A Charity School Movement? The Lincolnshire Evidence

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The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) was formed in London in 1699. It was the result of the religious fervour of the Revd. Dr. Thomas Bray who was quite unconcerned in his efforts to reform the lower classes, convert the heathen and provide small libraries for clergy. A continuing thread in all his activities was the belief that education was an instrument for good and could be used by the established church to combat immorality and religion which had their sources in the lowest strata of society. At the first meeting of the Society on 8 March 1699 Dr. Bray was joined by Lord Guilford, Sir Humphrey Mackworth, Mr. Justice Hooke and Colonel Colchester. They resolved to further and promote that good design of erecting charity schools in each parish in and about London.1

The foundation of schools was encouraged, advice on financial matters offered and plans for efficient administration were drawn up. Soon the business at the meetings of the Society was dominated by the problems attending the founding of the schools. It did not organise individual schools itself nor did it provide money for them as a matter of policy. It did, however, have limited funds initially from the subscriptions of its members and later through bequests and legacies. These it used to give assistance to existing schools experiencing temporary difficulties or to new schools where plans looked promising and local people had made a serious effort to fund the venture. In its first years it helped St. George’s School, Southwark2 and took a keen interest in St. Martin’s School, Whitechapel3 and Cripplegate School4 among others.

The enthusiasm with which many greeted the ideas of the Society and the evidence of their practical value both in the rapid expansion and the successful running of the schools prompted Dr. Bray and his associates to look beyond London. They decided to establish a correspondence with one or more clergy in each county and with one clergyman in each great town and city of England in order to erect societies of the same nature as this one throughout the Kingdom.5

They wrote to clergy telling them of their methods, claiming that already two thousand children were taught in the London charity schools and urging them to discuss with those who might be sympathetic “the setting up of schools for poor children.” Books were promised together with printed instructions on the management, organisation and rules of the schools. The clergy were asked to report any progress or difficulties to the Society. From those who felt the value of such a venture there emerged a wide network of correspondents.

The recipients of charity education were such poor children... whose parents or relations were not able to afford them the ordinary means of education.7

In London this meant children of the poorer trading and labouring classes1 and sometimes included children from the workhouses. The urban schools often attempted to clothe their charity children usually in a distinctive uniform. This was a practice which, for financial reasons, was often difficult to sustain8 and one which some parents abused for their own gain.9 Some schools undertook to provide meals for their children and a few had boarding facilities. All hoped to place their children in a suitable apprenticeship though most found great difficulty in doing this and the children often had to take whatever employment they could get.10

The charity school curriculum inducted children into the beliefs of the Christian faith and prepared them to occupy labouring positions in society.11 Reading, writing, elementary arithmetic and instruction in the catechism were usual though occasionally some industrial or domestic work was included. The famous picture of a charity education painted in the handbook for charity teachers by James Talbot in 1707, *The Christian School Master*, bore but slight resemblance to the facts as recorded in the records of individual schools.

**THE PROBLEM**

Studies of the Charity School Movement fall under two headings. Firstly there are studies of individual charity schools usually written by headteachers,11 local historians12 or research students.13 Secondly, there are accounts of the movement which either describe it as a whole or in part.18 Most of these studies are quite unsatisfactory. It is surprising in view of the richness and abundance of some of the manuscript material that more adequate studies of the individual schools have not been written.19 A majority of the existing histories are no more than insubstantial pamphlets, while longer studies continually fail to consider the social and economic context of the school preferring rather to engage in elaborate descriptions of its educational and administrative trivia. It is even more surprising that there is no satisfactory history of the S.P.C.K. The Society deserves more discriminating and scholarly histories than either of those offered by W. O. B. Allan with E. McClure and W. K. Lowther Clark.21 The archives of the Society, both printed and manuscript are exceptional but as yet have not been properly evaluated.22 The need for such an evaluation is evident when reading the general history of the Charity School Movement. Students have been too inclined to take the S.P.C.K. material at its face value. In the case of most studies this has led to significant errors. With respect to the standard text M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, it has led not only to factual mistakes but to a partial and distorted picture of the movement and particularly of the role played by the S.P.C.K. This distortion, taken up by the general histories of education, has become received opinion. There are very few exceptions to the stricture that students of the Charity School Movement have either attempted too much with too little critical analysis or have been too modest with too slight a regard for sources. In the first case, lack of perception has resulted in serious imbalance, in the second, oversimplification has resulted in grotesque misrepresentation.

Despite general agreement that the S.P.C.K. provides basic sources for an understanding of the Charity School Movement during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, there has been disquiet among some students concerning the accuracy of its records. Corrections to the Society’s published lists of charity schools occur in the work of W. E. Tate,24 though this did not cause him to change his opinion that the Society was ‘the founder of the
English system of national education. The effect of this unreliability of sources on the assessment of the role of the S.P.C.K. in charity education in Leicestershire has been clearly and forcefully demonstrated by J. Simon. Her analysis of the S.P.C.K. evidence for Leicestershire charity schools (excluding Leicester) shows that of the thirty-five schools named by the Society only one, the Ashby Subscription School, counts as 'a charity school proper'.

