

Chapter Three The War and Its Aftermath 1940 +

At the outbreak of the War, as Drumpark was taken over first as a billet for evacuees and later by the military, pupils had to remain at home and were denied access to education apart from home visits arranged by their former teachers when they could manage. Staff had been transferred to other schools but, aware of parents' anxiety to have their children back at school, had campaigned to have special classes organised in a number of the schools in the area. Some classes ran double sessions to give most children the chance to benefit from some measure of education. In spite of this, some children found it impossible to attend as distances were too great; there were no travel facilities and weather conditions in the winter of 1940 were unusually severe.

To those capable of travelling independently to one of the centres, Travel vouchers were issued. Another problem was the lack of industrial training for the older pupils who would be leaving without the necessary skills for employment. By August, the military were still in possession of the Drumpark building because the War situation had become more acute over the summer months.

Nearby Swinton School was closed down as an unexploded bomb was buried near the School at Easterhouse Station. Alternative accommodation was being sought, but attempts in December to centralise pupils in Old Monkland School fell through, as the school was too small.

However, suitable premises were found in the Girls Junior Instruction Centre and the move to have all the pupils under one

roof came about in May 1941, with the proviso that practical classes would recommence after the summer vacation. However, it proved very difficult to get the children to come out of their homes in time to get the school bus.

An innovative scheme began later that year with Miss Donald supervising a Day War- Time Nursery on the premises within the hours of 1 am and 7pm. This caused some financial problems for staff involved in the running of the nursery, so much so, that they requested a rise in salary.

This was granted as follows: For extra duties, cleaners were to receive 8/-per week, the cook 15/-, cook's assistant 10/-, junior assistant, 2/6 and the janitor the princely sum of £1.1.0 for extra work incurred re the nursery.

In 1944 a School for the Deaf was established in Hamilton and some pupils were transferred there. They lost a lot of time travelling as they were bussed to Drumpark first, then to Hamilton and the same on the homeward journey. Whenever there was a transport problem, the transfer could not be made and, therefore, they missed a lot of education.

Over the War years and immediately afterwards transport continued to be a problem until the Education Authority awarded the contract to SMT when services improved, although the drivers refused to enter the School premises because the driveway was unsafe. Perhaps the unsafe surface had something to do with two previous incidents when, on separate occasions, a cook and a parent were crushed against

the school wall, fortunately suffering only minor injuries.

The move back to Drumpark campus was effected in April 1946 when it was noted "Splendid co-operation was received re transfer and now everything feels settled and things are going well". The curriculum expanded again with tailoring, gardening, woodwork and eventually cobbling taking place alongside domestic science, which was the only craft-skill which survived during the War.

Facilities for the teaching of PE were inspected and found insufficient room for a football pitch and no gym apparatus or a Hall. In spite of these drawbacks, a PE teacher was appointed a few years later and, no doubt, had then to make the best of it.

In spite of this decade's interruption of on-going education, the Inspectors' report of 1949 was very favourable. At this point there were 286 pupils on the roll. They say "throughout ... ample evidence of devoted teaching and sympathetic handling of children. The bearing of the children and their obvious pleasure in the activities of the classroom were a credit to their teachers who were keenly interested in the children as individuals.

The work of the head teacher in the War years must have been particularly difficult with so many centres to oversee. However, she reacted swiftly when one member of staff was not pulling her weight. A letter to the Education Authority stating that she was "unwilling to retain ... as a member of staff" saw that particular teacher transferred within a week.

On another occasion when a teacher had inferred to an Irish member of staff that "the lights of Southern Ireland guided enemy planes to the coast of England", the Deputy Director was called in to settle this religious question. He managed to do so amicably. If absenteeism were ever a problem, one member of staff was absent for four days, "no excuse for absence was received and ... appointment was terminated".

However, Miss Donald's strength was in her knowledge and expertise in the field of Special Education. She gave evidence to the Russell Committee in 1944 regarding the "Laws concerning mental deficiency and lunacy". In the same year, she spoke to a conference in Manchester on "Individual Material in the Education of Mental Defective Children".

