne School" Ambulance*

beneficiary of this gift, and, on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1972, the Director of Army Education, Major General H.H. Evans, C.B., presented the Field Lane Centre in London with an ambulance purchased with "Funds donated by the Headmaster, staff and pupils of The Bourne School, Singapore" – a useful addition to the

facilities of the Centre. The ambulance was in daily use until 1976 when it was replaced with a larger vehicle. The "Bourne School" ambulance was then transferred to Eastwood Lodge where it continued to prove a useful amenity.

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

In 1982 the Rt. Hon. The Viscount Brentford indicated that he felt he should relinquish the office of President of Field Lane, a position in which he had served since 1965. Prior to this he had been a Vice President for 30 years, an appointment in which he had followed his father who was appointed a Vice President in 1923. The news that Lord Brentford died on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1983, just a few months after his retirement from the Presidency, was met with great sorrow. It was with gratitude however, that Field Lane received the services of Lord Brentford's son, the 4<sup>th</sup> Viscount Brentford,

who succeeded his father as President, thus continuing a family association which had already lasted 60 years.

## XII. THE HAVENS GUILD

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



*The Havens Guild*

Informal links had remained with the Havens Guild since it had been founded but, in 1980, it was proposed that in order to secure the future of the Guild's work it should be amalgamated with Field Lane. After the completion of legal formalities The Havens Guild became part of Field Lane on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1982, giving the charity an

opportunity in a new field of activity – the welfare of the disabled.

Mr Blake became a Vice President of Field Lane at the time of this amalgamation.

### XIII. HOLDING TO ITS MISSION

Field Lane was now firmly established in its work with older people with four care homes, a day centre and one home for older people with a disability. The homes were set in good locations across the South East from Walton on the Naze through Southend to Reigate and Worthing. They all had fine grounds and interesting but old buildings which was also true of the day centre. The day centre was near to the offices in Vine Hill at Cubitt Street; the Havens Guild for older people with a disability was in Barnet. All the services had a good reputation and offered what Field Lane set out to achieve - places of welcome and comfort for the increasing numbers of older people who needed care in their final years.



*The Priory, Worthing*

The decision in 1947 to move to the other end of the age spectrum and away from education and Industrial Schools for young people had taken time and hard work to establish itself on the ground. But the charity was determined in its Christian endeavour and continued to see care for older people as shown by the homes and the centre and their support for their local communities, as its clear mission

The 1980s was a period of tight controls of Government and local authority expenditure. Nevertheless a growing elderly population needed services and Field Lane was firmly holding to its mission at the time of providing care and support to older, vulnerable people.

The homes were popular and, in their local areas through the care and love that the charity and staff showed their residents, they were like beacons of hope. In contrast the commercial care industry was gaining a bad reputation for low standards, poor care and exploitation as many services were run by people with little or no experience of care provision. Field Lane's garden parties, visits, activities and a sense of joyousness in the Christian faith shown by staff in their work felt like a sanctuary to the residents.

The Field Lane day centre in Camden offered care and facilities to the elderly and disabled people in the local area. It had a special place in Field Lane as it represented so much of what trustees wanted to give - companionship, care and support through meals and social activities. However, the centre was expensive to run and required funds every year to maintain its services which in 1983 included Sunday services and a Sunday school. Grants were received from local authorities and trusts but the losses had to be covered by fundraising or from the organisation's reserves.

Field Lane's income briefly exceeded expenditure in the early eighties which was greatly welcomed and it was hoped by the trustees to be a forerunner of better times but it was clear that it was legacies, gratefully received, which were keeping the charity afloat. The Havens Guild had to receive regular financial help from its supporters "to avoid passing on all of the costs of running the home to the residents". For the trustees and staff the importance of the work of Field Lane was felt to be a justification of their confidence that God was with them and that funds would be found albeit with hard work. Fees for the homes were seen as contributions to the costs with the task of the charity being to find the remaining money needed.

#### XIV. A NEW FUTURE

The early to mid-1980s was a time of change and new direction in other ways. Mr Ash (author of the original Field Lane Story) retired in 1983 after thirty six years with Field Lane including twenty three as General Secretary, and Ian Stocks was recruited. Ian brought an administrative eye to the Foundation and worked with the Trustees to help Field Lane enter a period of substantial change as the new care home regulations and new ways of managing information and finance using computers were introduced.