The others were either established seventeenth century foundations, parish schools with free places, traditional endowed schools, schools organised by incumbents or non-existent. Although it is arguable that there is a narrowness in Mrs. Simon's proposed definition of a charity school, her interpretation of the facts is suggestive and deserves evaluation with respect to other counties. If the Leicestershire evidence reflects a general trend, a radical revision of the place of the Society in the history of popular education will be needed.

It is important to analyse the Lincolnshire charity schools listed by the S.P.C.K. for this diocese as an exemplar in the provision of charity education and its schools were specially indicated in the Society's lists. It had more charity schools than any other English county. This may be attributed to the strong support the Society's aims received from William Wake and Edmund Gibson, bishops of Lincoln at a time of rapid growth for the Charity School Movement at national level.

The principal printed evidence in the archives of the S.P.C.K. relating to Lincolnshire is the Account, an annual return of the schools. It can be supplemented by material in the minutes of the Standing Committee and the General Committee of the Society, by the original correspondence and letter abstracts. The accuracy of the Lincolnshire returns in the S.P.C.K. Account can be determined by checking them against the Speculum. This is a manuscript record of information given by clergy to Bishops Wake and Gibson during their visitations of 1706, 1709, 1712, 1715, 1718 and 1721. It is a reliable guide to educational provision in the archdeaconries of Lincoln and Stow, although the form in which the information is arranged and the practice of making additions at unspecified dates, limits the precision with which it can be used. Among queries made in his 'Letter of Advertisement to the Clergy of the Diocese' Bishop Wake asked,

Is there any Lecture, School, Alms-House or Hospital endowed within your parish? And what is the Endowment of it?

Bishop Gibson was more thorough and his 'Letter and Queries to the Clergy of the Diocese' asked,

Is there any Publick or Charity School, endowed or otherwise maintained in your Parish? What number of children are taught in it? And what care is taken to instruct them in the Principles of the Christian Religion according to the Doctrine of the Church of England, and to bring them to Church, as the Canon requires?

Further corroboration depends on the extent to which local records which have some relevance to the educational provision in each parish have survived or the degree to which sources, like the Reports of the Charity Commissioners, have used material no longer extant. However, the correlation and comparison of the Accounts and the Speculum provide a basic framework for an understanding of the Charity School Movement in Lincolnshire. This simple exercise is all that is attempted here.

In the first published Account of 1704 the S.P.C.K. recorded charity schools in Lincolnshire at Denton, Stamford and Lincoln — which had two schools — at Spilsby and 'fifteen towns thereabouts'. By 1713 there were sixty-nine places which either had charity schools or where there was an active preparation for their provision. This had increased to eighty-three places by 1724, some of which had more than one school. During this period changes in the Account occurred not only as new schools were added but as proposed schools failed to emerge, as existing ones could not continue and as errors were corrected.

The Society was quite alive to its problems of communication for information was sent to it by local correspondents who varied in the care they took to investigate schools, corroborate facts and in the way they interpreted the word 'charity'. It excused its mistakes by commenting that,

Perhaps some are unavoidable in a relation of so many particular Matters of Fact, especially considering the Changes several of the Schools may possibly have undergone in the Time wherein Notices of them have been collecting.

An attempt at accuracy was made in compiling the Account. Correspondents were requested to write in a 'large hand' and corrections like changing Hilby to Keeby occur. However, the Society was often not in a position to discriminate between a sensible proposal for a school and a pious hope for one, though it usually inclined towards the most encouraging interpretation of plans.

Of the schools listed by the S.P.C.K. between 1704 and 1724 two incorrect entries can be removed. Barnack and Hannestone are not Lincolnshire parishes. The first is located in Northamptonshire and the second is non-existent. The remainder can be grouped as follows:

1. Schools endowed prior to 1699
2. Schools endowed after 1699
3. Schools with an endowment prior to 1724 but of uncertain date
4. Schools (or children) paid for by a private person or persons
   (a) The incumbent (and others)
   (b) Local patrons and benefactors
   (c) Voluntary contributions
5. Urban Charity Schools

1 SCHOOLS ENDOwed PRIOR TO 1699

The S.P.C.K. claimed as charity schools nineteen foundations which were envisaged prior to its establishment in 1699. Clearly these schools were not inspired by either the precept or the example of the Society. Although both the Speculum and the Account agree that the schools in question existed during the first two decades of the eighteenth century as the Charity School Movement gathered momentum, they can be eliminated for there is no evidence of their change of character and organisation due to the influence of the Society. These schools are Wrangle and Burgh-le-Marsh which had sixteenth century endowments; Hatton, Stow and Waddington which had endowments from the first half of the seventeenth century; and Astersby, Billington, South Carlton, Crowle, Faldingworth, Grantham, Horbling, Louth, North Somercotes, Raithby, Stickney, Surfleet, Witham-on-the-Hill and Wrawby which had endowments from the second half of the seventeenth century.

