

Children

In 1865 the Residential School for the Jewish Deaf School (R.S.J.D.C.) closed its doors for the last time, thus bringing to an end one hundred years of full time residential and educational provision for Jewish Deaf children from the four corners of the world.

Residential and religious education continued in another form for a further twelve years, but this is mainly the story of a unique school which started as the result of the dissatisfaction of a business man in Manchester, Mr Solomon.

In 1865 the education of the deaf children was mainly ~~is~~ provided by large residential institutions maintained by Christian charties. Mr Solomon had a deaf son and was averse to sending him to such a school.

Finding two other Jewish business men with similar problems, he persuaded them to join him in opening a small school for Jewish deaf children in North London, in the belief that the high number of Jewish residents there would be willing to support such a school.

The Asylum for Deaf and Dumb Jews opened in 1865 with a handful of pupils in a converted house, but numbers quickly grew, and more suitable premises were found in Nightingale Lane, Balham in South London a year or so later.

Teaching Deaf children in these days was mainly by manual methods, but the Governors of the Jewish school were continually on the look out for the most up to date methods and they heard of a new oral system being pioneered in Holland by a teacher of the deaf, Mr Van Praag. He was persuaded to come to London, and the Jewish school thus had the honour of being one of the first schools in Britain to use the now universal 'oral' system.

With the full co-operation of the school Governors, a succession of progressive and dedicated headmasters continued this policy of keeping up with the latest teaching equipment and techniques, a policy only made possible by the dedicated and willing help of Jewish communities all over Great Britain and the rest of the world. At one time there were pupils in the school from over 20 countries including Africa, the U.S.A., and South America.

A full programme of religious education was a major part of the curriculum, leading up to and past the Barmitzvah for the Boys, and Jewish household management for the Girls. All Holy Days and Festivals were strictly observed, and past pupils were always welcomed to return when help with religious occasions such as marriages and childbirth was needed.

In the 1930's, the name of the school was changed to The Residential School for Jewish Deaf Children, as being more in keeping with the times, and also by this time financial help was available from local educational authorities on a per capita basis.

As the years went by, more and more educational provision became available to deaf children in their own areas, at home and abroad, thus giving parents the choice of having their children at home. Eventually there were insufficient pupils to make the school economically and educationally viable, which factors finally led to the closure of the school in 1965. The School Governors decided to open a hostel for Jewish Deaf Children in North London, and this provision was maintained for a further twelve years.

Mr. E. Denton

Last Headmaster of

The Residential School for Jewish Deaf School.