Mr Blake who had been such a philanthropist and had founded The Havens Guild and The Priory died in 1983 and in 1984 Leslie Brice a highly respected and long serving Trustee and Chairman from 1970 to 1980 also died. Field Lane was embarking on its new future with a new generation.

Externally, the Code of Practice for care homes was followed by the Residential Care Homes Act in 1984 which brought mandatory registration of care homes, minimum standards and inspections. To have an external body assessing the Field Lane homes was naturally a nervous time for the Trustees but the inspections were positive and Field Lane began a period of investment in its homes. Field Lane had to respond to four Acts of regulation between 1984 and 2008 each of which imposed tighter standards and different inspection regimes. For a small organisation the increasing regulation was intrusive and costly but in general Field Lane supported the improvements in care standards that lay behind the legislation.

The homes and the Cubitt Street day centre were all old buildings which had to adapt to meet changing expectations of residents and their families and the registration authority's requirements. Heavy investment was made to improve services such as kitchens and reduce the multiple rooms which were often four bedded. These were converted into communal areas or into shared and

single rooms. The Havens Guild had reduced its numbers from 42 to 35, which was later reduced further, in order to eliminate the four and then three bedded rooms. As the home was reluctant to reduce the number of its staff, and therefore the costs, the changes created serious financial difficulties.

The day centre was keen to extend its services into the wider community and appointed David Amery as Development Officer in 1984. Following the tragic death of a child in a hostel behind the centre David identified the growing number of homeless families in bed and breakfast hotels as a group Field Lane could support. The families who had minimum facilities in their hotel bedrooms would benefit from using the centre's facilities once the older people had left there in the afternoon. The Trustees agreed to give financial support to the new work and Field Lane invested in specialist staff, extra washing machines, and improved kitchen facilities and toilets. It was an expensive service to offer but Field Lane committed itself to it and worked hard to raise the funds needed for the new work with the families. A play worker was appointed and the London Borough of Camden began to support the work with a grant which it continued for many years. Relationships were formed with other homelessness groups that brought new ideas and experience into Field Lane. A second play worker was appointed in 1986 but the centre needed over £45,000 from Field Lane to cover its costs that year.

## XV. ASHDOWN CLOSE LEADS THE WAY

For a long time the Field Lane Committee had been concerned about the best use to which the surplus land at Dovers, Reigate could be put. It had been agreed in 1978, to explore the possibility of building a block of flats for elderly people. This was expected to be an expensive and fairly long-term project as there were various legal and technical problems to overcome. Not least of which was the question of funding. Following an approach to The Housing Corporation the Foundation was registered as a Housing

Association and, therefore, became eligible for loan finance. Building work started on a block of flats which would be available for occupation at the end of 1984. Twelve single bedroom flats and seven flats for two people – accommodation for a total of twenty six elderly people; a communal lounge, a visitor's room and laundry facilities.

Ashdown Close was opened by the President on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1985. The nineteen flats in Ashdown Close were designed for people who could be independent but felt they would like to be closer to some assistance as they aged. This type of housing provision was seen as a solution for people who would like a neighbourly eye kept out for them as they grew frailer but did not want, nor were ready for, a care home.

Ashdown Close was Field Lane's first new build scheme since the Vine Hill ragged school and refuge was built in 1877 and represented an important transition for the organisation. By registering as a housing association Field Lane became part of a national outward looking movement which was receiving extensive government support for the provision of suitable and affordable housing and which was often led locally by church based initiatives. Registration also brought requirements for standards of housing management, financial reporting and services that were monitored and on which Field Lane had to report.



*Ashdown Close*

By 1986 the homes were being criticised for the multiple



occupation of bedrooms and they were losing money. The Priory had to make investments in room adaptations, fire safety systems, heating and laundry which were fortunately met by a legacy for the home. The local population in Worthing had a fondness for The Priory and people had been generous when the extension had been built in 1958 and they continued to see The Priory as "theirs". Eastwood Lodge was looking at adding nursing care to its residential care in the hope that residents could avoid leaving the home when they needed nursing support.

The Trustees took time to look at how Field Lane should go forwards into the next decade and in 1987 confirmed their commitment to the care of older people. This led to further investment in the homes, reductions of occupancy in the remaining multiple rooms, introduction of nursing and general upgrading and improvements. The losses on the homes and on the Cubitt Street day centre remained high with the centre and its family commitment alone running at a deficit of £54,066 in 1986 and £81,280 in 1987. But the legacies remained strong and enabled the charity to maintain its work and investment in the homes and the day centre.