Both the Speculum and the Account record the endowment of the school at Wrangle. Thomas Alenson, Roman Catholic priest and Vicar of Wrangle during the reign of Philip and Mary, made a provision for the school in his will of 1555. There is firm evidence of the continuation of this school into the first quarter of the
eighteenth century. Both also agree on an endowment of £10 per annum for the school at Burgh-le-Marsh made in the will of John Holden in 1503. The S.P.C.K. declares that the money was derived from ‘lands left to superstitious uses’, probably referring to the fact that it was originally intended to provide for the support of a charity priest. Each gives £6 per annum for the school at Hatton, a sum originally left in the will of Mr. Henage Smith in 1616 to be used for the education of the village children. For the school in Stow they agree on £12 per annum. This combined an annuity of £5 given by the Countess Dowager of Warwick in 1626 with a further annual £7 left by Edward Burgh in a will declared by the Charity Commissioners to be ‘evidently void’. The Speculum mentions for Waddington a sum of £1 per annum for the education of four ‘poor children’, while the Society simply notes that four children are taught there ‘for a small annual pension’. They are referring to a provision made in the will of the Revd. Thomas Swift in 1646. To these four children were added another sixteen ‘being taught at the expense of the Minister’. This school was to become a subscription charity school at a much later date according to the Charity Commissioners. At Aystbury they disagree on the amount of the endowment, the Speculum giving £30 per annum and the Account £50 per annum. Anthony Acham of Holborn, whose will of 1638 was proved in 1691 left £10 per annum to pay for a master to teach the children of this parish and Goulceby. The higher figures could reflect additional unknown endowments or an increase in the value of the land set aside for this payment. Both confirm a school and an endowment at Billingborough the gift of the Toller family. The earliest provision was of £6 per annum made by John Toller ‘about 1669’ and continued by his son, also John Toller, who conveyed this amount by deed in 1686. For South Carlton only the Speculum mentions that £10 per annum was given by Sir H. Monson. The S.P.C.K. simply reports that a school was endowed by Sir John Monson. This is a reference to a will of 1678 requiring £200 to be invested for the school. The £10 this produced each year was to be used to teach children at the school built by Sir John. Both agree that the school at Crowle was endowed with £6 per annum which combined the rents left by Richard Brewer in his will of 1687 ‘for the teaching of 20 children of the poorer sort’ with money from the land left ‘for the teaching of poor children of that parish’ by Thomas Walker in his will of 1692. £5 per annum appears in both sources for the school at Faldingworth and probably refers to an annuity from land in Bassettingham given in 1662 by the Countess Dowager of Warwick. They concur in mentioning a yearly provision of £12 at Grantham, although the Society adds that this was augmented by a further £30 per annum. Revd. Dr. Thomas Hurst endowed this school in his will of 1671. They are also in agreement that £6. 10s. per annum was left for the education of ten poor children at Horbling. This was the gift of Edward Brown in his will of 1691. The schools at Louth had £16 per annum according to both sources. It is described in the Speculum as an A.B.C.D. school. Robert Maplecroft, Master of Pembroke Hall and Dean of Ely provided for this school in a codicil to his will of 1676. They both record the endowment of the school at North Somercotes, but only the Speculum gives the master’s stipend as £10 per annum, a sum which dates back to a gift of John Mottram in 1691. They agree on £6 per annum as the endowment of the school at Raithby. This endowment, given in the will of Thomas Lawford in 1683, was available for the children of Enderby, Hundleby and Sausthorpe as well as Raithby. The school in Stickney, according to the S.P.C.K. endowed with forty-four acres of land and a house and called by the Speculum a ‘free school’, was in fact a grammar school. In his will of 1678 W. William Lovell gave land so that a school could be maintained which would, ‘instruct youth fit for the University in Latin, Greek and Hebrew’. Robert Majoram’s endowment for the school at Surfleet is recorded in the S.P.C.K. Account, the Speculum simply notes that there was an A.B.C.D. school, support for which was falling. He left land and a house in his will of 1681, part of the income from which was to pay for the education of children of the widows and ‘labouring men’ who ‘live in Rysegate and about the Fen Ends in the parishes of Surfleet and Gorbeston’. Each source agrees that at Witham on the Hill £8 a year was given so that ‘eighteen poor children could be taught’. By indenture dated 1692 Hierome Bertie and Edward Clark each paid a property rent of £4 a year to enable nine children to be taught. Finally each also mentions Wrawby as having a school endowed with £100 per annum. This was a grammar school for which Sir John Nelthorpe made provision in his will of 1669.

