

Educational Experiences of Deaf Children in Wales: The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1847-1914

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Summary

This thesis is an extensive analysis of the records of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Wales' first institution for boarding and educating deaf children, from 1847 to 1914. The Institution opened in Aberystwyth in 1847, moving to Swansea in 1850. The study explores the institutional sources, asking what can they show the historian about public attitudes to disability and deafness, and what can be learned about the everyday lives of those who attended the Institution. The thesis will examine the major discourses in special education such as the rise of oralism and the increasing role of the state through the 1893 Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, arguing that the Institution's response illustrates the complexity of their application in Wales and Britain. However, equal emphasis will be played on the routines, backgrounds and leisure lives of the pupils themselves. It will be suggested that the melodramatic and tragic imagery projected in public by the Institution differed greatly from daily life.

The work is placed firmly in its historical and social context. It challenges historical frameworks which rightly explain the construction of attitudes to disability and deafness, but leave little room for individual variation between pupils and institutions. Likewise, the problematic notion of experience will be explored, questioning the extent to which the voice of the pupils can be found using sources almost exclusively written by the Institution's staff. Finally, the thesis will argue that wider contemporary issues are reflected in the Institution's records, not those exclusive to deaf children. These include the spread of Victorian philanthropy, the changing social role of education, and the impact of family lives and leisure time for children. It is argued that disabled and deaf children in institutions were not passive victims but active agents, participating in all of these discourses.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On 15th September 1848, the newspaper *The Welshman* printed a report from the first Annual General Meeting of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. It reflected upon the first year of Wales' first formal institution for boarding and educating deaf children, founded in a small house in Aberystwyth with two day scholars (though, by the end of the first year, eight children had been admitted):

Now if it be the duty (as it unquestionably is) of the affluent inhabitants of Wales to minister to the instruction and relief of their ignorant and destitute neighbours, it is most emphatically their duty to provide for the education of those surrounded with a double wall of ignorance - THE DEAF AND DUMB OF THE PRINCIPALITY.¹

With no previous forms of institutionalised education for deaf children available in the Principality, the philanthropists and wealthy benefactors of Wales were bound by 'duty' to provide care and schooling to those described as afflicted or ignorant. The report illustrated the urgency, tragedy and sense of pride which characterised the Institution. It recognised the need for deaf schooling, and sent a plea for assistance to those who could help, informed by dramatic and tragic interpretations of the children's deafness.

This thesis will centre around a detailed study of this Institution, which moved to Swansea in 1850 and remained there until World War II forced a permanent evacuation from the building; in 1897 the title Royal was awarded to celebrate the Jubilee year.² The thesis will examine the school from its foundation until 1914, an

¹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Aberystwyth, for the year ending 30th June, 1848* (Aberystwyth, 1848), 25.

² The National Archives Kew, HO 144/407/B23782 Home Office Correspondence: Title Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. The shortened title of 'Cambrian Institution' will be used throughout the thesis.

end date which has been chosen in order to concentrate on specifically Victorian and Edwardian attitudes towards deafness and events in the history of education.³ Being an inmate of the Institution was one of very few methods of deaf education in Wales in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In many ways this was a typical deaf institution. It took in pupils for instruction and boarding, and offered the religious and moral training common in most Victorian schooling. Yet in other ways it was different. From the 1870s, for example, it had one of the only deaf headmasters in Britain, and its response to major discourses in deaf education was not always consistent with the norm.

The study will present a portrait of the Institution which seeks an understanding both of the motivations of the educators and benefactors and asks what can be uncovered about the experiences of the children who lived and studied there. It will, therefore, address questions both about the children's lives and educations and the forces which presented them to the wider public as 'ignorant and destitute'. Yet it is also necessary to compare and contrast its developments with major legislative and attitudinal issues in special education, and to examine the Institution against historical arguments and theories from disability and deaf history. This chapter will begin to establish the context, before the remainder of the chapter places the detailed case study against this social and intellectual framework.

This introductory chapter will survey the existing literature on disability history and map out the perspective which the thesis will take. It will be framed by developments in disability and deaf history. Older literature focused mostly on medical, political and educational achievement will be reviewed and critiqued, before analysing the contribution of works focussed on the social, materialist and cultural attitudes towards disability. The obstacles faced when writing disability history will be examined, including the interconnected but problematic relationship between deaf and disability history. Thus the chapter will introduce a number of other broad themes which will be

³ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1892* (Swansea, 1892), 22; John Hay, 'Postcard Corner: Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb', *Deaf History Journal*, 8:3 (2005), 40-1. The Institution will also be referred to as a school throughout the thesis.

dealt with throughout the thesis. The problematic exercise of discerning deaf children's historical experience and agency will be discussed as a central issue of the thesis, and presented as a challenge facing all historians of education and childhood. Similarly, the role that deaf children played in national discourses of education and the social construction of childhood will be introduced in a historiographical context. The goal is to locate the Cambrian Institution within the issues and problems surrounding disability and deaf history, whilst recognising the importance of broader themes and developments. This chapter will begin by surveying the literature which has emerged as a coherent body of disability history, arguing for its importance as a theoretical context to this thesis, with deafness specifically examined later in the chapter.

Disability history: medical and social

Histories of disability which recognise disabled people as historical actors have only recently begun to be written. A number of detailed accounts of policies for 'the disabled' or 'the handicapped' have been compiled which end with improved legislation and technology, and allegedly improved lives. Likewise, biographies of individuals working in the professional area of the care and education of disabled people or histories of individual institutions are no new invention. However, historians have now begun to consider a historical perspective on disability which rejects a linear narrative approach. Contemporary disability history has mostly shifted its focus to the lives of disabled people themselves and the institutional and social forces which affected them. Doing this has brought to light the possibly harmful effects of policies and attitudes once portrayed as progressive. Yet even with these developments, there remains a noticeable lack of work which specifically addresses the history of disability or special education, and almost no detailed studies related to Wales. This section will consider the wider historiography of disability, before later moving to the contested position of deafness within disability history.

Disability historians have highlighted both the major problems with existing historical accounts of disability and the issues and questions with which historians should frame future work. Commentators on the need for disability history such as Elizabeth Bredberg and B.J. Gleeson, both separately writing in the journal *Disability and Society*, have signalled the importance of treating disability as a complex and important historical issue. They critique the lack of historical research specifically focused on disability, and the overreliance on institutional perspectives characteristic of much existing work.⁴ Some historians have argued that disability history is of importance to the present-day movements and campaigns participated in by disabled people. To this extent, many have stressed similarities to the role of race and gender history due to the portrayal of disabled people as an important social category which is still fighting for its rights.⁵ Introducing their collection of essays on the *New Disability History*, Longmore and Umansky suggest that insights into the discrimination faced by disabled people in history is crucial evidence for modern disabled people demanding full citizenship. Put simply, 'This history matters, and not in the abstract.'⁶

As well as recognising disability history as a field, disability historians have drawn attention to the near-invisibility of disabled people in other historical works. Disabled people and disability as a metaphor are both prevalent throughout history, yet are rarely addressed as valid historical agents. As Douglas Baynton argues, 'Disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write.'⁷ Yet disability is a difficult subject to categorise, especially from a historical angle. There is a wealth of sources available, but historians have been reluctant to include disabled people either as a group or as visible members of a society. This is due either to neglect to include disability as a focus for inquiry or, as

⁴ Elizabeth Bredberg, 'Writing Disability History: Problems, Perspectives and Sources', *Disability & Society*, 14:2 (1999), 189; B.J. Gleeson, 'Disability Studies: A Historical Materialist View', *Disability & Society*, 12:2 (1997), 181.

⁵ Catherine J. Kudlick, 'Disability History: Why We Need Another "Other"', *The American Historical Review*, 108:3 (2003), 763; Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs* (Abingdon, 2006), 29-30; Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History' in Paul Longmore, P.K. and Lauri Umansky (eds.), *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 34.

⁶ Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, 'Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream' in Longmore and Umansky (eds.), *The New Disability History*, 14.

⁷ Baynton, 'Disability', 52.

Longmore and Umansky suggest, a kind of 'existential anxiety' which it can stirred up in non-disabled people: 'that which we fear, we shun.'⁸

Until the rise of disability studies in the 1970s, there were few attempts to write specifically about disability or disabled people in history. As Gleeson points out, the existing attempts were deeply flawed and ideologically questionable, such as Watson's 1930 book *Civilization and the Cripple*, which portrayed the 'cripple' as a historical burden, a subject in need of medical assistance and a 'social problem' from the nineteenth century onwards.⁹ Most references to disability were in the context of institutional progress or medical achievement, written from the perspective of clinicians and professionals administering the treatment.¹⁰ This longstanding, individualised 'medical model' has in recent decades been criticised for its characterisation of disability as a problem in need of a cure, a 'personal tragedy' which affects only negatively those afflicted.¹¹

The response was the social model of disability. This was intertwined with the rise of disability studies, and was an essential tool for challenging the inadequate linear narratives of progress offered by medically and institutionally-focused historical accounts. Though there is no universally-accepted definition of the social model, the British interpretation is based on a statement by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation in 1975, which argued that disability is 'imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society.'¹² A distinction is thus made between impairment and

⁸ Longmore and Umansky, 'Disability History', 7.

⁹ Frederick Watson, *Civilisation and the Cripple* (London: J. Bale & Co., 1930), 5; Gleeson, 'Disability Studies', 186.

¹⁰ Bredberg, 'Writing Disability History', 190-1. Bredberg's study offers a number of examples of the use of the medical model of disability in history.

¹¹ Kudlick, 'Disability History', 772; David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, 'Disability Studies and the Double Bind of Representation' in David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (eds.), *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 1; Longmore and Umansky, 'Disability History', 8; Sally Tomlinson, *A Sociology of Special Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 39; Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 10.

¹² Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 'Fundamental Principles of Disability' <<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/UPIAS/fundamental%20principles.pdf>> (1975).

disability. The Northern Officer Group, an organisation of disabled people working in local government, clarified the difference between the two terms in their 1999 document 'Defining Impairment and Disability': impairment was 'an injury, illness, or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological function' whilst disability was 'the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers'.¹³ In social model theory, a clear barrier exists between the two – impairment is based purely on physical difference whilst disability is a social issue: the former does not simply 'cause' the latter, societal barriers do. The social model was adapted to new studies of disability history to argue against the portrayal of disability as an individual tragedy in need of treatment. The focus was instead on the mechanisms of society that caused the oppression of disabled people. These included the medical or educational institutions, previously only celebrated in historical accounts of disability.

A close look at the use of the social model in history reveals that, whilst being an important change in disability history and a crucial device for critiquing historical attitudes towards disability, it has a number of weaknesses, which make it an inadequate overarching narrative. The most notable example is the materialist school of disability history, which adopted the social model to create a primarily economic explanation of how modern practices of discrimination and exclusion of disabled people came into being. Vic Finkelstein, for instance, created a narrative based on three phases. Phase One started at the beginning of the modern era and saw disabled people as part of a generally oppressed social group, but not segregated for their impairments. If there was a widespread attitude towards disability, it was one of personal misfortune or sin. Phase Two centred around industrialisation, which created the production line technology (designed for non-disabled people) and institutions designed for disabled people (such as asylums) which in Finkelstein's view turned the 'cripples' of Phase One into passive and oppressed disabled people unable to work

Accessed 5 February 2010; Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs* (London: Routledge, 2006), 29.

¹³ Northern Officer Group, 'Defining Impairment and Disability' < <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Northern%20Officers%20Group/defining%20impairment%20and%20disability.pdf> > (1999) Accessed 5 February 2010, 1.

and supposedly in need of care and support. Eventually, Phase Three will see the reintegration of disabled people, the 'elimination of disability'.¹⁴

Finkelstein's theory is a good example of both the strengths and limitations of materialist disability history. He highlighted the ways in which society created barriers for disabled people which arguably still exist today; Finkelstein was himself a vociferous campaigner for disability issues. Yet the phases are not fully defined (no date is given for the start of the 'modern era' of Phase One) and there are undoubtedly problems with attributing almost all of his definition of disability to the industrialisation period, with little recognition of individual differences and inconsistencies within the phases. Such a fixed narrative can obscure the individual lives of disabled people, and what they were doing in response to their exclusion from society. Michael Oliver similarly used Marxist theory to criticise the segregationist practices of the workhouse. Oliver focused on the ways in which industrialised society excluded disabled people from the labour market by separating work from home, hence causing them to be seen as a burden in need of care and isolation, which the new institutions conveniently supplied.¹⁵ This materialist reading of disability history made some crucial points, but its point of view obscured the complexity of disability history, by failing to take into account any kind of individual difference. It also attributed solely to industrialisation negative social attitudes and stereotypes which may have existed in earlier periods. David Turner's analysis of disability historiography highlights this criticism, noting, for example, that the stigmatisation of disabled people was visible in the medieval period.¹⁶ Thus the social model's rigidity became both a strength and a weakness, successfully dislodging the dominant medical model but creating problems of its own.