The Bed and Breakfast project was now outgrowing its space at the day centre and by the end of the decade the project had moved to new premises on the Thomas Coram site in King's Cross, the location of the famous Foundling Hospital.

## XVI. INVESTING IN SERVICE

The investment continued apace in the homes although they continued to post year on year losses. Eastwood Lodge, having prepared for dual registration with a further investment of £130,000, was unable to recruit sufficient nurses and had to postpone adding nursing care until this problem was resolved. In 1989 the homes showed a loss of £235,000 and the centres £124,000. This was mitigated by other income to a loss of £34,000

and enormous efforts were made to raise funds to enable the work to continue and grow by improving the homes and attracting residents.

At this time Georgie Anderson was appointed as leader of the families centre and with her drive and enthusiasm the centre's services and reputation grew quickly. It showed a 34% increase in attendances and was providing play space, laundry, kitchen and cooking facilities. A holiday in Wales was organised for residents, and Easter and Summer play schemes were arranged alongside the Sunday play sessions. Adult and health education were also beginning to be offered.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1991 was celebrated with a special service at St Giles Cripplegate and gave Field Lane a chance to reflect on its journey and look ahead at what would be more change; regulatory, financial and in its leadership.

The Havens Guild which was losing money every year could no longer rely on its supporters to fund its shortfall and needed to expand its beds, which had reduced to 25, to bring in more income. Plans to expand the home with an appeal for £650,000 were discussed.

## XVII. THE COMMUNITY CARE ACT

In 1992 Ian Stocks returned to overseas work and Jeremy Lamb was appointed to lead Field Lane through its next period of change and especially those associated with the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 which was due to come into effect in 1993/94. This Act would fundamentally change the provision of care for people who were publicly funded by replacing an individual's application to the DHSS for support with a duty for local authorities to assess a person's needs and then contract with providers of care for the provision of care services. Jeremy came from a social care background and had had experience of the

proposed changes to Community Care through a research project designed to look at the impact of the changes when introduced as a pilot scheme in Kent.

The local authorities took time to create smooth and financially sustainable contracting relationships and systems which meant that Field Lane's homes and internal management were under evermore critical scrutiny. For services to be sold under contract rather than offered as a charitable service, even though Field Lane's own funds had to be used to top up the local authority rates, was a difficult change and it took time for the implications of the new relationships to be understood. The centres, although outside of the Community Care regulations of the homes, were also caught up in the new changes and had to report on the use of their grants by showing the benefits to families and clients.

Field Lane had been approached by the health authority in the Southend area to see if a new registered nursing residential centre for nine people with severe learning and physical disabilities could be built in the grounds of Eastwood Lodge. The residents would be coming from South Ockendon hospital which was to be closed as part of the Government policy to move people from long stay hospitals to community located care. Field Lane would have total responsibility for the building and the care of the residents for an agreed annual fee. This was agreed and Badgers opened in 1993.



*Badgers Construction Ceremony in 1992*

## XVIII. BADGERS OPENS A NEW ERA

The opening of Badgers began a new era for Field Lane. The focus on the person rather than the institution, a new understanding of needs and care, the crossover between learning disability and dementia in terms of staff training, awareness of personalities and the significance of Field Lane's new responsibilities all took time to filter through the organisation. The visible changes and new abilities that the people who took up residence at Badgers achieved were nothing short of miraculous. Trustees and visitors were very moved on meeting residents and staff as this type and level of care and support was new to many. It became clear that the success of Badgers was pointing to a sphere of work which Field Lane could aim to develop. Other similar units were planned to be opened elsewhere and the health authority had discussed them with Field Lane as possible future projects. They were eventually opened by the Local Authority itself some time later.

Field Lane had to develop new expertise but so did other professional agencies including the local hospitals. Staff at Badgers taught them about the care that people with a severe learning disability needed in hospital and Field Lane grew in confidence and reputation.

The Community Care Act had a dramatic effect on the occupancy and levels of frailty in the homes. The local authority endeavoured to keep people at home with a day care package but those who did come through the local authority were much frailer than previously experienced. A Head of Care was appointed alongside a Housing and Property Manager with the intention of focusing energy on the key areas of the services. These had to reflect the high standards of professional and personal care that clients and the local authorities were looking for as well as the Christian nature of the organisation that no-one wanted to lose.