2 SCHOOLS ENDOWED AFTER 1699

Of the schools in Lincolnshire listed by the S.P.C.K., eighteen were either founded by endowment after 1699 but before 1724, or were existing schools which received additional endowments during this period. For only one, Epworth, is there any evidence of a firm link with the Society. The rest continue a pattern of educational provision which was as clearly established and random as it was ancient and private. These schools show none of the characteristics associated with the charity schools as they developed in London and other urban areas and in this respect they are misleadingly called ‘charity schools’. The schools are Barkston, Barlings, Benington, Long Bennington, Great Carlton, Epworth, Froxton, Hannington, South Kelsey, Malby-le-Marsh, Markston, Owering, Ruskington, Scawby, Sedgebrook, Sysonby, Waddingham and Wrotton.

The school at Barkston was endowed by Mrs. Selina Towers in 1718, though interest in it had been shown prior to this date. The Account states that subscriptions were being collected for a school in 1716 to teach sixteen children, though the Speculum stated that it was for fourteen. Rents of £10 a year were given by Edward Boulter to the school at Barlings. This endowment is dated by the Account as 1711. No school at Benington is mentioned in the Speculum though it notes that ‘some charities said to be injured by Mr. Burrell’. A letter abstract of 1712 of the Society mentions that a school was ‘lately set up for six children’. The source for this is the will of Richard Cowell who left land and property to provide for the education of six poor children in Bennington. Both the Speculum and the Account agree that the school at Long Bennington was endowed with £20 per annum by Sir Edward Smith. His will of 1716 set up a school to serve this and the two adjoining villages of Castle Carlton and Carlton Parva. The school at Epworth was established after money raised by public subscription had been used to buy land for the support of a master. It attracted an endowment of £2 a year in Robert Coggan’s will of 1713. Correspondence relating to the establishment of a school here began in 1700 when the Revd. Samuel Wesley wrote to the S.P.C.K. and told the secretary that he had informed his bishop of the Society. A year later he asked for further information about charity schools and affirmed that ‘it would be a mighty advantage if a Charity School could be set up in Epworth and the poor of the other
parishes allowed to send their children thither gratis. A stipend of £10 a year for the master of the school at Folkingham is agreed by both the Speculum and the Account. In his will of 1713 Richard Brocklesby gave rents from his land to pay for the children to be taught their catechism and to read the Bible. Sir Charles Thorold endowed the school at Harmston with £20 a year. The school is mentioned by the Account of 1711 and by a Letter Abstract of the same year which states that the endowment was for ninety-nine years. An earlier mention is of the church wardens' presentations of 1709. There is a small difference regarding the income of the school at South Kelsey for which provision was made in the will of Lady Mary Ayscough in 1712, the Account giving £6 a year as against £7 10s. in the Speculum. At Maltby-le-Marsh Mrs. Ann Bolle's will of 1705 ordered rents from her farm in the village to be paid for a schoolmaster. The Society gave his stipend as £10 per annum and the Speculum as £14. Three schools were formed as a result of Dame Margaret Thorold's endowments in her will of 1718. The schools at Marston and Sedgebrook received £15 and that at Syston £5 per annum. In his will of 1705 Alexander Wrawby left £80 with which land was to be purchased. The rent from this to was to provide the master of the school at Owersby with his stipend. His income is variously given as £6, £7 and £11 a year. A small income for a school at Ruskington is confirmed. The £2 per annum left for the school by Mr. Martha Chamberlain in 1709 was augmented by a further £10 in 1710 in the will of Ann Hodgson. Sir Richard Nelthorpe's will of 1705 provided for a school building at Scawby. The Speculum records an endowment of £4 10s. while the Account gives £3 per annum. Both sources agree on an annual endowment of £8 for the school at Waddingham. This amount was given for a master's stipend in the will of James Thompson in 1719. They also confirm an endowment for the school at Woot. This was made by Henry Travers in his will of 1710.

3 SCHOOLS WITH AN ENDOWMENT PRIOR TO 1724 BUT OF UNCERTAIN DATE

The Society included in its lists a few schools which are of uncertain date but which received an endowment prior to 1724. There is no direct evidence to link their educational provision with the S. P. C. K. As with schools in the preceding section they can only misleadingly be called 'charity schools'. These schools are Bilby, Digby, Kenby, Ludborough and Stallingborough.

The Speculum and the Account both state that there was a school at Bilby for ten children. Its income of £5 a year was derived from land given to the school by Mr. Thomas Johnson at 'an unknown date'. The Charity Commissioners comment that, 'No documents showing the origin of this charity were forthcoming'. An endowment of £1 per annum at Digby to enable three poor children to read is recorded in both documents. The same survey is again confirmed in both sources for Kenby. The Charity Commissioners observe the same amount and, taking their information from the Parliamentary Returns of 1786, state that the donor is unknown as well as the date of the gift. Ludborough was endowed with £7 per annum and the Parliamentary Returns again give neither the donor nor the date of the endowment. Stallingborough, John Appleby left in a will, whose date is unknown, £1 a year for the instruction of four boys.