¹⁴ Victor Finkelstein, 'Attitudes and Disabled People: Issues for Discussion' <<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/finkelstein/attitudes.pdf>> (1980) Accessed 5 February 2010, 6-8.

¹⁵ Michael Oliver, 'Disability and the Rise of Capitalism' <<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Oliver/p%20of%20d%20Oliver3.pdf>> (1990) Accessed 5 February 2010.

¹⁶ David M. Turner, 'Introduction: Approaching Anomalous Bodies' in David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg (eds.), *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity* (London: Routledge, 2006), 6.

Recently, historians have criticised the exclusive use of the social model in historical accounts of disability, arguing in favour of a more complex picture which cannot be traced solely to material factors. These critiques convincingly point out that any historical model of disability history which focuses all its attention on one cause of disability – be this the old-fashioned personal tragedy model or an entirely social explanation – will inevitably have weaknesses. Roger Cooter notes that by dismissing all non-social readings of disability, one risks a ‘vulgar sociological rendering in terms of social control models that exclude, or can be juxtaposed to, other kinds of disability narratives.’¹⁷ Furthermore, he demonstrates that while there was indeed a ‘medicalisation’ of disability in the nineteenth century, there were few direct attempts from the medical profession to actively define disability.¹⁸ Disability as a historical construct is simply too complex to reduce to any one explanation.

Beyond the frameworks: finding a pluralist historical model of disability

By recognising the limitations of both the social and medical models, it becomes easier to identify alternative historical views of disability which resist simplistic categorisation. One of these is the understanding of disability as part of a general construction of normalcy and ‘othering’. Waltraud Ernst has explored the historical construction of these binaries, noting in particular that normality is a relatively recent construction.¹⁹ This view indeed presents disability as defined entirely by social factors, but does not rely solely on economic explanations. Lennard Davis has applied the concept of normality or ‘normalcy’ to the study of disability, emphasising not the limiting technologies of the Industrial Revolution but the global development of bodily norms as part of Enlightenment thought. For Davis, the rejection by Enlightenment thinkers of the medieval ‘idealised ruler’ created a global concept of

¹⁷ Roger Cooter, ‘The Disabled Body’ in Roger Cooter and John Pickstone (eds.), *Companion to Medicine in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2002), 381.

¹⁸ Cooter, ‘The Disabled Body’, 380.

¹⁹ Waltraud Ernst, ‘The Normal and the Abnormal: Reflections on Norms and Normativity’ in Waltraud Ernst (ed.), *Histories of Normal and the Abnormal: Social and Cultural Histories of Norms and Normativity* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1-25.

the able-bodied 'average citizen' which excluded disabled people and ruled them as abnormal.²⁰

Douglas Baynton has masterfully explained the role of disability in discourses of the 'other' by demonstrating its use as a 'justification of inequality'. Baynton discusses the ways in which disability indicated abnormality and was applied in justifications of slavery. The notion that black slaves lacked the intelligence to participate in general society was permeated by both religious leaders and doctors, who prescribed mental conditions such as 'drapetomania', which supposedly caused slaves to run away.²¹ Baynton continues to find yet more subtle ways in which disability has been deployed metaphorically. For example, he notes how the women's suffrage movement expressed its dismay at being classified along with 'minors, paupers, lunatics, traitors [and] idiots', thus setting disability as the abnormality from which the group wished to distance themselves.²²

Cultural studies of disability have looked at the presence of disabled figures throughout history, drawing parallels between the ways in which they were portrayed in cultural sources and wider social attitudes. For example, Tom Shakespeare explored the ways in which disability is presented as 'the physicality and animality of human experience' by cultural representation, arguing for its centrality in disability studies.²³ He points out that by seeing disabled people as an 'other', whether through the lens of a freak show or as an object of sympathy in charity advertising, we are taught to fear or pity them.²⁴ Other authors have further provided increasingly sophisticated accounts of how mainstream culture has permeated this interpretation of disability. Whittington-Walsh traced the history of disabled people in popular culture, from Victorian freak shows to portrayals in mainstream cinema, finding they have been consistently objectified, albeit in differing ways. Whereas freak shows presented

²⁰ Lennard J. Davis, 'Bodies of Difference: Politics, Disability and Representation' in S. Snyder, B.J. Brueggemann and R. Garland-Thompson (eds.), *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2002), 101-2.

²¹ Baynton, 'Disability', 37.

²² Baynton, 'Disability', 43-4.

²³ Tom Shakespeare, 'Cultural Representation of Disabled People: Dustbins for Disavowal?', *Disability & Society*, 9:3 (1994), 295.

²⁴ Shakespeare, 'Cultural Representations', 287-8.

them as an overtly exotic other, modern mainstream cinema largely uses non-disabled actors in stereotypical roles, as an unthreatening, asexual 'savant' triumphing over adversity, or as violent revenge-seekers who are to be feared and deserve their isolation.²⁵ A rare exception to this was Tod Browning's 1932 film *Freaks* which uses disabled actors in active roles, though this was met with considerable controversy and was a commercial failure.²⁶

These cultural studies of disability demonstrate the unexpected ubiquity of images of disability throughout history. As Catherine J. Kudlick argues in her outstanding review article surveying disability history, it is essential for understanding the manufacture of human hierarchies. She points out a number of well-known examples to illustrate this - from religious metaphors of 'monstrosity' such as John Knox's 'First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women' in 1558 to the Darwinian notion of 'survival of the fittest', which metaphorically cast physical weakness and disability as an 'other' and create a fear of it as the 'ultimate living catastrophe'.²⁷ Other studies of disability have used this universalist mindset to explore historical attitudes towards and experiences of disability. Jessica Scheer and Nora Groce argue that impairment is a 'human constant', ever-visible and ever-changing.²⁸ They are keen to point out some of the oversimplistic generalisations and stereotypes applied to disabled people. One of these is the idea that pre-industrial societies killed disabled children at birth or allowed them to die, as this ignores the possibility that infanticide was also committed towards non-disabled children.²⁹ Instead, Scheer and Groce stress the shifting cultural factors which make the lives of different individuals and groups of disabled people different. For example, one of their case studies is of Martha's Vineyard from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. Many people on certain parts of the island were born congenitally deaf,

²⁵ Fiona Whittington-Walsh, 'From Freaks to Savants: Disability and Hegemony from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939) to *Sling Blade* (1997)', *Disability and Society*, 17:6 (2002), 695-707.

²⁶ Whittington-Walsh, 'From Freaks to Savants', 705. This is, of course, not to deny the existence of a strong and subversive disability arts movement, as well as recent breakthroughs in the portrayal of disabled actors on-screen, such as the 2009 Channel 4 series *Cast Offs*. However, many mainstream cultural portrayals of disability remain mired in stereotype.

²⁷ Kudlick, 'Disability History', 765-6.

²⁸ Jessica Scheer and Nora Groce, 'Impairment as a Human Constant: Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives on Variation', *Journal of Social Issues*, 44:1 (1988), 35-6.

²⁹ Scheer and Groce, 'Impairment as a Human Constant' 27.

resulting in the majority of residents - both deaf and hearing - using sign language. Deafness for many islanders was thus seen as a human variation rather than a 'handicap'.³⁰ Situations such as this – which demonstrate the effect of the specific social environment – may be overlooked by restrictive historical narratives such as the medical and social models.

Similarly, Anne Borsay offers an interpretation of the impact of social policy on disabled people which focuses on how attitudes towards disability are culturally constructed. Her book *Disability and Social Policy* examines the area of social policy from a perspective which takes into account cultural factors as well as the material parameters of policy. Thus areas such as the Poor Law and education are presented as institutions which contribute to ever-changing cultural discourses. Borsay stresses the impact of 'economic rationality', the idea that disabled people should be self-sufficient and useful to society, on Victorian schools, hospitals and asylums. However, she argues that it became 'culturally ingrained' *before* the Industrial Revolution, and became applied in an institutional context.³¹ A pluralist yet critical method of writing disability history best accommodates these diverse perspectives. It is possible to write from a theoretically-grounded position which acknowledges the value of existing frameworks of understanding disability whilst combining elements of their approach. Borsay's work, which acknowledges both material and cultural perspectives of disability history, is a good example of this.

Other recent historical work has explicitly stated the need for this kind of approach. Tom Shakespeare's book *Disability Rights and Wrongs* criticises the social model for its static nature and reluctance to adapt; it remains as it was when it was first proposed in the 1970s.³² This view has caused controversy amongst the disability studies

³⁰ Scheer and Groce, 'Impairment as a Human Constant' 31. Groce has elsewhere written extensively about Martha's Vineyard using both written and oral records. Nora Ellen Groce, *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985).

³¹ Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 197.

³² Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, 34.

community.³³ Shakespeare values ‘analytical rigour and open debate’ over ‘social model orthodoxy’.³⁴ He does not wholly dismiss the social model, rather recognising its significant contribution to the historical study of disability, whilst remaining open to other theories and approaches. This focus on plurality and integrating multiple perspectives of disability allows room for an approach to disability which does not limit itself to one medical or social framework, but remains progressive and politically motivated.

One of Shakespeare’s most resonant arguments is that impairment is fundamentally intertwined with disability, meaning that historians of disability should not ignore individual impairments. For Shakespeare, discarding the link between impairment and disability is problematic: impairment, after all, is ‘only ever experienced in a social context.’³⁵ Most importantly, ignoring impairment can devalue personal experience. Jenny Morris explains this gap in the social model in her 1991 work *Pride Against Prejudice*, which analyses contemporary discrimination and prejudice towards disabled people:

...there is a tendency within the social model to deny the experience of our own bodies, insisting that our physical differences and restrictions are *entirely* socially created... to suggest that [social attitudes and environmental barriers] is all there is to it is to deny the personal experience of physical or intellectual restrictions, of illness, of the fear of dying.³⁶

Whilst Morris is writing from a modern perspective, her argument has relevance for disability history. The social model of disability history largely denies any kind of personal perspective, even those that do not correspond to the “personal tragedy” narrative it strives to eliminate.

³³ Anne Borsay, ‘Disability Studies and the Missing Body: A Historical Perspective’, *Association for Medical Humanities Annual Conference* (Durham University, July 2009), 7-8.

³⁴ Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, 199.

³⁵ Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, 33.

³⁶ Jenny Morris, *Pride Against Prejudice: Transforming Attitudes to Disability* (London: Women's Press, 1991), 10.

Other writers have further argued that it is possible to focus on the lived experience of disability whilst remaining aware that disability is primarily a social construct. Writing from a modern socio-political perspective, Nick Watson argues that overreliance on the social model can oversimplify the complex and diverse experiences of disabled people and potentially exclude the dimensions of gender, race, ethnicity, class, age and identity which are experienced alongside disability. Like Shakespeare, he argues for an understanding of disability which is rooted in politically-motivated social explanations of discrimination and prejudice, yet is 'grounded in the experiences of disabled people' and offers a perspective that disabled people can themselves connect with.³⁷ The integration of *experience* is thus an important quality of a pluralist approach to disability history, and one which materialist histories of disability often lacks. It is to the crucial and deeply problematic notion of disabled historical experience that we should now turn.

Experiencing disability in history

A key goal for this thesis is uncovering the experiences of institutionalised deaf children, whilst simultaneously recognising the role of social factors in disabling people with impairments. As we have seen, both the medical and social models of disability history create large groups with little room for individual voices. The social model's repositioning of disabled people as a minority group is progressive and influential, but can obscure any kind of individual angle. In the medical model, disabled people are characterised as recipients of care, aid or education, or by a homogenous personal tragedy. They are almost always passive and denied agency, minor players in a narrative which is progressing towards improved services or their cure and recovery. Some more recent and critical accounts which use a top-down approach to the study of institutions and social policy can also have the effect of removing a disabled voice. Deborah Stone's book *The Disabled State* provides a useful history of the categorisation of disabled people through English Poor Law

³⁷ Nick Watson, 'The Dialectics of Disability: A Social Model for the 21st Century' <<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Barnes/implementing%20the%20social%20model%20-%20chapter%207.pdf>> (2004) Accessed 5 February 2010.

policy, emphasising how the labels of sickness, defectiveness and insanity inherent in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 helped shape definitions of disability which continue to the present day.³⁸ However, her focus is solely on what is done *for* disabled people, with little attempt to study their reactions to this categorisation.