Essex had talked to Field Lane about opening and operating a day

centre for older people in Southend under contract to the social services department. An unused part of the old house at Eastwood Lodge was converted and was open from 1994 to 1998 when the contract was not renewed and Eastwood Lodge itself was closed.

By 1994 it had become clear that The Havens Guild was never going to be financially independent, even with an extension, and its closure was announced. However relatives and others in the local community mounted a campaign to keep the home open and worked to raise funds but it was eventually closed in 1998. The 17 residents were found accommodation elsewhere and the site at 95 Hendon Lane was sold for redevelopment.

Care services had to modernise and standards had to rise to be acceptable to the new inspection regime. Field Lane introduced new common standards and procedures which were supported by a Quality Assurance scheme. Mandatory training began to feature and staff were encouraged to acquire a National Vocational Qualification.

In 1995 the Cubitt Street day centre had reached a point where the costs could no longer be met from reserves and the centre was closed with the lease sold back to the Baptist church. This ended a chapter of service of 44 years in that community.

## XIX. CARE HOMES CLOSING

Initially Field Lane had enjoyed good occupancy and high praise for its care homes from the local authorities but the required changes needed were costly. When the local authorities began to experience heavy pressure on their funds they reduced their referrals as well as limiting or reducing the fees paid. It had become clear that older buildings, reducing occupancy and fees that were being held down were not good financial foundations on which to build a future and a programme of deficit reduction had to begin. 1998/99 was described as "a terrible year" with heavy losses.

Notwithstanding optimistic hopes and plans for the future, it was no longer possible to fund the losses and hard decisions had to be made.

One of the consequences of the Community Care Act was to reduce the willingness of donors to fund care services for older people, including Field Lane, as they were now expected to be adequately funded by local authorities. Many care charities almost foundered due to the mistaken belief of supporters that funds would no longer be required.

In 1998 the decision was taken to close three homes; The Havens Guild in Barnet, Singholm at Walton on the Naze and Eastwood Lodge in Southend and staff at the homes and at Vine Hill were made redundant.

Singholm had always been a specially regarded home in Field Lane with an active life in its local community and a gentle management style and it had benefited from a large investment to provide additional rooms and upgrading of the general facilities. It had a special place in the memory of Field Lane. However it was losing money and had no en-suite rooms which people were asking for and Field Lane did not have the resources to invest further. Singholm was closed but remained equipped and continues as a care home after a succession of owners were able to make the adaptations needed.

Eastwood Lodge, which had been originally purchased as a holiday venue for children in 1939 and subsequently registered for nursing care, had been overtaken, as a unit, by the modern demands for single rooms and en-suite facilities. The single storey wooden buildings to the rear of the main house in which the bedrooms and communal areas were located always looked like ex-military buildings and they were cramped and unsuitable for the modern requirements of care. Residents and their families always spoke highly of the manager and the care they received from the staff;

the grounds were attractive and badgers would scavenge and disport in the evenings. But the home was losing money and although much effort and some cost had been expended to plan for rebuilding in the grounds the risk in a very uncertain care market and the lack of cash in Field Lane meant there was little option but closure.

The Trustees though were still “spurred on by the belief that looking after the vulnerable and frail is the work that God has commissioned Field Lane to undertake” and they looked forward with hope to a new future.

These changes left Dovers and The Priory as the remaining homes and they attempted to build up their work by focussing on dementia. Dementia had been long identified as the oncoming concern in older people’s care and Field Lane was determined to be part of that response.



*Dovers*

## XX. NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The turn of the century saw a period of very significant change begin to take place in all parts of the organisation’s work and was in contrast to the distress of the previous two years.

The Priory marked its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the opening of Primrose, a specialist dementia care unit which would be linked to a day care service and which included support for carers. In 2001 Dovers opened Gracefield providing dementia care followed later by Daybreak which offered help and assistance such as late openings and bathing services. Daybreak received generous

support from The Tudor Trust as a research project as it was hoped that services could be replicated but the costs were high and the local authorities and the clients struggled to pay the charges needed.

The homes were adapted to reflect a more dynamic approach to dementia support with, for example, domestic style kitchens installed for the use of residents with their families.