4 SCHOOLS (OR CHILDREN) PAID FOR BY A PRIVATE PERSON (OR PERSONS)

Nearly half of the entries in the Society's Lincolnshire list refer to the support given to children by incumbents and local benefactors to attend parish schools.

a The Incumbent

In thirteen parishes the cost of the education of small groups of children was met by the incumbent, either alone or with others. These parishes were Barrowby, Burton Coggles, Carlton-le-Moorland, Croft, Greatford-cum-Wilsford, Hatcliffe, Holton-cum-Beckering, Ingham, North Cotes, Thorpe, Usherby, Wyberton and Wilsford.

At Barrowby the children were taught 'by what the Rector gives or procures'. The Society gives the number of children as seven while the Speculum says that it was twelve. The school at Burton Coggles was 'at the cost of the Lord of the Manor and the Minister'. The former paid for seven or eight children and the latter for six. Neither the Speculum nor the Account acknowledges an endowment of £20 given for a school at Carlton-le-Moorland in the will of John Jessop dated 1707. They simply indicate that a few poor children there were taught 'at the charge of the Minister and some private persons'. The incumbent and his churchwardens met the cost of a private school at Croft according to the Speculum, though the Account says that a subscription of £10 had been raised towards a school. The evidence for a school at Greatford-cum-Wilsford is from the Society alone. A letter abstract in 1713 from Mr. Thomas Seaton records that ten poor children were supported in a school there by Dr. Ball, the rector and Mr. Curtis, the lord of the manor. There is no confirmation of a school at Hatcliffe from the Speculum where the S. P. C. K. claimed that several children were taught 'at the charge of the Rector'. They are, however, in agreement that a few children in Holton-cum-Beckering were taught 'at the expense of the Incumbent'. At Ingham there is in the Account a school for ten children 'at the charge of the curate and two or three others'. Similarly at North Cotes, where the expense of teaching the poor was borne by the rector, there is no confirmation from the Speculum. The Society maintained that some were taught at the expense of the vicar at Thorpe. There is no confirmation of this if the reference is to Thorpe near Wainfleet. The Speculum does however state that at Thorp near Montem near Lincoln there was a school for six children. It is not clear which is intended.

At Usherby the S. P. C. K. is alone in holding that there were three children 'taught at the charge of the Minister'. There is no confirmation from the Speculum of a school at Wilsford for four children. The Society said that the incumbent gave £2 per annum for their support. Finally at Wyberton the Speculum had knowledge of a school in which there were twenty children, six of whom were paid for by the rector and the rest by 'parishioners'. The Society claimed that a school here for ten boys and ten girls was supported by subscription. It has a letter abstract which records the efforts of Mr. Shaw to set up a school in this, his parish, 'by assessment but not being countenanced by any act of Parliament it was opposed and dropped'. After receiving advice from the Society he determined to try the 'subscription method'. It was felt that should there be insufficient support in Wyberton, the adjoining village of Frampton could also be approached.

b Local Patrons and Benefactors

In a further twelve parishes local patrons or benefactors met the cost of the education of some of the children. These were Barnoldby-le-Beck, Dowsey, Edenham, Glentworth, Haconby, Marshchapel, Nettleham, Nocton, Rippingale, Trusthorpe, Washingborough and Wootton.

The school at Barnoldby-le-Beck where seven children
were taught ‘by private charity’ according to the Society, is not noted in the \textit{Speculum}. At a slightly later date than the S.P.C.K. evidence the Commissioners record that the will of Sarah Stanford, dated 1720, gave property and land to build a school at Laceby which would also serve the poor of Bradley and Barnoldby-le-Beck.\textsuperscript{116} The \textit{Speculum} and the \textit{Account} agree that the school at Dowby received £10 per annum from the lord of the manor\footnote{David Wood, “A Charity School Movement? The Lincolnshire Evidence”, Journal of Economic History, 1995, 55(2), 339-362} and that the school at Edenham was supported by ‘a Noble Lord’.\footnote{Ibid.} The Society is alone in claiming that at Glentworth the poor were taught at the expense of the lady of the manor.\footnote{Ibid.} The school at Hacconby had six poor children taught at the ‘charge of a lady’ who gave £3 a year for this purpose according to the \textit{Account}. The \textit{Speculum} agrees these figures but queries whether or not the money was given by Gilbert Heathcote, Jr. or Lady Brownlow. The same figures occur in the Commissioners’ Report which refers to an entry in an ‘old parish book of Rippingale’ stating that Lady Cust, granddaughter of Sir Richard Brownlow, paid an master of the school, William Pedder, £3 per annum in 1757.\footnote{Ibid.} Both sources confirm a school at Marshchapel where £2 a year was given to teach four boys. The \textit{Account} says that this was the gift of a private gentleman.\footnote{Ibid.} They also agree that the Bishop of Lincoln ‘put to school’ twelve children in Nettleham, though an entry in the \textit{Speculum} during this period says that the school was ‘not duly administered’ and finally was ‘intermitted’.\footnote{Ibid.} Again they are in agreement that the school at Neaton was supported by the member of Parliament, Sir William Ellis.\footnote{Ibid.} The \textit{Account} claims that at Rippingale twenty-four children were taught and that the expense of this was met by a lady and a private gentleman. The \textit{Speculum} holds that there was a public school here with a stipend of £8 per annum.\footnote{Ibid.} They both note a school at Trusthorpe which was not endowed and where the poor were taught by private charity\footnote{Ibid.} and also another at Wasingbrough (in addition to the grammar school) which was paid for by Charles Hall, lord of the manor.\footnote{Ibid.} The school at Wootton initially had £2 a year given, according to the \textit{Account} by ‘John Falding’. The Commissioners note a will of 1727 in which John Falding left £5 per annum to the school.\footnote{Ibid.}

\textbf{c Voluntary Subscriptions}

In five parishes subscriptions for the education of poor children were made. They were Brant Broughton, Bucknall, Denton, Great Hale and Skellingthorpe.