Gleeson has criticised this 'statist' approach because of its inability to understand the 'concrete lived experience of disability'. Furthermore, it can also create a 'beggared' history of disability which limits the role of disabled people to that of poor and desperate sufferers.³⁹ However, his response to this inadequacy is wholly materialist and calls instead for a study of the economic processes which create disabling institutions and attitudes.⁴⁰ Gleeson does not recognise the possibility that this materialist reading of disability history may also fail to achieve a satisfying understanding of the experience of disability, a point made in Shakespeare's and Watson's critiques of the social model. The social model successfully casts disabled people as an oppressed group – something which was in need of recognition before the model's inception in disability studies – yet by doing this, can ignore individual voices. This can also deny the inclusion of dialogue based on the experience of having a specific impairment. Borsay has further questioned this absence of impairment, rejecting the orthodox social model view that studying individual impairments is unnecessary.⁴¹

The issue is one of perspective, and is a theoretical challenge which has been addressed in the field of the history of medicine through work such as Roy Porter's seminal article 'The Patient's View', published in 1985. Porter argued that, prior to writing, much of the history of medicine had been written from the perspective of the doctor and was presented as a narrative of professional and technical progress which often bordered on the 'downright Whiggish'.⁴² Yet this top-down approach, he argued, obscured the role of the patient. 'Medical events,' he wrote, 'have frequently been

³⁸ Deborah A. Stone, *The Disabled State* (Basingstoke, 1985), 40

³⁹ Gleeson, 'Disability Studies', 190-1.

⁴⁰ Gleeson, 'Disability Studies', 196-7.

⁴¹ Borsay, 'Disability Studies', 3-4.

⁴² Roy Porter, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below', *Theory and Society*, 14:2 (1985), 181.

complex social rituals involving family and community as well as sufferers and physicians', thus to ignore these systems and individuals is to present only a limited understanding of the history of medicine. The argument is one of equal importance to disabled people in history, whose opinions and perspectives are also often lost.

When used in conjunction with the multitude of perspectives and ideas which have emerged in disability history, the use of individual stories of disabled experience can contribute to a more rounded historical approach. Paul Longmore has argued persuasively for a perspective of disability history which emphasises historical agency: a picture of disabled people reliant on institutions ignores the many acts of individual and collective action.⁴³ Indeed, Longmore's own study of groups such as the League of the Physically Handicapped in America points to the under-recognised existence of disabled agency and activism before the rise of the disability rights movement in the late twentieth century.⁴⁴ This is a crucial point: it is possible to study disability as a socially and culturally created category, whilst highlighting the actions and responses of individual disabled people.

This thesis aims to put such an approach into action by looking for both collective and individual responses on the part of children in institutions. It is a question which concerns the methodology of reading sources, and the questions which the historian brings to them. This has been a topic of discussion within the social sciences. Indeed, Davis and Watson's study of contemporary special education underlines the need for the children's experiences to become visible. In order to understand their lives and the exclusion and discrimination they face (both in mainstream and special schooling), they argue that children should be placed as critical social actors. Listening to children's experiences is thus a crucial part of understanding the power balances and workings of institutions.⁴⁵ Their research is focused on modern special education, but it presents important issues to the historian of disability. Indeed, unlike social

⁴³ Paul K. Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 41.

⁴⁴ Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book*, 53; 56.

⁴⁵ J.M. Davis and N. Watson, 'Where Are the Children's Experiences? Analysing Social and Cultural Exclusion in 'Special' and 'Mainstream' Schools', *Disability and Society*, 16:5 (2001), 684.

scientists, disability historians rarely have access to detailed personalised accounts of their subjects, thus making writing about experiences of disabled people in history is even more challenging and problematic. Yet listening to and incorporating disabled experiences can help understand the social construction and effects of disability.

Stephen Humphries and Pamela Gordon have used oral history to put this point across. Their excellent study uses interviews with disabled people recalling their experience of home and school life in the years 1900 to 1950. The interviews were conducted by the authors through contact with voluntary organisations and requests in local newspapers, and the research is presented with extended quotations from the interviewees as the central focus.⁴⁶ The result is probably the only collection of oral sources relating to disability from this era, and adds a powerful personal dimension to the history of disability. Though an individual perspective is used, a socially-orientated historical view of disability still emerges. Its interviewees talk about alienation, discrimination and their parents' shame, giving evidence of social factors which create disability whilst detailing their own responses to the attitudes they faced. In the introduction and commentary, Humphries and Gordon use their findings to comment on these attitudes, and how they could become internalised by disabled people. Yet far from presenting an image of passive tragedy, they stress the action taken by disabled people in response, strongly arguing for recognition of their historical agency.⁴⁷ The capacity for disabled people to bring about change through their actions is also recognised, some by active protest such as strikes and sit-ins and others through being 'determined to lead a dignified and independent life'.⁴⁸ Studies such as this demonstrate that personal data – far from impeding the progress of social disability history – can help achieve a more rounded picture which places disabled people firmly at the centre of their own history.

Yet the importance of 'experience' cannot be stressed without a consideration of the term's limitations. The notion that we can 'experience' the feelings and reactions of

⁴⁶ Steve Humphries and Pamela Gordon, *Out of Sight: The Experience of Disability 1900-1950* (Plymouth: Northcote House 1992), 10.

⁴⁷ Humphries and Gordon, *Out of Sight*, 7-9.

⁴⁸ Humphries and Gordon, *Out of Sight*, 10.

any individual or group in history is itself problematic. The term, as Raymond Williams demonstrates, is wide-ranging and has been applied to ‘radically different conclusions to be drawn from diversely gathered and interpreted observations’.⁴⁹ As this suggests, it would be unwise to assume that describing and learning from ‘experience’ is an unchallengeable possibility, but it would be equally unwise to abandon the possibility of incorporating it into historical works of disability. Joan Scott has explored this issue, arguing that historians should concentrate on the social construction of experience and identities of oppressed groups.⁵⁰ Thus the historian should be critical of understanding historical experience, and draw attention to the ways in which these groups and identities were created: ‘the social and personal are imbricated in one another,’ she argues, ‘and... both are historically variable. The meanings of the categories of identity change and with them the possibilities for thinking the self.’⁵¹ Gail Lewis applies this wariness to the ever-changing nature of social categories in her study of black women’s experience, arguing against what she sees as the totalising, predominantly white post-1960s feminist narrative of ‘women’s experience’. Yet she does not reject the category of ‘experience’, but draws attention to the social, cultural and political factors which create it.⁵²

The critical but open-minded approach of Scott and Lewis, which uses socially-minded definitions of oppressed groups but allows for a study of their personal experiences, is one which is of value for the study of disability history. It suggests that the historian *can* achieve an (admittedly limited) understanding of the experience of disabled people, whilst still presenting them as a minority group, disabled by social boundaries. Rose Galvin has drawn on this theory for her social category of disability, arguing that an understanding of social forces must be achieved to understand disabled experience and identity. Her focus is on discourses of work and sexuality, and how they render disabled people as abnormal.⁵³ Yet her interpretation of a historical disabled identity is flexible. Whilst labels and identities are placed upon

⁴⁹ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976), 127.

⁵⁰ Joan W. Scott, ‘The Evidence of Experience’, *Critical Inquiry*, 17:4 (1991), 773-97.

⁵¹ Scott, ‘Evidence of Experience’, 795.

⁵² Gail Lewis, ‘Situated Voices: ‘Black Women’s Experience’ and Social Work’, *Feminist Review*, 53 (1996), 24-6.

⁵³ Rose Galvin, ‘A Genealogy of the Disabled Identity in relation to Work and Sexuality’, *Disability & Society*, 21:5 (2006), 500-3.

disabled people by social forces, her version allows for resistance, as oppressed groups also have the ability to challenge these norms and build new identities.⁵⁴ Again, a valid understanding of ‘experience’ is reached which incorporates personal factors without underplaying the ways in which society imposes disability.

Of course, speaking of one overarching ‘disabled identity’ causes immediate problems. As Longmore and Umansky warn, not all disabled people in history felt bounded by a collective spirit.⁵⁵ This does not, however, mean that it did not exist at all. Longmore and Umansky point towards the ‘minority group consciousness’ of events such as the 1988 Deaf President Now! campaign at Gallaudet University, where students mobilised to protest against the deaf university’s installation of another hearing president.⁵⁶ However, this profile of active engagement against oppression is difficult to apply to everyday life before unified movements fighting for rights for disabled people. As Humphries and Gordon point out, disabled children in the early twentieth century had few outlets of resistance to harsh treatment, and so it is unwise to apply modern concepts of oppressed group activism to them.⁵⁷ Despite this, they should not be denied a voice in historical writing. By treating the concept of ‘experience’ as legitimate, with a focus on both the personal and the social angles to disability, the historian can write about disabled people as historical agents, with variable individual and collective experiences.

One of the main obstacles historians of disability may encounter when trying to write about identity or experience is the lack of sources written from the perspective of disabled people. When exploring institutional life from a bottom-up perspective, it may be difficult to locate sources written from disabled people's perspectives – they are largely the subject of documents produced by the institution’s staff. Oral collections and infrequent memoirs aside, few disabled voices can be heard before the twentieth century. This lack of sources should not, however, be seen as an unmovable

⁵⁴ Galvin, ‘Genealogy’, 509.

⁵⁵ Longmore and Umansky, ‘Disability History’, 19.

⁵⁶ Longmore and Umansky, ‘Disability History’, 11. See also Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, 69.

⁵⁷ Humphries and Gordon, *Out of Sight*, 56.

barrier to the writing of disability history in any period. A source written about disabled people – an institution's report, a letter or newspaper article – can be of use to the historian even if it does not immediately allow the subject a voice. This is because sources can still be read with a careful eye on the subtext; would details of troublemaking and discipline, for example, indicate negative reactions from disabled people to their experiences? If disabled people's voices appear in public documents, they may also say much about power relations, in addition to their insights into everyday life for disabled people. Institutional records can offer insights into attitudes towards disability, which can reveal some of the processes by which public and private perceptions of disabled people were created. Though it may seem synonymous with an outdated model of disability history, the history of education, medicine and social policy remain key elements.

Top-down sources may not grant the historian comprehensive access to experience, but the attitudes they convey have played a role in disabled people's mindsets and perceptions of themselves. These sources can be studied by questioning the motivations of their writers and seeking agency for their subjects. The search for 'agency' is, of course, a problematic concept. As Henry French and Jonathan Barry point out in their edited collection *Identity and Agency in England 1500-1800*, it is possible for the historian to recognise the voices of marginalised people. French and Barry recognise the importance of assigning a capacity for agency, identity and resistance to historical figures who are largely absent from most sources. However, it is one 'heavily circumscribed by pre-existing value systems'; independent agency 'tended to be mediated through and restrained by socially accepted pathways'.⁵⁸ Their arguments are important to this thesis, which attempts to ascribe historical agency to the children discussed here whilst recognising potential limitations such as the children's lack of freedom in the Institution, socially-prescribed interpretations of deafness, and the absence of the children's perspectives in the sources. As the thesis will primarily be using institutional sources, it will indeed face problems in coming to conclusions about disabled people's experiences in history. However, it will be argued that a

⁵⁸ Henry French with Jonathan Barry, 'Identity and Agency in English Society, 1500-1800' - Introduction' in Henry French and Jonathan Barry, *Identity and Agency in England 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), 23.

perspective of disability history which explores both the personal and social aspects of experience is achievable, if one pays close attention to variation and social context. With this in mind, it is therefore necessary to introduce two further concepts with their own complex histories and debates which will frame this thesis: deafness and special education.

Deaf history

This thesis will be primarily concerned with deaf children's experiences, which presents the immediate and problematic issue of the relationship of deafness to disability. This is a deeply complex issue, as many members of deaf communities, as well as some historians of deaf people, do not consider deafness a disability. They argue that deaf communities should instead be thought of as subject to the same excluding social forces as linguistic minorities.⁵⁹ Those deaf people who subscribe to this view do not see themselves as 'disabled' *per se*, rather as part of a very specific deaf community with its own language and customs.⁶⁰ This is, of course, not to assume that every deaf person takes this stance. Harlan Lane points out that in the USA, both the linguistic-minority model of deafness and the more disability-orientated perspective are represented by various organisations. For example, the former is represented by the National Association for the Deaf, whereas the American Speech-Language Hearing Association assume the views of the latter.⁶¹ This divide is often represented by linguistics; those who culturally identify themselves with the deaf community are referred to as Deaf with a capital 'D', whereas a lower-case 'd' refers to deaf people who were not involved in the community, do not use sign language or

⁵⁹ Harlan Lane, 'Constructions of Deafness' in Lennard J. Davis (ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader* (New York, 1997), 155; Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003), 3; Baynton, 'Disability', 51.

⁶⁰ Mairian Scott-Hill (known previously as Mairian Corker) wrote about the tensions and overlaps between the conceptions of deafness and disability. Her conclusions recognise the overlaps in ideology but highlight deaf people who disagree with the connection, who 'may also feel excluded from the disability movement [as well as hearing society] because the movement is seen to reflect the world-view in the way in which it is socially organised around phonocentric language 'norms'.' Mairian Scott-Hill, 'Deafness/Disability: Problematising Notions of Identity, Culture and Structure' in Sheila Riddell and Nick Watson (eds.), *Disability, Culture and Identity* (Harlow: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2003), 89.