*Penelope Keith visiting The Priory*

2001 was Field Lane's 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the carol service held at St Margaret's Lothbury was well attended with people coming from all parts of Field Lane and making full use of the disabled and accessible facilities of the City of London.

The work with families had shown the appalling conditions in which so many parents and children were living and the Government was keen to find alternative solutions. Better accommodation was needed and at the same time legislative steps were being taken to reduce the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation. In Field Lane discussions had begun about preventing homelessness as well as supporting families.

Field Lane had been a member of UNLEASH, a London wide churches homelessness group which was chaired for a time by Jeremy Lamb. Through UNLEASH a Catholic religious order, The Poor Servants of the Mother of God, had let it be known that they had buildings which they would let a charity use once their own use for them had finished. They owned three large linked houses near to Notting Hill Gate which they had used as a convent and



hostel for students. The Sisters wanted their work with families to continue but they could no longer undertake it themselves and so needed a partner. After lengthy discussions which had begun in the midst of the homes' closures in 1998, two houses were let to Field Lane. The name Andrew Provan House was chosen to honour the London City missionary who established the first school in Field Lane in 1841.

The adaptations to create 17 flats were funded through a substantial grant obtained from the Housing Corporation with the support of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and from Field Lane's own reserves. After much hard work to adapt the building and prepare the flats for the families Andrew Provan House was opened in 2005. The aim was to help families avoid future homelessness by using the support of the staff team to develop better decision making and, for some, simple support in taking responsibility for new babies.

This was a step change for Field Lane and it had to create and invest in new and different management and administrative systems as well as supporting the staff. Two additional flats were added at a later date when a large kitchen on the lower ground floor and the nursery were converted.

The work of the families centre had attracted attention due to its pioneering approach and in 2001 Field Lane with the Maternity Alliance held a national conference in London on how to improve the health and welfare of the children in homeless families based on Field Lane's work. The conference launched the results of a project showing how best to support families. The centre had also found itself caring for families fleeing the Balkans conflict with parents and their traumatised children finding safe space and tailored support there.

Local authorities and funds such as Children in Need aided the work with grants and a study for Oxford University (Kathryn Taylor

Gaubatz PhD University of Oxford 2000) showed the centre's approach and its range of services and support to be unique. The welcome to any family in bed and breakfast was a key aspect of its open door approach and Christmas celebrations were shared by all faiths around groaning tables. For many in Field Lane the families work was a direct link to its early days and the pioneering work at the schools and refuges with children and their families.

The centre's special regard was demonstrated by the visit of the then Prime Minister Tony Blair and the launch with Comic Relief of the Domestic Violence Helpline in 2003 with well known celebrities attending. Diana Princess of Wales also visited and spent time with the families. Of great interest was the visit of the Director of Homelessness for the United States government to see the centre in operation and meet the families. The BBC featured the centre in a World Service programme and Sky news also ran a programme. In 2003 a second centre was opened near King's Cross in partnership with a local church with substantial government funding.



*Diana, Princess of Wales visiting the Homeless Families Centre*

This was a period in which the value and work involved in partnerships was better understood. Funds such as the American charity Bright Horizons which was looking for a first partner in the

United Kingdom funded a Bright Space for families, and Shelter was a partner in supporting families when they had left Andrew Provan House for their own homes.

## XXI. A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Although the pain of closing homes and centres was deeply felt, the opportunities resulting from some additional capital and the savings made by closing the loss making services allowed some new and timely investment in the work.

Alongside the planning and opening of Andrew Provan House in London a new type of service was being developed at The Priory and Dovers. Staff no longer wore uniforms and some residents enjoyed assisting in the kitchen where they could have a “chef’s” table for a meal. Both homes had domestic kitchens that were equipped to allow families to cook lunch and eat together if they wished. An annual “fine dining” event at which residents could host relatives and friends was always booked up and the popular cookery writer Marguerite Patten, who came as a guest at the Priory in 2007, pronounced it a success.

These and other changes were inspired and led by the Head of Care, Jacky Owen, who was appointed in 2000, and Tony Ellmer, an experienced chef and catering manager. Other organisations and the inspectors who visited were amazed at the freedom to lead an ordinary life that residents were assumed to desire and be capable of and which the home managed as a matter of course. Allena Edwards, The Priory’s manager, would arrange for any new resident to be set up with a bus pass and be accompanied to Marks and Spencer for their shopping or a trip to the hairdressers. Relatives and visitors were advised to check availability as people had such busy lives. This approach of the home and its manager was highly unusual and in 2005 the home scored the maximum rating in seventeen sections of an inspection. This was outstanding and exceptional for a care home.