Both the \textit{Speculum} and the \textit{Account} agree that there was a school at Brant Broughton, though only the latter has that it was ‘maintained by subscription’.\footnote{Ibid.} The Society is alone in holding that at Bucknall twelve children were taught ‘upon Contribution’.\footnote{Ibid.} They agree again that the school at Denton received £10 a year raised according to the \textit{Speculum} by ‘voluntary contributions’.\footnote{Ibid.} The Society is unsupported in describing the school at Great Hale as provided for by subscription, the \textit{Speculum} simply notes that £12 per annum was given ‘during good pleasure for the Instruction of 18 poor children’.\footnote{Ibid.} The \textit{Speculum} does however state that the charity school at Skellingthorpe was ‘by subscription’. The amount subscribed annually according to the Society was £5, for twenty-five children.\footnote{Ibid.}

There are five other schools about which information in the sources is very slight. It is not immediately clear within which categories they should appear. They are Billinghay, Binbrook, Fillingham, Potterhanworth and North Hykeham. At both Billinghay\footnote{Ibid.} and Binbrook\footnote{Ibid.} there is only the evidence of the S.P.C.K. list that the poor were taught by the vicar (though it could be argued that the \textit{Speculum} refers to a school at the latter). Both sources confirm a school at Fillingham for twenty children, the Society claiming that it was erected in 1709.\footnote{Ibid.} They also agree on one at Potterhanworth.\footnote{Ibid.} The \textit{Account} is the source for the school at North Hykeham providing for sixteen children and erected in 1709.\footnote{Ibid.}

\textbf{5 URBAN CHARITY SCHOOLS}

There were nine schools in Lincolnshire which approximated to the pattern of the metropolitan charity school as promoted by the S.P.C.K. and as developed in various urban centres. There is clear correspondence between them and the criteria suggested by Mrs. Simon.\footnote{Ibid.} They were in Lincoln, where there were five schools, Boston, Spalding, Spilsby and Stamford.

The \textit{Account} and the \textit{Speculum} agree that in Lincoln there were eventually five charity schools. They were St. Martin’s; St. Peter’s, Eastgate; St. Peter at Gows; St. Paul in the Ball and St. Swithin’s. Each was ‘a charity school by subscription’, taking thirty pupils between the ages of six and ten years. Initially at least the teachers were the wives of clergyman.\footnote{Ibid.} One of the Society’s correspondents in Lincolnshire, John Disney, complained to the secretary of the S.P.C.K. that ‘in several respects’ the \textit{Account} presents the Lincoln schools ‘more to advantage than they deserve’.\footnote{Ibid.} But the precise nature of this stricture is not clear.

At Boston the \textit{Speculum} gives a public school, an ‘endowed school for reading and writing’ and two charity schools ‘one of boys, the other of girls’. The \textit{Account} gives three schools, two schools which clothed boys and girls and a third which received £30 a year from ‘Mr. John Loughton’.\footnote{Ibid.} The Blue Coat School was established in 1713 by subscription though it also attracted bequests. It was ‘erected upon the Common Plan mentioned in the Annual Printed Account’.\footnote{Ibid.} This is the clearest possible evidence of the influence of the S.P.C.K. at Boston. That it was a continuing influence in the early period of the school’s history is evident from the correspondence between the school and the Society concerning its staff.\footnote{Ibid.} The school provided for boys and girls—a not uncommon practice for some of the urban charity schools—thus giving rise to the claim that there were two schools. Besides provision for a grammar school dating from the mid-sixteenth century, a school was endowed by John Loughton in 1707 for twenty-five children though this does not appear to be connected with the Society.

As well as the grammar school founded in 1588 and the Petit School founded in 1682 by Thomas Willsby, there was in Spalding the Blue Coat School. The \textit{Speculum} states that it had an income of £16 a year, the \textit{Account} describes this as an endowment. The Commissioners record that the school house was the gift of John Gamlyn and that in 1710 the townspeople rebuilt and renewed it, starting also a subscription ‘for educating and clothing poor children’.\footnote{Ibid.} This school attracted bequests subsequently.