⁶¹ Lane, 'Constructions of Deafness', 154.

acquired deafness in later life.⁶² This is often applied in historical works as well, though as Cathy Kudlick's historiographical survey recognises, there is 'no commonly agreed-upon rule' for its use.⁶³ This thesis has opted to eschew the rule, as the term and ideological concept was not fully realised in the period from 1847 to 1914 which is studied here, though it will be argued that there were many examples of the formation of deaf communities and identities amongst the pupils and associates of the Institution.

The conception of deafness as a linguistic minority was a seismic shift in the perception of deaf people, and has become a prevalent view in historiography; it presents a challenge to any description of deaf people as 'disabled'. If we are to use historians of the deaf such as Harlan Lane as examples of linguistic-minority deaf thought, there are some ways in which the views of members of the deaf movement and the disability movement may not be fully compatible. For example, assimilation with the non-disabled and non-deaf world is controversial. Unlike many in the disability movement, those belonging to deaf communities may be in favour of separation through education in residential schools, as they formulate a deaf community and identity.⁶⁴ This view therefore forms part of the goal shared by these key historians of the deaf of uncovering Lane calls the 'mask of benevolence'.

This phrase was coined in an eponymous book, but Lane's most influential and cited work is his extensive history of the deaf, *When The Mind Hears*. This presents the history of deaf people firstly through the eyes of Laurent Clerc (who opened the first school for the deaf in the USA alongside Thomas H. Gallaudet) and secondly himself, a hearing person whose views are aligned with many in the deaf community. The work rejects outright the notion of deafness as disability in favour of a conception of deaf people as a minority group, oppressed for their use of sign language.⁶⁵ This is

⁶² J. Woodward, 'Implications for Sociolinguistics Research among the Deaf', *Sign Language Studies*, 1 (1972), 1-7 cited in Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 33.

⁶³ Kudlick, 'Disability History', n63.

⁶⁴ Lane, 'Constructions of Deafness', 162.

⁶⁵ Harlan Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community* (San Diego: DawnSignPress, 1999); Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (New York: Random House, 1984).

carried out through the denial of access to sign language through education and social policy. This approach involves revealing the social discipline behind supposedly kind and helpful institutions which create prejudice towards deaf people, namely schools, institutions and welfare systems.

These ideas are informed by the notion that institutionalisation creates a relationship between power and knowledge.⁶⁶ Thus dominant attitudes towards deafness as sub-human and in need of curing become the norm, a position which many argue is directly opposed to the wants and needs of deaf people themselves. Paddy Ladd is the major British voice in challenging the 'insidious' ways in which these institutions perpetuate the view of deaf people as afflicted and in need of integration with the hearing majority.⁶⁷ His pioneering book *Understanding Deaf Culture* positions 'deafhood' as a culture with historical roots, and his work challenges legacies left from historical exclusion. The book seeks to recognise deaf people as 'people whose lives were not motivated by a sadness in not being able to hear birds singing or who were not primarily motivated to come together by any sense of loneliness or exclusion', and the 'oppression of these communities by those supposedly charged with responsibility for their welfare'.⁶⁸ This argument seeks to relate these issues exclusively to deaf people, distancing them from any notion of disability. Other works of deaf history position themselves as documents of political oppression or calls for action; for example, A.F. Dimmock's book *Cruel Legacy* states that its purpose is to 'reveal how badly Deaf people were treated in the course of history'.⁶⁹

Much of this criticism centres upon the rise of oralism in deaf schools from the nineteenth century. Oralism is the general term referring to the process of teaching deaf children to speak by forbidding the use of signs, replacing them with painstaking and often fruitless attempts to teach deaf children to speak. Whereas it was seen in

⁶⁶ This concept was heavily explored in the work of Michel Foucault. For an introduction to its application to disability theory, see Shelley Tremain, 'Foucault, Governmentality and Critical Disability Theory: An Introduction' in Shelley Tremain (ed.), *Foucault and the Governmentality of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 1-27.

⁶⁷ Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 7-8.

⁶⁸ Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 3.

⁶⁹ A.F. Dimmock, *Cruel Legacy: An Introduction to the Record of Deaf People in History* (Edinburgh: Scottish Workshop Publications, 1993), iii.

orthodox histories of special education as a mark of educational progress, oralism has recently been portrayed as one of the most visible and ruthless means of marginalising and normalising deaf children and has links to the simultaneous rise of Darwinism and eugenic thought.⁷⁰ In particular, the Second International Congress of the Deaf in Milan of 1880 - which proclaimed across Europe the 'incontestable superiority of speech over signs' - is often presented as a particularly damaging historical event.⁷¹ Oralism is one of the key themes of this thesis due its symbolism and repression, and the Cambrian Institution's complicated relationship with the technique forms much of Chapter 5.

Of course, the emphasis on social exclusion offered by Lane and Ladd echoes the social model of disability, and the two schools of thought share similarities as well as differences. Indeed, both Lane and Ladd fully acknowledge the theoretical parallels and potential for overlap within the disability movement and the deaf community.⁷² Both movements identify medical and welfare institutions as problematic, and both argue for structural and societal changes to improve the lives of their members. Indeed, disability groups and deaf communities have been known to co-operate and share political alliances.⁷³ Lennard J. Davis' outstanding work on deafness, *Enforcing Normalcy*, highlights both the uniqueness of the deaf community and the links it has to disability. Whilst 'the Deaf do not regard their absence of hearing as a disability, any more than a Spanish-speaking person would regard the inability to speak English as a disability', for Davis the links are inescapable:

⁷⁰ For examples of orthodox and pro-oralist history, see Kenneth W. Hodgson., *The Deaf and Their Problems: A Study in Special Education* (London: Watts & Co., 1953); D.G. Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped* (London, 1963), 27;), J.S. Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream: A History of Special Education* (London, 1988), 100.

⁷¹ Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf (1880) cited in Lang, 'Perspectives', 15. See Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 4; Dimmock, *Cruel Legacy*, 30.

⁷² Lane, 'Constructions of Deafness', 164; Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 84.

⁷³ S. Robinson and R. Adam, 'Cultures of Disability and Deafness: Rethinking Links between the Disability Movement and the Deaf Community', Paper presented at the Australian Social Policy Conference, University of NSW, July 2003
<<http://www2.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2003/papers/Paper248.pdf>> Accessed 9 December 2009.
Robinson and Adam's paper refers to disability and deafness in Australia, but its considered theoretical arguments are valuable to this discussion.

While I honour that argument [that deafness is not a disability], I still see the political benefits in linking deafness to disability. I would never say that a Deaf person and a paraplegic were the same. They are not. But to the ableist majority, they may be.⁷⁴

Davis' work highlights the important ways in which both deafness and disability are both socially constructed and often linked together in public discourse. Educational institutions which presented deafness as a tragic affliction often linked it to blindness, presenting it on a hierarchical scale of disability. Thus a historical perspective which treats disability and deafness as linked, whilst respecting their differences, is perhaps the most appropriate. It can be dangerous when disability is used to form any kind of human hierarchy; this is presented most clearly in the aforementioned work of Baynton, who argued that is potentially harmful for one group to overtly distance themselves from disabled people. Indeed, this is precisely the criticism which Paul Longmore gives Lane's *When The Mind Hears*. Longmore laments that,

'Lane stigmatizes people with other disabilities', and far from being an opposing theory, the 'minority model which defines "disability" as primarily a socially constructed and stigmatized identity and which Lane so convincingly applies to the history of deaf people also best explains the modern experience of blind people, physically handicapped people, and even most mentally retarded people'.⁷⁵

Moreover, it is important to remember that whilst political currents within deaf communities were visible from an early stage, deaf people in earlier periods may not have had the same ideas and political concepts as the modern, organised deaf movement.

These conflicting views pose questions about how one can study deaf history using an approach which respects various perspectives on deafness. Like disability history,

⁷⁴ Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Deafness, Disability and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995), xiii.

⁷⁵ Paul K. Longmore, 'Uncovering the Hidden History of People with Disabilities', *Reviews in American History*, 15:3 (1987), 358.

there were few works of deaf history until the 1970s, before which the primary works were focused on institutional achievement.⁷⁶ Some of these now appear outdated and informed by a narrative towards medical progress and cure. Kenneth Hodgson's 1953 work, revealingly titled *The Deaf and their Problems*, presented the history of deaf education from a medical perspective, with a number of chapters scientifically discussing hearing and the 'problem' of losing it. As such, Hodgson portrayed the nineteenth century as 'a veritable crusade for the deaf', and a public 'realization that something could be done to relieve their misery.'⁷⁷ Thus, deaf history experienced similar early scholarship to general histories of 'the cripple' or 'the handicapped'. Yet despite this similarity to the historiography of disability, the separate contexts and issues regarding deafness are important to establish when writing about deaf people in history. Sections of the deaf community often have their own linguistic and cultural traditions or histories, and the community developed a political identity through its organised defence of the importance of sign language.⁷⁸

Furthermore, a recent collection on deaf history, edited by John Vickrey Van Cleve, highlights the importance of social and historical context, looking at isolated case studies rather than treating deaf history as one narrative to be treated with 'moral outrage'.⁷⁹ Indeed, the role of oralism and the Milan Congress is of particular importance in this area - its damaging effects can be recognised by the historian without ignoring the complex historical debates and institutional variations in implementing oralism. This approach allows for a perspective of deaf history which is compatible with the pluralist version of disability history outlined earlier in this Introduction. It is necessary to value individual variation and historical agency as well as establishing the universal limiting social and attitudinal barriers.

⁷⁶ John V. Van Cleve, 'Preface' in John V. Van Cleve (ed.), *Deaf History Unveiled: Interpretations from the New Scholarship* (Washington DC, 2000), ix.

⁷⁷ Kenneth W. Hodgson, *The Deaf and Their Problems: A Study in Special Education* (London: Watts & Co., 1953), 151, 156.

⁷⁸ See Robinson and Adam, 'Cultures of Disability and Deafness', who point out that 'the Deaf community has been overtly political for a longer period, and it can be argued, has a far more well defined self definition as a linguistic and cultural minority group'.

⁷⁹ Douglas C. Baynton, "'Savages and Deaf-Mutes': Evolutionary Theory and the Campaign against Sign Language in the Nineteenth Century' in Van Cleve (ed.), *Deaf History Unveiled*, 92. The argument cited here comes from Van Cleve's 'Editor's Introduction' to the article.

Recently, a deaf history has emerged which puts this into practice. Cathy Kudlick's article on disability history notes that deafness' 'fraught relationship with disability' has allowed for a historical perspective on deafness which can focus both on deaf people's legitimacy as a linguistic minority and the social forces which affected deaf people.⁸⁰ This is certainly visible in many recent works of deaf history. Van Cleve stresses that deaf people 'have played a larger role in history than has been recognised', but when hearing individuals interfere, this agency is 'thwarted'.⁸¹ Much deaf history makes this distinction between the suppressed deaf community and the negative effects of interference by professionals. Jan Branson and Don Miller's book *Damned for their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled* is so far one of the most successful works which attempts to explain the legitimisation of prejudice against deaf people, and their subordination in society.⁸² Branson and Miller use case studies from education and eugenic thought to explain this shift: they lament, for example, the rise of the medical viewpoint with its 'clinical gaze' and claims to benevolence that hide processes of normalisation.⁸³ Though their work seeks to distance deaf people from the category of 'disabled', Branson and Miller are critical of the attitudes practised by institutions and use similar arguments to historians of the social model of disability. Their approach is scholarly and varied and, despite its strong political message, presents themes such as the development of sign language, oralism and the rise of medical categories of deafness (such as hearing loss) as complex historical developments. Another good example of this approach is Douglas Baynton's *Forbidden Signs*, in which the author traces the history of deafness, deaf education and the suppression of sign language in America, and treats attitudes towards deafness as varied and open to change and interpretation.⁸⁴

Moreover, a number of studies have emerged in recent years which position deaf people not just as oppressed victims but as historical agents and active members of communities. Recent historians of deaf people in the USA have addressed this and

⁸⁰ Kudlick, 'Disability History', 782.

⁸¹ Van Cleve, 'Preface', x.

⁸² Jan Branson and Don Miller, *Damned for their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled* (Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2002), 10.

⁸³ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 132

⁸⁴ Baynton, Douglas C., *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

produced excellent records of American deaf communities using unconventional perspectives. A good example of this is Robert Buchanan's *Illusions of Equality*, which expands the setting of deaf history to include the workplace and the attitudinal issues faced for deaf people to gain employment.⁸⁵ By shifting the perspective towards the everyday lives of deaf people, Buchanan's study opened up new avenues for historians by shifting attention towards deaf people themselves, as well as the legislation and policies written for them.

Recent studies of British deaf history have also posed new questions about the role of deaf people in their own history. Neil Pemberton's article and thesis about the social and religious value of sign language argues that many of the Victorian deaf were far more active in commenting on and resisting social oppression than historians have thus far recognised. Pemberton argues that hearing discourses have received disproportionate historical attention from those of deaf people, and that through deaf 'missions' (religious and social congregations), deaf people created 'dynamic socio-cultural spaces' to develop 'a shared language and culture'.⁸⁶ By shifting attention towards deaf people and what can be discerned of their actions and opinions, such historians have begun to identify deaf voices in history which were previously overlooked. This thesis attempts to further locate these voices in an educational context. The next section will argue that the special education institution - which has been at the heart of most studies of deaf history - is still a legitimate subject of historical enquiry, and the bottom-up perspective adopted by recent deaf history is applicable to further study of special education.