Her reward came with the Birthday Honours List in which she received the MBE for services to education. Unfortunately, her failing health prevented her from being in school for the celebrations but her letter remains, "This honour is yours and belongs to the school. It is your achievement".

Her place as Head Teacher was taken by Miss Barbara E Fordyce, who had taught in the school since 1927. She soon was involved in the presentation of a second honour in the New Year's List of 1948, when Miss Catherine McMenemy, another long serving member of staff was presented with the MBE for her services to the National War Savings Effort.

Her work in this field had long been recognised by the National Association in Edinburgh and she had spoken at conferences on the importance of the Savings Scheme. On one occasion Miss

Masterton, an executive on the National Savings Committee, visited the School to congratulate Miss McMenemy, was duly entertained with Scots songs and poetry by the pupils and presented with a Drumpark purse as a memento.

The School continued to attract overseas interest with visits restarting after the War from places as far afield as Karachi, Bombay, Trinidad, New Zealand and Northern Rhodesia, not to mention visitors from Ireland. However, these visitors were more interested in the layout of the School than its internal workings because they wanted to copy the architectural design for their own building.

Conditions had changed over the War years. Women teachers no longer had to resign on marriage and a handful of married ladies kept the School fully staffed alongside their unmarried colleagues. During the War years, especially during the Blitz, duties of fire-watching were allocated to staff who were required to stay in School from dusk until dawn during School holidays as well as term-time. On one occasion, the police attended ... as lights were showing in the classroom. Some of the staff also joined the Civil Defence Service and had night duties to perform there also. Health remained a cause for concern, particularly throughout the early forties. Children who no longer had access to School meals showed marked signs of malnutrition. As a result of this, when the centres opened all Drumpark pupils who received free milk were allowed two free rations of milk. This encompassed all the children on the roll without exception.

A diphtheria epidemic also caused problems, as did an outbreak of scabies. "Many children have ceased to attend the

clinic and have been re-infected in their own homes." Summer camps had been set up, only for physically defective children, which naturally caused protest, however, "as many of the children were not absolutely clean, their names were deleted from the list".

A good balanced diet was advocated, but not helped by some defective supplies when barley sent by one supplier was found to be unfit for food. Battling against these odds, the domestic science staff encouraged both boys and girls (a breakthrough for those years) to take part in the Scottish Cookery Competition where they won the district finals and went on to the County Competition. A food inspector's report of the day stated that soup was to be served "once only in the week". By the end of the decade the National Health Service had been established and a much more organised service was on offer to both pupils and staff.

The social and cultural life of the School perked up again after the War. Entertainment in the Cosmo and Odeon cinemas, thanks to the Singleton family, became an annual event. The Children's Theatre Group and the Puppet Theatre performed for the children and parties had the obligatory conjuror (on one occasion, a lady conjurer).

Christmas parties went ahead with, by the end of the decade, gifts to the value of 1/- per child. Holiday celebrations began again with VE Day and VJ Day and another Royal Wedding in November 1947, that of Prince Phillip and Princess Elizabeth (now Queen Elizabeth II).

Football became a much more competitive pastime in the late forties, with the foundation of a Special Schools

Tournament in Lanarkshire. In spite of having insufficient room for a football pitch, Drumpark boys acquitted themselves well on the football field either defeating or equalising with Dalton, Knowetop and Auchinraith in the last years of the forties.

Outings were resumed each summer as transport restrictions were lifted and petrol rationing was phased out. Each summer the Drumpark pupils enjoyed the delights of a day 'doon the watter' at Dunoon or the play area at Livingston Memorial Park. School photographers

emerged again and began to circulate the schools with their wares. A Parents Day was held which was very successful.

Miss Fordyce pronounced "the result satisfactory, but time very short". Holidays for the summer began to be marked by a donation of ice-cream by Mr Rankine, Dairyman adding to the pleasure of the children.