The \textit{Speculum} and the \textit{Account} are in agreement on a charity school in Spilsby. It started in 1716 for twenty boys and twelve girls but a year later twenty-four boys and sixteen girls were ‘taught and clothed’. They came not only from Spilsby but from Toynott, Hundleby and Halton.\footnote{Ibid.} There is correspondence about this school in the archives of the Society.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Blue Coat school at Stamford was founded in 1704. Its numbers fluctuated in the early years. The \textit{Speculum} noted a school ‘for instructing et exercendis 80 poor children’ while the \textit{Account} claimed that it had a hundred and that it was intended to take two hundred and fifty. By 1718 the school had ‘sunk from 70 children to 41’ due to ‘factions and parties’.\footnote{Ibid.} An extensive correspondence with the Society reflects the changing fortunes of this school.\footnote{Ibid.}
CONCLUSIONS

1 Schools Linked with or Influenced by the S.P.C.K.

86 schools were claimed by the S.P.C.K. for Lincolnshire during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. 19 of these can be eliminated as being established prior to the foundation of the Society itself, leaving 67 schools. One of the 18 schools endowed after 1699 and before 1724, Epworth, and none of the five schools with an uncertain date of endowment, has a link with the Society so a further 22 can be withdrawn leaving 45 schools. Only one of the 13 schools supported by an incumbent, Wyberton, and none of the 12 supported by other benefactors was connected with the S.P.C.K. reducing the total by 24 to 21 schools. One of the 5 schools supported by voluntary subscription, Denton, and none of the other 5 about which information is slight, has an association with the Society, eliminating a further 9 schools, leaving a final count of 12 schools remaining. Of these 12 the 9 urban charity schools show the influence of the S.P.C.K. in their foundation, organisation and curriculum. Thus of the 86 schools in the Accounts for Lincolnshire 12 appear to be influenced by the S.P.C.K., viz. the 9 urban charity schools and the schools at Epworth, Wyberton and Denton.

2 The Evidence of the Speculum

In this analysis the Speculum is taken to be a reliable source insofar as it is able to indicate whether or not a school was established within a particular parish. This reliability derives from the circumstances under which its information was collected. When making comparisons between it and the Account, some fluctuation regarding numbers of pupils need not usually be significant given the nature of many of the schools. Variation with regard to endowments is more serious and unless there is other evidence, e.g. independent letter abstracts in the Society’s archives, the Speculum is usually to be preferred to the Account. Where the Account has a school not recorded in the Speculum this may be because it lacked an endowment — Bishop Wake asked only for endowed schools; it lapsed prior to the relevant visitation; it was not regarded as a school in the Society’s wide use of that word.

3 The Evidence of the S.P.C.K.

The Society’s practice of producing lists of schools in their various Accounts created the impression that these schools had been founded in the very recent past; that they were of a fairly uniform kind with some common and easily discernable characteristics; and that the Society was either directly or indirectly instrumental in their foundation. None of these is wholly accurate, particularly with reference to rural schools.

In the Lincolnshire lists over a fifth of the schools mentioned were older than the society itself and included endowed parish schools as well as established grammar schools. Even where schools were contemporaneous with the Society its influence over them was marginal. Most schools were founded according to differing but established patterns — they received endowments, they were supported during the interest of a patron or a family, they were organised and sometimes taught by the clergy.

It needs to be clearly understood that the Society was very loose in its use of the concept ‘charity school’. Some of the schools listed were no more than catechetical classes held in church on Sundays; others were really some provision of free places for the poor in an existing parish school; others referred to a room of a house where a few children were occasionally instructed in the rudiments of a particular skill — usually reading — and might have little permanence.

It is less easy to determine the instrumentality of the S.P.C.K. in founding schools. Correspondents reported the situation in their area as they found and understood it. Thus schools would often — probably usually — appear in S.P.C.K. lists without their knowledge, though there are a few obvious and well documented exceptions to this where the particular correspondent was himself closely involved in the management of a school. It is entirely characteristic of its method of compiling lists that the Society wrote to Mr. John Disney, one of its Lincolnshire correspondents, in 1714 desiring

Mr. Disney to inform them of the Revenue of the Blew Coat Hospital in Lincoln and the particulars of its application, but to procure it without letting it be known that the Society have any hand in making the inquiry.

In the rural areas of Lincolnshire little significant direct influence of the Society in the establishment of schools can be detected. Indirectly the situation is less decisive. Certainly the number of schools founded in Lincolnshire in the first quarter of the eighteenth century needs explanation. This expansion can, however, be more attributed to the interest and stimulus of Bishops Wake and Gibson than to the Society. Even in this diocese where the diocesan influence of the S.P.C.K. was slight, it had with the bishops is slight and hardly offers grounds to maintain its influence on the schools via the diocesan.

4 WAS THERE A CHARITY SCHOOL MOVEMENT?

The S.P.C.K. lists together with other material need careful analysis county by county to establish both the precise nature of the schools included and the degree of influence of the Society upon them. This present study of the Lincolnshire schools, suggesting a considerably diminished role for the S.P.C.K., sufficiently supports Mrs. Simon’s conclusions, to raise again her question, ‘Was there a Charity School Movement?’ Until the relevant studies have been undertaken the best answer available is still a guess. It seems, however, as if the charity school must be regarded as an urban, indeed principally a metropolitan, phenomenon rather than a rural one.