⁸⁵ Robert M. Buchanan, *Illusions of Equality: Deaf Americans in School and Factory 1850-1950* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1999).

⁸⁶ Neil Pemberton, 'Deafness and Holiness: Home Missions, Deaf Congregations, and Natural Language: 1860-1890', *Victorian Review*, 35:2 (2009), 66. See also Pemberton's thesis: Neil Ashley Pemberton, 'Holiness, Civilisation and the Victorian Deaf: A Social History of Signing and Speech in late Victorian England, 1865-1895' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2004).

Special education in history

The history of special education is essentially linked to the history of disability and deafness. Education has played an important role in many disabled people's lives and is central to key historical debates. Deaf schools were included in contemporary discourses which also encompassed education for blind people, and later physical and mental disability. Like disability and deaf history, the specific history of special education is a field of enquiry that has only recently begun to flourish.⁸⁷ It has not been wholly absent from history as key texts have been produced since the 1960s. However the approach of earlier works was largely factual and linear. D.G. Pritchard's exhaustive 1963 book *Education and the Handicapped* certainly created awareness of legislation and key figures in the history of special education, but his conclusion that institutions 'did valiant work' seems outdated in the light of the social model.⁸⁸ Other works, notably by Eda Topliss and J.S. Hurt, also provided an impressive amount of information about milestones in special education, but lack critical commentary or analytical vigour.⁸⁹ As Sally Tomlinson has demonstrated, if these historians did have a model of special education in history, it was one based on progress through time, thanks to the humanitarianism of key educators.⁹⁰ Rarely were their motivations or perceived successes questioned.

It now seems undesirable to discuss special education without pointing out its weaknesses and capacity for repression. Indeed, the position of 'historian of special education' now appears somewhat old-fashioned, as the key legislation and milestones have been discussed many times before and attention is now shifting to environments other than the school.⁹¹ However, this section will argue that, if integrated with the new perspectives emerging in disability and deaf history and theory described above,

⁸⁷ See Felicity Armstrong, 'The Historical Development of Special Education: Humanitarian Rationality or 'Wild Profusion of Entangled Events'?', *History of Education*, 31:5 (2002), 438; Jane Read and Jan Walmsley, 'Historical Perspectives on Special Education, 1890-1970', *Disability & Society*, 21:5 (2006), 455.

⁸⁸ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 113.

⁸⁹ E. Topliss, *Provision for the Disabled* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975); Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*.

⁹⁰ Tomlinson, *Sociology of Special Education*, 27.

⁹¹ Pemberton makes a number of criticisms of the existing history of special education to this effect. Pemberton, 'Holiness', 28.

the study of special education in history remains valid. It is important not to assume that special education has been founded upon nothing but humanitarian concern for children. This may indeed play a role, but historians have recently highlighted the possibility that educators may have been motivated by other economic, social or personal factors. Anne Borsay's overview of special education raises crucial questions about the ulterior motives of the people funding and managing schools and institutions. The very separation of disabled children from mainstream education, for example, was based upon the desire for social control and improvement, particularly as the eugenic movement rose to prominence in the early twentieth century. The rhetoric of many educators of mentally disabled people, for example, was based upon the need to categorise these children, protecting society from those incapable of education and thus, in the words of Mary Dendy (a promoter of these schools), 'a curse to themselves and society'.⁹²

Recent history of special education has also focused on the themes of work and self-sufficiency, which informed many debates about special education. The concept of 'economic rationality' has played a prominent role, the considerable emphasis given to technical instruction in many schools addressing the desire for the children to become 'useful' adults able to contribute to society.⁹³ Borsay traces the permeation of the 'economic rationality' doctrine through figures such as Chief Medical Officer Dr George Newman, who argued against the traditional school syllabus in favour of manual instruction.⁹⁴ At the same time, early special schools placed value on making children economically productive, and often sought to make a profit.⁹⁵ By identifying these motivations, historians have begun to demonstrate that economic motivations often sat side-by-side with (or perhaps clouded) a drive for humanitarianism. This has helped to build a more critical and rounded picture of special education. This thesis hopes to contribute to these developments in special education history by offering a case study of the complex interplay of these motivations, and the reactions they generated from the children in the schools.

⁹² Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 104.

⁹³ Armstrong, 'Historical Development of Special Education', 444.

⁹⁴ Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 109.

⁹⁵ Tomlinson, *Sociology of Special Education*, 36.

Though important work has commenced on rethinking the incentives behind key figures in special education, the lack of agency on the part of the children remains a problem. Felicity Armstrong, for example, notes the ‘almost total absence of the voices and perspectives of disabled people in dominant accounts of the history of disability and education.’⁹⁶ This thesis will argue that the actions and opinions of both the educators and the pupils must be sought in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of special education. Yet the absence of children’s voices in special education history is understandable, as they are extremely hard to find. Read and Walmsley criticise the institutional nature of much special education theory, but concede that bureaucratic and often relentlessly positive institutional records make it difficult to ‘unlock the voices of those confined within the walls.’⁹⁷ While the history of special education is particularly difficult for any historian seeking to avoid a top-down approach, it is certainly achievable. Read and Walmsley continue by arguing that it is indeed possible to find the children’s voices, by reading sources carefully and critically. Printed reports and minute books may be one-sided with questionable claims, but looking for their ‘received’ content can help the historian find the perspectives of the children.⁹⁸ This is undoubtedly problematic but achievable if the historian adopts a careful and critical approach to reading sources; this can help building an interpretation of special education which is not confined solely to issues of its leadership.

This is not just an issue for historians of disability, deafness and special education but one faced by all historians looking at childhood and education. Indeed, it will be argued throughout this thesis that discourses of special education and the training of deaf children ran parallel with debates about compulsory education and the social and moral role of the child in British society. Yet disabled children have been largely absent from this discussion, hardly mentioned in general texts about the history of education and changing conceptions of childhood. Later chapters of the thesis highlight the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb's regulation of leisure and the construction of a code of morality which was in tune with wider developments

⁹⁶ Armstrong, ‘Historical Development of Special Education’, 438.

⁹⁷ Read and Walmsley, ‘Historical Perspectives’, 456.

⁹⁸ Read and Walmsley, ‘Historical Perspectives’, 457.

amongst schools and reformers across Britain. For the historian of special education, it is important to note how these general issues intersect with already-identified discourses of disability and deafness.

Indeed, the history of special education, which has rarely engaged with the wider picture of education in Britain at all, positions developments in special education largely separate from those in mainstream schools. Thus, whilst this thesis largely focuses on the distinctive discourses and experiences of disability and deafness in institutions of special education, it is important to recognise that non-disabled children in mainstream schools may well have had similar experiences. Indeed, the system of sending children to boarding schools to be both lodged and educated was long established. In the Victorian era, boarding schools came to be associated with exclusive school fees and a specific type of character-building linked to boarding schools' aristocratic connotations.⁹⁹ Yet the regimented timetables and often harsh punishments experienced by disabled children in special education institutions ran parallel to similar situations in mainstream education.

Much of the discussion of the children's lives, therefore, will be framed by historiographical debates about the general social history of education and childhood, as well as works specifically about disabled or deaf people. Works on the general social history of children will be used to contextualise these debates, such as Lydia Murdoch's *Imagined Orphans* which examines the role of philanthropy on the lives of street children, and Anna Davin's *Growing Up Poor* which utilises a wide range of sources to provide a comprehensive picture of poor children at home, in school and on the street in late Victorian and Edwardian London.¹⁰⁰ The thesis will take into account the problems in discerning the lives and experiences of children in general. In particular, historians such as Harry Hendrick and Ludmilla Jordanova have identified the inability to find one, unproblematic voice of children or a singular 'history of

⁹⁹ See Rupert Wilkinson, 'Political Leadership and the Late Victorian Public School', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 13:4 (1962), 320-30; .A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

¹⁰⁰ Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram, 1996).

childhood'.¹⁰¹ Jordanova in particular is critical of finding an 'authentic voice of childhood' because 'children... are constructed in particular social settings'.¹⁰² Her arguments are not a deterrent to the historian to avoid studying childhood, but a call to acknowledge the historical distance between author and subject and respect the complexity of children's experience: 'no single type of source material provides an authoritative historical picture, while the value of all sources depends on their interpretation.'¹⁰³

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb as case study

The methodology of reading sources will be a key consideration throughout this thesis. Very little historical work has been done on the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb or deafness in Wales, and therefore this case study must rely primarily on institutional sources. This lack of secondary work is beginning to change. Two works published very recently by the British Deaf History Society have begun to fill the gap in Welsh deaf history. Neil Alderman's book *Joseph and Mary* follows the author's family history using both archival sources and family memories. Joseph, his grandfather, attended the Cambrian Institution, and his grandmother Mary went to the Cardiff Oral School for the Deaf and Dumb.¹⁰⁴ The latter school is discussed in the other book, Cedric Moon's *A Tale of Three Deaf Schools in Wales*, which examines the state-sponsored Welsh day schools set up towards the end of the nineteenth century as a result of legislation which called for compulsory elementary education for blind and deaf children (discussed here in Chapter 2).¹⁰⁵ Some other works have discussed the Cambrian Institution, notably an excellent article by Victor Golightly on the links between Dylan Thomas, the Institution and Swansea's deaf

¹⁰¹ Harry Hendrick, 'The Child as a Social Actor in Historical Sources: Problems of Identification and Interpretation' in Pia Christensen and Allison James (eds.), *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices* (London: Falmer, 2000), 36-61; Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Children in History: Concepts of Nature and Society' in Geoffrey Scarre (ed.), *Children, Parents and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3-24. This is also addressed in Heywood, Colin, *A History of Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

¹⁰² Jordanova, 'Children in History', 5.

¹⁰³ Jordanova, 'Children in History', 15.

¹⁰⁴ Neil J. Alderman, *Joseph and Mary: A Case Study in Deaf Family History* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2011).

¹⁰⁵ Cedric J. Moon, *A Tale of Three Deaf Schools in South Wales* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2010).

community.¹⁰⁶ Finally, the Cambrian Institution has featured in occasional short articles in the *Deaf History Journal*.¹⁰⁷ These works have made cases for the importance of Welsh deaf history and the areas yet to be explored by historians.

Despite this, the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and deaf history in Wales remain largely under-studied. Most of the historian's access to the Institution from the period 1847 to 1914 can be found in the records left by the Institution's staff and available at the West Glamorgan Archives Service in Swansea. These are printed Annual Reports from its inception to 1914, the Minute Book of the Institution's organisational committee from 1847 to 1887, a personal report of the Principal from 1860 to 1876, and the personal Letter Book of Principal Benjamin Payne - one of few headmasters of a British deaf school who was deaf himself - from 1876 to 1909.¹⁰⁸ Other sources have been used where possible, such as newspaper reports (primarily from Swansea's local newspaper *The Cambrian*) and some records from local councils and the central Board of Education. These primary sources form the basis of much of the case study at the centre of this thesis.

The records provide fascinating insights into both the politics and the everyday life of the Institution. These include details of internal debates about policy, legislation and curriculum, outlines of the routines that the children were given, and some records of the home and social lives of the pupils. It will be argued that, by approaching the sources asking questions which concern both the educators and the pupils themselves, a portrait of the Institution emerges which highlights areas of life as a pupil in a deaf institution which have previously received little attention from historians. However, the value of archival sources from the schools is beginning to be recognised in individual institutional studies such as Anthony Boyce's history of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and Geoffrey J. Eagling's look at the Ackmar Road

¹⁰⁶ Victor Golightly, "'Speak on a Finger and Thumb': Dylan Thomas, Language and the Deaf", *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 10 (2005), 73-97.

¹⁰⁷ John Hay., 'Postcard Corner: Royal Cambrian School for the Deaf & Dumb, Pen y Bryn, Swansea', *Deaf History Journal*, 8:3 (2005), 40-41; Cedric Moon, Neil Alderman and Richard Jones, 'Welsh Deaf History - 70 Years On!', *Deaf History Journal*, 15:1 (2012), 23.