Learning disability services were also changing. A new model of supported living for people with a learning disability had been conceptualised based on a total focus on the person. The demand for placements in the community was rising and the local authority in Southend considered that they would be able to make referrals for this type of service. A house was purchased in Southend in 2004 and having been adapted to accommodate five people in en-suite bedrooms and a training flat, it opened in 2005. Field Lane set up a separate domiciliary care agency so that the residents could receive the support needed as an essential part of a total package that Field Lane wanted to offer. This model of housing with a support package was successfully replicated in Southend and Surrey.

The services were changing and new projects were in hand. New sources of funding were opening up through Government in both housing and in social initiatives funds such as Futurebuilders. Field Lane was held in high regard for its innovative approach to care and support, and funding was obtained for more houses.

2008 was the centenary of Field Lane being incorporated as a company and Coutts, who were Field Lane's investment managers, hosted the Annual General Meeting at their offices in the Strand. This was an opportunity to host an outside speaker and John Low, Chief Executive of the Charities Aid Foundation was invited. This was a good and well attended occasion and made special because in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts had been a supporter of Field Lane's ragged schools. The past and the present were joined.

At that time the organisation's constitution was revised to bring it into a modern format and to meet the changes brought in by the Companies Act 2006. The opportunity was also taken to revise the Christian reference in the Objects by removing some restrictions and so broadening the Christian background of the Trustee Board. The Trustees and staff were certain that Field Lane had to retain

its Christian heart and throughout the organisation people spoke with appreciation of the Christian ideal of service.

The financial crisis of 2008 had badly affected Field Lane. Income from investments was reduced to a trickle and local authorities had to cut back their budgets which bore heavily on occupancy and fee income at Dovers and The Priory. Legacies had also reduced. However new opportunities were opening up.

A positive outcome of the country's financial crisis was that property suitable for learning disability projects was very affordable and local authorities had money for fees and charges when supported living was an alternative to residential care. A successful application was made to Futurebuilders and two houses were acquired and adapted; Salfords near Redhill and Westcliff on Sea near Southend. The houses opened in 2010. In addition Field Lane entered into a contract to manage a house in Caterham and support its residents. A second domiciliary care agency was formed in order to service the Surrey houses and some tenants of Ashdown Close.



*Salfords, near Redhill*

Two social clubs, Cafe Dance in Westcliff and a club in Reigate, were formed and run voluntarily by staff and residents of the houses and Ashdown Close. They are still popular for their music and dancing and are well attended not just by Field Lane's residents but by guests from other homes and supported living projects. The clubs meet weekly with the generous help of local churches who let the clubs use their premises and facilities.

For some time Ashdown Close had been giving tenancies to independent tenants with a learning disability who were supported by the Field Lane agency. This was because it had become more difficult to find older people who wanted to move there due to the flats' relatively small size and because, since Ashdown Close was built, other housing facilities had become available. There had also been a huge growth in the availability of domiciliary care designed to help people stay at home.

At this time, Field Lane had been approached by The Society of the Holy Child Jesus who were interested in some assistance in administering their nursing home in Harrogate. Field Lane had been looking for opportunities to use its expertise in care but without having to make the capital outlay on its own buildings. Agreement was reached and in 2010 Apley Grange nursing home in Harrogate became the first project of Field Lane Management Services Limited, a new company set up as a subsidiary to manage support services.

## XXII. FACING THE FUTURE

With the charity still under financial pressure but also wanting to complete the modernisation of services it was decided that the office building at 16 Vine Hill, which had been part of the original Ragged School buildings should be sold and the offices moved to more modern premises. In 2011 the move to offices at a new charity centre in Victoria was completed. Field Lane now felt like a modern organisation in its open plan offices, enjoying having other charities as neighbours.

Dovers and The Priory, for all their efforts, were not attracting enough clients and more investment in the old buildings was again needed. Various options had been explored for both homes in order to maintain their services but finally and after much debate and heartache, the decision was made in 2012 to sell them. Efforts were made to find buyers for them as going concerns

but eventually the residents had to be helped to find alternative homes and the sites were sold for redevelopment. This completed the move from registered care for older people in homes owned by Field Lane and brought the new supported living services for families and people with a learning disability to the forefront of its development plans. Following the homes' closures the staff numbers at the central office were also reduced.