It is crucial to decide what a ‘charity school’ is to mean. The all-embracing view of the S.P.C.K. only confuses by obliterating distinctions.

It is probably best to see it as a school catering for the children of the settled urban poor between the ages of seven and twelve years. It would attempt to clothe its pupils as well as instruct them in the rudiments of learning, particularly Christian knowledge. Occasionally it might feed and board them and when they were old enough it would seek apprenticeships for them. It would normally be founded and maintained by annual subscription though it tended to attract small legacies. Usually it was managed by a small committee. The distinction between this school and what is indicated in the Account and Speculum as the ‘charity schools’ of rural Lincolnshire is very clear.

FOOTNOTES

1 S.P.C.K. General Board Minutes, 8 March 1698 (Old Style).
2 Ibid. 18 May 1699, 5 June 1699, 20 July 1699, 17 August 1699, 5 October 1699.
3 Ibid. 5 June 1699, 6 July 1699, 1 September 1699, 26 October 1699.
4 Ibid. 13 July 1699, 5 August 1699, 29 September 1699.
5 Ibid. 2 November 1699.
6 Ibid. 2 February 1699.
7 Ibid. 2 November 1699.
8 London County Council Archives (subsequently L.C.C.), Archbishop Tenison’s Charity School, Minute Book, 1706; Guildhall Library (subsequently G.L.), St. Anne’s Charity School, Blackfriars, Minute Book, 1707.
9 Hounslow Public Library (subsequently H.P.L.), Bluecoat School,
The text appears to be a page from a book or a journal, discussing the history of a school in Lincolnshire and related church schools. The text includes references to historical sources and individuals, and mentions the town of Sleaford, among others.
poor parents will send to school. Other ministers have applied the
offerings of collections at communion to the charitable purpose.
And in some few parishes, the more able rectors of them have
founded and perpetually endowed such charity schools. And by lay
people many considerable gifts and legacies have been bestow’d and
bequeath’d to this pious use." (See also Accounts, 1710 and 1713.)

159 None of these characters, it should be interpreted too rigidly.
Exceptions and variations can be easily found in the practices of
individual schools. For these see D. H. Webster, A Study of
Anglican Charity Schools in the Eighteenth Century With Particular
Reference To The Parts Played by the S.P.C.K. and The London

Book Review

ECONOMIC POLICY AND PROJECTS
The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern
England by Joan Thirsk, viii + 199pp., Clarendon Press,
1978, £6.00; TRADE AND INDUSTRY IN TUDOR AND
STUART ENGLAND by Sybil M. Jack, 200pp., Allen and
Unwin, 1977, £4.95 paper, £10.50 hard covers.

Anyone who has studied probate inventories of the
household goods of husbandmen will have been struck
by the contrast between those of the first half of the 16th
century, comprising only bare necessities, and those of the
late 17th century, with their wide range of consumer goods.
This change, its causes and its significance for the
economic and social history of England, is the subject of
Dr. Thirsk’s Ford lectures of 1975, published with an
additional Conclusion. ‘Projects’, practical schemes for
manufacturing or growing goods for consumption at
home, were the means by which the change was wrought.
Their inspiration is attributed to the Commonwealthmen
under Edward VI who sought thereby to replace expensive
imports and to employ the poor, and their fostering
became a definite government policy under Cecil.

Dr. Thirsk traces projects in the period from 1540 to
1624 and describes the new occupations and established
industries which developed from them and which swiftly
but unobtrusively spread over the country, unchecked
by the scandals of patents of monopoly. Projects often
took root in rural areas. They required little capital outlay
but a considerable labour supply which was readily
available owing to the increase of population. Wool
warping, tobacco growing, wax refining, and the
production of linen and oil, and pin making were labour-
intensive processes. Many of the new occupations, such as
stocking knitting, were part-time employments carried on
by families engaged in agriculture. Without such
employment the labouring classes could not have endured
inflationary prices, but with them their earnings rose so
that they themselves could afford to buy the products of
the new rural industries, cheap consumer goods. As a result
internal trade increased, the home market expanded, and
Dr. Thirsk discovers the beginnings of the modern
consumer society. Many aspects of local history, some
particularly relevant to Lincolnshire, are illuminated by
her original approach to rural industries, and her very
readable book will stimulate and inspire.

Mrs. Jack’s book complements Dr. Thirsk’s in that it
deals mainly with the basic capital-intensive industries. She
provides some useful accounts of the progress of individual
industries and also an appendix of original documents. Her
work, however, makes difficult reading and is complicated
by being a re-examination of the evidence for Professor
Netl’s ‘industrial revolution’, long ago challenged and
undermined. Concerned to measure economic growth, she
can only find ‘sporadic growth in specific and unrelated
industries at diverse points of time’.

MARY FINCH

LINCOLN