¹⁰⁸ West Glamorgan Archive Service [WGAS], E/Cam, Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (later Pen-y-bryn School, Swansea).

deaf school.¹⁰⁹ The latter in particular recognises the school's log books as 'interesting reading', covering the 'everyday life of the school'.¹¹⁰

However, these institutional sources present a number of problems and limitations. An immediate issue is one of chronology. The only source which is available throughout the period under study is the Annual Reports, and many issues of these are missing, particularly in the earlier years of the Institution; for example, a gap of ten years is absent from 1859 to 1869.¹¹¹ The inconsistency of the records means that some periods receive more detailed attention than others. For example, the Minute Book featuring key Committee decisions ends in 1887, just before the onset of compulsory deaf education. This undoubtedly featured in discussion during the meetings and its availability would have offered more detailed insight to the ones collected in Chapter 3, which records the Cambrian Institution's reaction to national legislation. Similarly, the Principal's Letter Book offers a wealth of information about individual pupils and demonstrates the interaction between Principal and teacher, which often concerned the monitoring of children's home lives. However, it is only available from 1876 to 1914 and represents the views of just one of the Institution's Principals. Thus the sections of this thesis which rely heavily on the Letter Book, such as the discussion of home lives in Chapter 7, are predominantly focused on this period in the Institution's history. This disparity of sources has also made it difficult to include quantitative data, though some material from the institution's records of statistics have been used, supplemented where possible with information from the UK census.

The Institution's sources present a picture of life in the Institution, but from an undeniably distorted position. It is important to recognise that the voices and perspective immediately visible in the sources are not the children's, but the people at

¹⁰⁹ Anthony J. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf, 1829-1979* (Doncaster: Doncaster M.B.C. Museums and Arts Services, c.1990); Geoffrey J. Eagling, *A History of a London School for the Deaf: Ackmar Road 1898-1983* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 1998).

¹¹⁰ Eagling, *History of a London School*, 31.

¹¹¹ The Reports may well have survived, but they were not held at the various archives and libraries I used (Swansea Central Library, UCL Royal National Institute for the Deaf Library and the British Library).

the top of the Institution and those circulating around it: the Principal, the Committee, or the newspaper reporter. This in itself is important, as these views offer an impression of the mindset which lay behind the running of the school, thus demonstrating the attitudes towards deafness and education being disseminated to the public. The Annual Reports, in particular, functioned both as advertisements for the school and bulletins for readers to discover about deaf children. Indeed, their cultural value was discussed at the time, for example in this letter in 1899, from the Institution's principal to the honorary secretary:

"Why read [Annual] Reports?" I am asked; but that depends upon their contents. Not a few friends have referred to ours as interesting, one going as far as to assert that we issue the most interesting report of any [deaf institution]...¹¹²

The sources, then, are of immense value to the historian as they indicate the public reception and consumption of information about the school and attitudes towards deafness. However, a key challenge in using these sources is recognising the distinction between the public image of the Institution and the everyday experiences of the pupils.

Few sources originate from the perspectives of the pupils themselves. The few that were presented as pupils' experiences were often subject to similar issues of institutional bias. For example, a series of letters were printed in the Annual Reports, supposedly written by the children to their parents. However, these were a feature of all deaf institutions' records and have been recognised as potentially doctored or false.¹¹³ As such, the sources from the Cambrian Institution are subject to the warnings given by Read and Walmsley and require reading for what they call the 'received' content.¹¹⁴ This involves looking for hints of everyday life and pupils' experiences which is not immediately visible. The everyday routines of the pupils can

¹¹² WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 7 November 1899.

¹¹³ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 43.

¹¹⁴ Read and Walmsley, 'Historical Perspectives', 457.

be built up from details such as timetables, lesson plans and communication about the curriculum, and the reports of pupils' progress indicates some of the attitudes of the pupils towards their education. Likewise, hints about the children's home lives and relationships with their parents are visible in letters. Examples of misbehaviour were recorded by the Principal and the Committee, and these potentially indicate feelings of dissatisfaction and potential resistance among pupils, which has gone largely undocumented in historical study. Whilst keeping in mind their many limitations as historical documents of children's experience, it is on these details and perspectives which this thesis will centre much of its attention.

Thesis structure

This introductory chapter has explored the theoretical and historiographical background of disability history and the challenges faced by historians of deaf education. Chapter 2 will begin to address further general questions about special education in history in Britain and Wales, providing an overview of key developments in both special and mainstream education and the debates they created. Having established the key developments and legislation, the remainder of the thesis will focus on its central case study of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. It will present its findings thematically, focusing both on the mechanics of the running of the Institution and the lives of the pupils themselves. This structure has been chosen to avoid presenting a narrative history of the Institution, instead revolving its arguments around key historical themes and debates. Chapter 3 will outline these two perspectives by introducing the political decisions taken by the Institution's staff and the identity and responses of the pupils. Framed by the previous chapter's outline of legislative developments in special education, it will first look at the Cambrian Institution's response to the government acts calling for compulsory deaf education, arguing that its critical and reluctant stance to state involvement is indicative of the slow and complex implementation of special education legislation and the continued autonomy of voluntary institutions. It will then provide a brief look at the demographic backgrounds of the pupils themselves, as an introduction to the methodological focus on children's experience. Chapter 4 focuses further on the

organisation of the Institution by arguing for the importance of philanthropy. Even after its certification by central education authorities, the Cambrian Institution remained a primarily voluntary institution, and donating to the Institution (along with many other charitable organisations) was an important part of life for the town's elite. It will be argued that the mechanics of charity were crucial in creating social constructions of disability, permeating a specific image of the afflicted deaf child to the public to raise awareness and funding for the Institution.

The thesis will then add to the many existing discussions of the practice of oralism by looking at the Cambrian Institution's varying and often contradictory responses to the rise of the oral method in Chapter 5. The Institution fought strongly for the presence of signs and the manual alphabet in education, yet occasionally flirted with oralist methodology and discouraged the use of signs at home. The chapter will also ask questions about the place of eugenics - the pseudo-science of the improvement of the human race - in the Institution, noting that much of the Institution's publicity material reflected contemporary discourses of eugenics, though its actual implication was highly limited. The final chapters of the thesis will focus their attention on the lives of the pupils, how these were determined by the Institution's staff and what chances the children had for response and variation. Chapter 6 will examine everyday school life, asking questions about the children's daily routines, education and conditions, and finding their own reactions to these. In Chapter 7, the children's home and leisure lives will be examined. While there is very little biographical evidence available about the children, the instructions and letters sent to parents from the Institution's principal can reveal how the children were being (and expected to be) brought up and treated when they were not at the school. The role of leisure will be positioned as a crucial and underdeveloped aspect of deaf children's lives; the chapter will look at how the children chose to use their play space, as well the provisions made for them in the form of trips and entertainment. The moralising influences of school staff and community figures in their organised leisure time can also reveal much about attitudes towards deafness and education and the construction of the ideal deaf pupil.

By rigorously analysing the materials produced by the Institution, it is hoped that a significant contribution will be made to the picture of deaf education in Britain. The thesis will be framed by the existing historical work which has been introduced in this chapter, arguing for a perspective which both recognises the social construction of disability and the linguistic model of deafness, and also places the (limited and problematic) search for the children's experience as a central objective. It is for this reason that this thesis will not confine itself to one overarching framework, and will instead use and respect ideas from a variety of theories and positions relating to disability, deafness and special education. This Introduction has established how this approach can produce a comprehensive and satisfying study, without compromising its impact or its integrity.

Chapter 2

Education for Disabled Children in Britain and Wales

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the concepts of both mainstream and special education evolved at a rapid rate. Beginning with a limited but constantly expanding system of voluntary and Poor Law workhouse schools, the debate about state intervention in the education of disabled people became louder. The landmark Education Act in 1870 did not actively mention disabled children but made elementary education compulsory across Britain. This development, along with later legislation created specifically for disabled children, helped special education become an increasingly important issue. This chapter will provide a brief survey of the key people, legislation and events behind these activities and debates. While the remainder of the thesis will focus on the contrast between the actions of educators and the experiences of the children, this chapter focuses entirely on the provisions made for disabled children. Though the focus will be primarily on deaf schools, it will also argue that blind and physically disabled children were being discussed in the same debates, and so developments in this area will also be included. It will be argued that an understanding of the attitudes and workings of both state and voluntary special education is essential to contextualise a detailed study of one single institution.

As such, this chapter will provide a social and political context to the thesis' main case study of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Though the actors in the main case study are deaf children in Wales, their education was set against a backdrop of ever-changing ideas about education, disability and nationality. Therefore, a number of different strands will be discussed. The early development of Poor Law education will briefly introduced, as well as the voluntary beginnings of special education for blind and deaf children. The intervention of the state in education, which intensified in the latter half of the nineteenth century, will also be discussed, as well as the fraught application of these ideas to Wales. Finally, the issues surrounding state involvement in special education will be examined, with a focus on the adoption and debate of contemporary ideas about the nature of disability,

such as oralism and eugenic thought. All of these national, educational discourses were actively engaged with by individual institutions, many of which remained voluntary despite state assistance. The final section of the chapter, therefore, will place these legislative and political developments in the context of the history of the Cambrian Institution, which expressed deep scepticism towards notions of state assistance. The chapter will, for the most part, take a top-down approach, arguing that an understanding of the key legislation can help the historian answer questions of individual experience and agency. Thus, this chapter will frame further enquiries about children in special education themselves, which form the basis of later chapters in this thesis. It will be argued in later chapters that the passing of laws formed only part of the picture. Additionally, despite focusing predominantly on the actions of those in power, this chapter will strive to avoid generalised notions that the outcome of increased activity in special education can equate either to progress or oppression.

The roots of mass education in Wales

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb began amidst considerable educational and social change in Wales. Many national developments were separate from what was happening elsewhere in Britain, and it is this specific national context which this chapter will first consider. The development of education in Wales was in many regards slower and more problematic than in England, where the process was by no means smooth. This slow progress is made clearer by the changing and sometimes volatile social environment of the first half of the nineteenth century. The English government of Wales was generally unfriendly towards Welsh language and customs, not helped by a class system with a large divide in terms of wealth and culture.¹ This social tension materialised in violent outbreaks – the Merthyr Rising of 1831, the Rebecca Riots of 1839-42 and the strong influence of Chartism made a mark in public consciousness, further giving English rulers the impression that Wales was experiencing major problems with violent dissenters (despite similar events

¹ Neil J. Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-Class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1991), 147-50.

happening in England).² Alongside this came major demographic changes, notably rapid increases in population in urban areas.³

At this point, most education in Wales was through Sunday schools, and the school system was predominantly Anglican. Contrasted to this was the popular growth of nonconformity, including an outspoken press which addressed concerns about the Anglican dominance of elites. Given the rise of nonconformity, this was bound to cause tension and dissatisfaction. Indeed, many parents refused to allow their children to go to the Anglican-controlled National Schools on religious grounds.⁴ Nonconformists did begin to influence the development of education, as seen in the rise of the British Schools, which favoured a non-denominational approach to schooling. Hugh Owen's 'Letter to the Welsh People' in 1843, which suggested the establishment of British Schools in every district of Wales, was indicative of the general religious tensions arising in the Welsh school system.⁵ Though similar events were emerging across Britain - as we shall see later in the chapter - the religious divide took on a specific national context.

Some effort was made by the state to involve itself in Welsh education in the form of grants, including a (largely unsuccessful) offer to 29 mining proprietors in Monmouthshire to form schools.⁶ The most notable event in pre-1870 Welsh educational history, however, came when William Williams, MP for Coventry, expressed concern at the educational options available in Wales, and called for an enquiry in the House of Commons in 1846. The findings became the Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales, or the 'Blue Books' of 1847.⁷ The books shed light on the poor state of schooling in Wales, expressing concern that the Sunday Schools were for many the only possible way of learning to

² D.G. Evans, *A History of Wales 1815-1906* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), 123.

³ Evans, *History of Wales 1815-1906*, 96.

⁴ Smelser, *Social Paralysis*, 174.

⁵ Evans, *History of Wales 1815-1906*, 102.

⁶ Evans, *History of Wales 1815-1906*, 100.

⁷ National Library of Wales Aberystwyth, 'The Blue Books of 1847'
<<http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=295>> Accessed 3 July 2012.

read, and noting that only half attending were able to read the scriptures.⁸ Elsewhere, they drew attention to poor conditions in the schools, and the low quality and pay of teachers.⁹ The Commissioners were not exclusively critical, and highlighted the 'topics of general interest' on offer at the schools. However, the critique of Welsh schools delivered by the 'Blue Books' was generally ruthless and unreserved.

The Commissioners of the 'Blue Books' did not, however, limit themselves to criticism of schools. Overshadowing any educational comment was the Commissioners' unwavering attacks on the Welsh language and people. The balance was publicly skewed towards an English and Anglican perspective from the beginning: Williams recruited three Anglican, non-Welsh-speaking commissioners and, though he eventually added Welsh-speaking assistants, the majority of these were also affiliated with the Church of England.¹⁰ The Welsh language, the Commissioners argued, was one of the keys to Wales' educational failings, a 'peculiar language isolating the masses from the upper portion of society.' Their harshest comments were reserved for the supposedly typical Welsh character, a barrier to success in education:

[The Welshman] is left to live in an under-world of his own, and the march of society goes so completely over his head, that he is never heard of, excepting when the strange and abnormal features of a Revival, or a Rebecca or Chartist outbreak, call attention to a phase of society which could produce anything so contrary to all that we elsewhere experience.¹¹

Understandably, this portrayal of the Welsh language and people provoked strong feelings. The Reports indented themselves into Welsh collective consciousness as the 'treachery' or 'treason' of the Blue Books, a clear show of resentment to the elitist

⁸ Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales [RCIESW] (1847) <<http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=774>> Accessed 3 July 2012.