Field Lane had always valued having a President and Viscount Brentford, like his father, had been a strong supporter of the charity and had taken whatever steps he could to raise funds and give encouragement. Until he lost his seat in the House of Lords as a hereditary peer he would ask Field Lane for briefings from the front line which he would bring into the debates on social issues. He decided to step down in 2013 after thirty years. George, Earl of Haddo, who had become a Vice President in 2008, was then invited to become President. George through his father, the Marquis of Aberdeen, has a direct family connection with the Marquis of Aberdeen who had become President on the death of Lord Shaftesbury in 1885. The Trustees were agreed that, whilst Field Lane was working hard to reshape itself and develop new services, its outstanding and committed people were great assets and continuity in the Presidency should be promoted.

All through these years Field Lane's supporters had fundraised in countless imaginative ways through marathon running, special events, personal donations and even a walk through the Channel Tunnel (Field Lane is listed on a plaque by the facilities at Cheriton). Although the work had to change the supporters have enabled many people to be cared for who otherwise would have suffered poor services, or for families, no support at all.

In 2013 a house in Frimley was purchased using grant funding and after adaptations, was opened in 2014 for six residents with a learning disability. A new contract with Surrey had created great interest in the project and with a marketing campaign many

potential residents had been attracted. Sir Richard Stilgoe and Field Lane's President, George, Earl of Haddo performed the official opening ceremony.



*Sir Richard Stilgoe and George, Earl of Haddo  
officially open the Frimley house*

By 2014 and after many years of change and evolution Field Lane was now beginning a new phase in its long life. It had successful alternatives to the care homes that had defined Field Lane for so long; the aging and costly buildings had been sold and positive plans could be made for the future and be based on more reliable income. Peter Calderbank was appointed Chief Executive in 2015 following Jeremy Lamb's retirement.

Throughout its history Field Lane has tried to be true to its founding - caring for the most vulnerable and being a vehicle for God's love. For all of its life the financial, legislative and cultural environments have had an impact and have often required a change of course. Whether it was Ragged Schools and education, support for offenders, support for families, care of older people and people with learning disabilities and now supported living, Field Lane has always acted to bring about good change for people and, by so doing, demonstrate the good news of the Christian faith.

### XXIII. AN UNFINISHED STORY

This then, in briefest outline, is the story to date of Field Lane. It has pioneered many forms of social service in the name of Jesus Christ and has always sought to help those in need. It is no small thing to



have been part – and sometimes the very tip – of the spearhead in the attack on human want, leading the way in such things as free education, school meals, children’s nurseries, night schools, refuges and rescue work, trade and industrial schools, maternity welfare, care of the elderly, supporting those with learning disabilities; and to have undertaken such service with the motive of demonstrating the love of God as something that is active and practical.

Happily, the years since 1841 have witnessed tremendous changes in the social and economic life of the whole country. Much that was done by Field Lane in earlier days has become the responsibility of government agencies and local authorities.

However, the Field Lane story is an unfinished one. There is always the need to make our ministry to the vulnerable wider and more effective. All this must, inevitably, lead to new developments calling for more workers, more premises, and more funds. These are the challenges which arise from the work of yesterday and of today. It is our response to these challenges which will determine the future of Field Lane and will write the story of tomorrow.

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

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

So, as we face the future we have a clarion call – take the vulnerable and the disabled to your hearts, love the young so eager for life, and those others – far too many – who feel themselves defeated by life. Give them yourselves, for in giving yourselves you are giving them hope, purpose, Christ himself, reconciling them to God just as God in Christ has first reconciled us to Himself.



We hope that you have enjoyed reading about our history.

You can find out more about Field Lane by accessing our website via:



Alternatively, visit [www.fieldlane.org.uk](http://www.fieldlane.org.uk) or contact us at:

Field Lane  
Ground Floor  
85 Buckingham Gate  
London SW1E 6PD

Tel: 020 7748 0303  
Email: [info@fieldlane.org.uk](mailto:info@fieldlane.org.uk)

Registered Charity 207493  
Registered Housing Association LH3047  
Company Limited by Guarantee 98226