⁹ Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 160.

¹⁰ Jones and Roderick, *History of Education in Wales* 58.

¹¹ RCIESW, 3.

attitudes that they contained.¹² The Welsh 'Nonconformist front' strengthened, rejecting Anglican assaults on Welsh people and their traditions.¹³ As a result, the Books have been noted by historians far more for their condescension and attack on Wales and Welshness than any legitimate comment on education.¹⁴ This, argues Jones and Roderick, became a 'mythology' which 'has assumed a life of its own in the historiography of Wales [and] distorted the educational message which the commissioners conveyed.'¹⁵

Indeed, further analysis of the Books' impact has revealed another side to the reaction, which took on board their comments about the low quality of education on offer. As Evans points out, some of the Reports' criticisms (at least of schools, certainly not of Nonconformity in general) were 'quietly accepted', and the need for state intervention in education was realised.¹⁶ After the furore of the 'Blue Books', Welsh education did indeed begin to work its way towards mass schooling, even if religion and language continued to cause intense debate. As in the rest of Britain, and with much resistance, the child labour market was beginning to incorporate the emergence of education through legislation such as the Collieries Act of 1861 (which excluded under-10s from work in South Wales) and the Factory Acts of 1867 (which insisted upon half-time school attendance).¹⁷ Yet the lasting impact of the Blue Books created a particular national context for Welsh education to develop. The undeniable need for educational improvement was framed by continuing confrontations of denomination and nationality.

¹² National Library of Wales, 'Blue Books of 1847'.

¹³ Evans, *History of Wales 1815-1906*, 127. Chris Williams' work on the application of postcolonial thought highlights the Blue Books, arguing that they served to 'assert and defend' Welsh nationality and culture. Williams' argument – that whilst Wales cannot technically be called a 'post-colonial state' in the basic sense, postcolonial theory certainly has a place in Welsh history – is an important one for Welsh social historians. Chris Williams, 'Problematizing Wales: An Exploration in Historiography and Postcoloniality' in Jane Aaron and Chris Williams (eds.), *Postcolonial Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 5.

¹⁴ Jones and Roderick, *History of Education in Wales*, 59. Gwyneth Tyson Roberts examines the Blue Books' attitudes towards Welsh identity, and their lasting effect, from a detailed linguistic perspective in Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998)

¹⁵ Jones and Roderick, *History of Education in Wales*, 62.

¹⁶ Evans, *History of Wales 1815-1906*, 127.

¹⁷ Evans, *History of Wales 1815-1906*, 263.

Crucially, disabled children and special education have been almost completely excluded from all historical discussion of Welsh educational change. Whilst the Blue Books made little or no comment on educating disabled children, the political and social changes nonetheless formed part of the landscape of their education. Moreover, early developments in special education were taking place at a similar time scale and speed. It is perhaps little coincidence that the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb opened its doors in Aberystwyth in 1847 - the year of the 'treachery' - and as we shall see in Chapter 3, its beginnings were accompanied by patriotic cries of Wales' 'duty' to teach its deaf children. As such, it will be argued that disabled children - despite being left out of explicit debate and legislation - were nonetheless actors in educational development in both Wales and Britain as a whole. This chapter will now examine the wider national contexts which contributed to disabled children's education.

Poor Law education

The Poor Laws in Britain are of considerable importance to the historian of special education. Welsh education was offered via the Poor Law and its support for voluntary schools. Many early blind and deaf schools were set up specifically as charitable institutions for poor children, and we shall see that a majority of pupils in the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb were assisted by Poor Law guardians (including a number from Swansea itself). Yet the Poor Laws also hold significance for rooting concepts of both disability and education. On the one hand, they hold an important role in social constructions of disability, due to their categorisation of the poor using language of disability. At the same time, the educational provisions which arose from them represented one of the first recognitions of the need for mass education. Although the Poor Laws had their origins in the Tudor period, it was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 that was of particular importance for its redefining of the principles of workhouse education and pauper categorisation.¹⁸ This legislation created a central Poor Law Commission, responsible for Poor Law recipients both on 'indoor relief' – inmates of the workhouse – and 'outdoor relief' – those receiving

¹⁸ Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 6.

material benefit through poor relief rather than workhouse inhabitation.¹⁹ The harsh and divisive mechanics of the poor law have, quite understandably, been the subject of critical study by historians. Borsay, for example, called its segregation of the poor ‘the ultimate dividing practice’, highlighting the increase in incarceration for poor and disabled people.²⁰ The dividing practices introduced by the Poor Laws were to have immense implications on social discourses of disability and on the concept of education. They are of particular importance to the education of children with physical and mental disabilities, for whom there was no formal institutionalised education.

As Deborah Stone rightly points out, many of the categories used in the 1834 Amendment Act now form part of modern conceptions of disability. Categories such as the ‘sick’, ‘insane’, ‘defectives’ and ‘aged and infirm’ represented attempts to separate those receiving poor relief by physical difference, much as individual impairments are separated in welfare policies today.²¹ The ‘defectives’ category, for example, included ‘deaf and dumb’ and blind people, and later epileptics and the ‘lame’ and ‘deformed’. People in this category avoided exemption from outdoor relief and were not required to learn to read or write before being given an apprenticeship.²² Yet they became separated from society, being seen as a burden and cause for concern. Mentally disabled workhouse inmates, for example, were viewed as problematic, and subsequently ignored or removed. In Swansea, the Visiting Committee clearly saw no purpose in educating them: ‘There is an idiot boy in the school room who should be removed from it.’²³

Stone’s analysis of the categories of Poor Law recipient further highlights its importance for the social construction of disability. Disability was merged with the concept of work, making it clear that to receive relief, paupers must be physically unable to participate in work. Stone describes these Poor Law principles as a solution

¹⁹ Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 22.

²⁰ Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 19.

²¹ Stone, *Disabled State*, 40.

²² Stone, *Disabled State*, 47.

²³ West Glamorgan Archive Service [WGAS], U/S 4/1, Swansea Workhouse Visiting Committee Minute Book 1857-9, 19 July 1859.

to a 'distributive dilemma', in which essential relief could be distributed to those deemed 'deserving', whilst the economy remained productive.²⁴ As well as this social categorisation, the Amendment Act severely restricted the political rights of disabled inmates and recipients of relief, as part of the 'less eligibility' principle. This was an ideology which sought to limit the number of eligible paupers by making workhouses and Poor Law relief as unappealing as possible and in a worse position than the poorest not receiving support, to counter the supposed problem of Poor Law recipients receiving relief when they were fit to work elsewhere. Thus, the Act removed the vote from those who were 'unfit for democracy or political citizenship.'²⁵ This further illustrates the controlling and degrading effects of the Act on disabled people; once receiving relief, it sent the message that they had no right to be considered as citizens.

Meanwhile, the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act sought to make education a part of life for workhouse children, suggesting training in the 3 Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic for the first time.²⁶ Workhouse education was essentially the only state education before 1870, and it offers some insights into the motivations of early educational reformers. Though a Royal Commission of 1832 attempted to persuade workhouses to focus only on education, the schools mostly supplemented work or trained children in 'the habits of usefulness, industry and virtue' which would aid them in work.²⁷ The educational provisions which emerged seemed to be in direct confrontation with the principle of 'less eligibility' also espoused by the Poor Law Commission. Indeed, the conflict between education and 'less eligibility' caused tensions amongst some local Guardians of the Poor Law. However, the movement for workhouse education continued to gain momentum, as schools believed to be successful (for example, at Petworth in Sussex) became publicised as examples to follow.²⁸

²⁴ Stone, *Disabled State*, 51-2.

²⁵ Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 23.

²⁶ Alan Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 42.

²⁷ Poor Law Commission cited in Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor*, 42.

²⁸ Frank Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), 147.

Like many other educational developments in the nineteenth century, Poor Law education was partly based on a moral reaction to the behaviour and environment of working-class children. In the case of the workhouse children, the schools often served as a physical barrier separating them from the dangerous moral influences of the inmates.²⁹ Recent historical work has exposed the many inconsistencies and shortcomings of Poor Law schools. The conditions were often poor, as evidenced by the school inspector of a Merthyr Tydfil workhouse who refused a grant and dismissed the schoolmistress because of its conditions.³⁰ The teaching could be inconsistent and tedious. A Visiting Committee to the Swansea workhouse, for example, found continuing problems in the girls' education and suggested a workhouse inmate be given 'a small sum' for teaching them reading and needlework.³¹ Workhouse educators also encountered problems with 'ins and outs', the high turnaround experienced in the schools due to children staying in the workhouse for short periods of time, until they were removed or their parents found work. Many individual workhouse schools found their children apprenticeships or trained them in specific industries such as shoemaking for boys and domestic service for girls.³² Manual training was clearly an important issue for many involved in workhouse education; the Swansea Visiting Committee wrote that they 'deeply regret to find that no means of industrial training exist yet for the boys.'³³ Workhouse schools were slowly introducing education (albeit basic and repetitive) to the lives of poor children, but the focus remained firmly on work.

Though workhouse education was largely of poor quality, there were some genuine attempts to move beyond its limits. In the mid-nineteenth century, James Kay (later Kay-Shuttleworth, who became an even more important figure in educational reform) and E.C. Tuffnell led the movement for District Schools, which they hoped would see groups of unions work together to form school districts of 500 pupils.³⁴ The plan clearly found favour in the Swansea committee, which agreed in 1859 that, 'It is

²⁹ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, 94.

³⁰ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, 94.

³¹ WGAS, U/S 4/1, Swansea Workhouse Visiting Committee Minute Book 1857-9, 16 August 1857.

³² Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor*, 43.

³³ WGAS, U/S 4/1, Swansea Workhouse Visiting Committee Minute Book 1857-9, 19 July 1859.

³⁴ F. Duke, 'Pauper Education' in Derek Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 69.

greatly to be desired that a district school should be organised for this and neighbouring unions.’³⁵ As Duke explains, the execution of the plan was largely a failure due to setbacks and poor planning, but it was significant in signposting the direction in which educational reformers wanted to take the schools.³⁶ It demonstrates an early awareness that expansion and improvement in quality was required. The ongoing poor conditions and abuses of workhouse inmates were rarely acted upon until the 1860s, with the formation of the Poor Law Medical Officers’ Association and the Association for Improving Workhouse Infirmarys. As Brundage points out, the formation of these societies represented a response to pressure from reform groups and the press, as well as broader national discourses of sanitary reform.³⁷

The changes effected by the Poor Law were complex and constantly evolving, with many ideas put forward by its supporters (such as the District Schools movement) failing to gain momentum beyond the planning stage. The limitations of available sources make the Poor Law particularly problematic for disability historians, though some such as Amanda Bergen have begun to address the link between disability, education and the Poor Law.³⁸ The existing records are insufficient to discover the number of disabled people in workhouses, or indeed of inmates in general.³⁹ The records for the Swansea workhouse school, for example, do not immediately mention inmates with disabilities, but this does not necessarily mean there were no disabled inmates, only that their details might not have been recorded.⁴⁰ Yet, as Stone argues, ‘Laws usually express a society’s aspirations rather than its behaviour, and nowhere is this maxim more pertinent than English Poor Law history.’⁴¹ It is these aspirations that make it a crucial element of a study of special education, because it prescribed the need for mass state education and drew lines between recipients and society, with disability acting as a helpful identifier of difference. The attitudinal shifts indicated by the Poor Laws are of great importance to the historian of disability and special

³⁵ WGAS, U/S 4/1, Swansea Workhouse Visiting Committee Minute Book 1857-9, 16 August 1859

³⁶ Duke, ‘Pauper Education’, 69.

³⁷ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, 98.

³⁸ See Amanda Bergen, ‘The Blind, the Deaf and the Halt: Physical Disability, the Poor Law and Charity c.1830-1890, with particular reference to the County of Yorkshire’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2004).

³⁹ J.S. Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream: A History of Special Education* (London: Batsford, 1988), 92.

⁴⁰ WGAS U/S 17/1, Swansea Workhouse School Admission and Discharge Book (boys) 1865-70.

⁴¹ Stone, *Disabled State*, 39.

education. The Poor Law only rarely mentioned special education specifically, though blind and deaf children were given places in institutions by boards of guardians for the first time, and the Education of Pauper Children Act of 1862 allowed guardians to further support blind and deaf institutions.⁴² The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was included in these institutions, and their own legislative history was directly affected by these Poor law developments. Poor Law authorities, in their capacity to pay for schooling of children receiving ‘outdoor relief’, regularly came into contact with schools such as the Cambrian Institution.⁴³ These developed in parallel with Poor Law education and represented early concrete manifestations of special education.

Voluntary education before 1870

Meanwhile, the question of the need for state education gained increasing prominence. The education of the poor was, in Richard Johnson’s words, ‘one of the strongest of early Victorian obsessions.’⁴⁴ Even if child labour remained very much a default option for parents of poor children, a number of factors came to fuel a boom in voluntary and charity education, and a gradual shift towards the opinion that every child should have access to education.⁴⁵ This began with an intense focus from the 1830s on street children, leading to a number of philanthropic societies founded in response to this. The Children’s Friend Society and the London City Mission, for example, were both set up in the 1830s for poor children.⁴⁶ Poor children, therefore, began to be targeted more than ever as objects of charity and concern by elites. This was equally symbolic of general, changing conceptions of the role in which education and work could play in the development of childhood. Legislation put in place after the 1830s – most notably the Factory Act of 1833 – created a political framework for

⁴² Margaret A. Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1993), 72; Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 92.

⁴³ School and ‘outdoor relief’ is discussed in W.B. Stephens, *Education in Britain 1750-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 11.

⁴⁴ Richard Johnson, ‘Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England’, *Past and Present*, 49 (1970), 96.

⁴⁵ Pamela Horn, *The Victorian and Edwardian Schoolchild* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1989), 35.

⁴⁶ Eric Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working-Class Children in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 220.

redistributing time away from work and towards school. This split between education and work became known as the 'half-time system' which, particularly in the industrial north of England, became the dominant form of provision for working children.⁴⁷

The motivations behind this 'obsession' with the education of poor children, of course, extended far beyond simple humanitarianism. Educational discussion clearly reflected the moral panic about working-class children. As Richard Johnson points out, the Minutes of 1846, a Privy Council discussion between James Kay and other school inspectors which set a template for government action and support from religious groups. In the discussions, the immorality of the working class and the 'subterranean paganism' of the rural poor were heavily criticised. Education was recommended as a substitute for morally failing parents to substitute the 'moral contamination' of pauperism.⁴⁸ The Minutes' recommendations and condemnations did not take shape in legislation, but Johnson is right to highlight them as representative of the concerns of early educational reformers.⁴⁹ This conception of immorality and potential corruption could also manifest itself as an argument *against* education, in that newly literate poor people might be influenced by radical literature.⁵⁰ These worries merged with rising fears about working-class children's influences, culture and leisure time. The distaste of religious and philanthropic elites for working-class children's lives outside work can directly be seen in counter-action from bodies such as the Band of Hope, which began in 1843 to wean children from the supposedly harmful influences around them, through Temperance songs and games with a strong religious message.⁵¹ Other societies such as the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Movement followed with a similar message.⁵² Working-class children, in the eyes of the philanthropists and religious officials, became a moral problem: they were easily corruptible and in need of saving. It is this interplay between leisure and

⁴⁷ Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006); Stephens, *Education in Britain*, 8; Michael Sanderson, *Education, Economic Change and Society in England 1780-1870* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), 20.

⁴⁸ Minutes of 1846 cited in Johnson, 'Educational Policy and Social Control', 108.

⁴⁹ Johnson, 'Educational Policy and Social Control', 96.

⁵⁰ Sanderson, *Education*, 17.

⁵¹ Lilian Lewis Shiman, 'The Band of Hope Movement: Respectable Recreation for Working-Class Children', *Victorian Studies*, 17, 1 (1973), 52.

⁵² John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 15.

morality, and the links it had to education, which are applied to deaf children in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Most educational provisions made before 1870 were strictly voluntary. From the 1840s, 'Ragged Schools' were beginning to offer very limited education to street children. Similarly, the 1857 Industrial Schools Act made very limited provisions for the poorest children.⁵³ The schools were mostly underfunded and poorly-run, as were the 'Dame Schools' usually run by a female teacher from her own home.⁵⁴ Any mainstream voluntary education was strongly denominational and mostly dominated by the Church of England through their educational branch, the National Society for Promoting the Education for the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (formed in 1811), with nonconformist competition from the British and Foreign School Society (formed in 1814). We saw, in Wales, these tensions between the Church of England and nonconformist attitudes to education manifest themselves in a particular national context, though historians have pointed out the limitations of characterising these tensions as a denominational 'war', as much of the dialogue took place between the Church and the State.⁵⁵ In Swansea, early education was dominated by nonconformity, with several Works Schools affiliated to the British and Foreign School Society and a number of 'British Schools' set up across the town.⁵⁶ However, the issue of Anglican monopoly was one of broader significance and may in some ways have spurred on support elsewhere for state intervention, as nonconformists campaigned instead for a more inclusive approach to religious teaching.

These stirrings in education, then, were establishing important areas of discussion and conflict which were to frame children's lives. Conceptions of poverty and charity, religious denominationalism and the content of the curriculum were all emerging into consciousness. Though developments have so far applied these themes only to

⁵³ Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, 220.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 151.

⁵⁵ See Anne Digby and Peter Searby, *Children, School and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), 14.

⁵⁶ Lorraine A. Cook, 'The Contribution of Nonconformity to Elementary Education in Swansea from the mid-Victorian era to the end of the Nineteenth Century' *History of Education* Vol.26 No.1 (1997), 44.

mainstream education, it will be argued that special education institutions also participated in these shifting dialogues. Voluntary institutions for special education were appearing, developing and responding to national educational discourse simultaneously with schools aimed at educating poor children and working children, all largely with funding from religious or voluntary bodies. With these themes in mind, this chapter will now cast its attention towards the specific attitudes being developed by voluntary education for disabled children.

Voluntary special education before 1870

Almost all education specifically offered to disabled people in Britain before 1870 was voluntary and philanthropic. The origins of special education are difficult to define, but key milestones and developments can be traced. This section will primarily introduce the educational institutions which developed throughout the nineteenth century for children with sensory disabilities. The history of blind and deaf institutions have different contexts but, in a legislative and political sense, shared characteristics together, being entirely centred around private individuals and organisations. Education specifically designed for physically disabled children, however, was a question largely ignored. Few special provisions were made because of a child's physical impairment, and specific voluntary institutions were slow to appear, beginning with the Cripples' Home and Industrial School for Girls in London, which opened in 1851.⁵⁷ Indeed, even in 1898 a Departmental Committee professed the apathy of the state in this area: 'We think that physical defect alone is not sufficient cause for the admission of a child to a special class.'⁵⁸

Despite emerging as a late development, interpretations of physical disability had begun to be addressed in voluntary discourses of education. Carolyn Steedman has shown how educational reformers such as Margaret McMillan made working-class children's bodies a key element of their vision of education. Her open-air Deptford

⁵⁷ Frances Wilmot and Pauline Saul, *A Breath of Fresh Air: Birmingham's Open-Air Schools 1911-1970* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1998), 2.

⁵⁸ Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 191.

Camp School had at its core a focus on nature, play and physical wellbeing, which could be cultivated in the outdoors.⁵⁹ This ideology was explored fully in the context of physical disability with the opening of the Chailey Heritage Craft Schools and Hospitals. The school was founded in 1903 by Grace Kimmins in association with her charity group and social club for disabled people, the Guild of the Brave Poor Things.⁶⁰ Chailey was the first school specifically designed for physically disabled children, focusing heavily on industrial training but offering a degree of intellectual education; a 1914 pamphlet issued by the school described how the boys' wing had 'been wittily and yet truly called the Harrow and Eton of Crippledom'.⁶¹ Writing retrospectively about the school in 1948, Kimmins outlined how its offerings of 'pure air', 'good food' and a programme of preventive and orthopaedic facilities could 'reduce the pitiable regiments of our stunted, maimed and physically defective'.⁶² The Chailey school was, then, a delayed but powerful introduction of attitudes towards physical disability into voluntary education.

The education of children with mental disabilities took a similarly slow course. 'Idiot asylums' such as the Earlswood Asylum offered education to their child inmates. The curriculum was based on gendered work programmes and the 3 Rs, and was portrayed by a number of institutions in terms of returning humanity to their inmates.⁶³ Opinions of those staffing Asylums could differ – Potts finds that figures such as Dr Shuttleworth of the Royal Albert Asylum in Lancaster was advocating for children to attend classes in special schools which would be linked to mainstream

⁵⁹ Carolyn Steedman, 'Bodies, Figures and Physiology: Margaret McMillan and the Late 19th Century Remaking of Working-Class Childhood' in Roger Cooter (ed.), *In The Name of the Child: Health and Welfare, 1880-1940* (London: Routledge, 1992), 23; Wilmot and Saul, *Breath of Fresh Air*, 6.

⁶⁰ G.T. Kimmins (ed.), *Heritage Craft Schools and Hospitals, Chailey 1903-1948: Being an Account of the Pioneer Work for Crippled Children* (London: Baynard Press, 1948). The Guild of the Brave Poor Things was somewhat unique in its attitude to charity, focused as much on unity and community as it was charity. S. Koven, 'Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers, and the Great War in Britain', *The American Historical Review*, 99 (1994), 1167-1202; E. Baigent, 'Vachell, Ada Marian [known as Sister Ada] (1866-1923), Worker for Disabled People' <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59841>> Accessed 23 August 2012.

⁶¹ East Sussex Record Office [ESRO], HB/130/2, The Heritage Craft Schools, The Guild of the Brave Poor Things, The Guild of Play: Pamphlet of notes, reproduced documents, photographs, accounts etc' (1914).

⁶² Kimmins, *Heritage Craft Schools*, 122.

⁶³ Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 102-4.

elementary education.⁶⁴ His opinions were indicative of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century debates on ‘feeble-mindedness’, which further ingrained the question of education to the existing methods of segregation and classification developed through the Poor Law and in institutions. With this, Borsay points out, came a debate about the necessity of education, in which ‘backward children’ were portrayed as more capable of succeeding than the ‘feeble-minded’. This, she notes, was a view espoused by Mary Dendy, a key campaigner in provisions for mentally disabled people. Whilst secretary of the Lancashire Society for the Permanent Care of the Feeble-minded, she opened the Sandlebridge Colony which focused heavily on work and household chores, with some provision in the 3 Rs.⁶⁵ Yet her interpretation of educational provision depended according to ability. Dendy wrote in 1901 that ‘feeble-minded’ children were incapable of education, ‘a curse to themselves and to society’.⁶⁶ The debates about education for mentally disabled children were heavily informed by selectivity and classification.

In his overview of special education, Hurt argues that sympathy and charity for the blind has historically been greater than for the deaf, as the press continued to perpetuate charity for the blind as a religious duty.⁶⁷ Yet schooling for both blind and deaf children seemed to develop at a similar rate, with both centred around conceptions of the philanthropic necessity of educating disabled children. The first blind school was founded by Valentin Huay in Paris in 1784.⁶⁸ In Britain, the poet Edward Rushton, who lost his sight on a slave ship, started the first school for blind children in Liverpool in 1791. In the decade afterwards, landmark schools in Edinburgh and London were set up, but taught only trades and music.⁶⁹ In Britain, blind schools were linked inextricably to the idea of charity and aid. The issue of age partly played a factor in this distinction; Carpenter points out that contemporary surveys calculated that the majority of blind people in Britain were over 21.⁷⁰ Thus

⁶⁴ Patricia Potts, ‘Medicine, Morals and Mental Deficiency: The Contribution of Doctors to the Development of Special Education in England’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 9:3 (1983), 188.

⁶⁵ Potts, ‘Medicine, Morals and Mental Deficiency’, 195.

⁶⁶ Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 102.

⁶⁷ Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 93.

⁶⁸ Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 95.

⁶⁹ Winzer, *History of Special Education*, 72.

⁷⁰ Mary Wilson Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society in Victorian England* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2010), 137.

the Swansea Institution for the Blind had its roots in the Society for the Teaching and Helping the Adult Blind, which offered to visit and teach individual blind people in the town.⁷¹ Charitable principles of self-help and independence were themes woven in popular discourses on blindness, so much so that many charities set up for blind people included ‘conditions’ of minimum age, seeing ability and particularly morality. As Lees and Ralph point out, the London blind organisations, the Blind Man’s Friend Charity and the Christian Blind Relief Society, both exclusively gave to ‘the needy deserving blind’ of ‘good moral character’.⁷² Likewise at Swansea, one of the rules for admission asked parents both whether ‘he [has] ever strolled about as a beggar, or played any instrument in the streets’ and whether the entrant bears ‘a good character for veracity, honesty, and propriety of conduct.’⁷³

Nevertheless, a literary and educational contest was the defining event in 19th century blind history: the ‘Battle of the Types’ between Braille and Moon which saw Braille adopted as the agreed method of blind education in reading, though Moon did not instantly disappear.⁷⁴ The British and Foreign Blind Association – formed in 1868 as an organisation to unify blind people and address the issue of blind education – advocated the system.⁷⁵ The Blind Institution at Swansea proclaimed its loyalty in 1884 by stating that ‘the *Braille* type has advantages not possessed by Moon’s characters, as the former is wholly made by dots, and the blind are able to write as well as read... which is a great boon to them’.⁷⁶ It is in this contest of educational methodology which blind and deaf education shared the most in common, as the history of deaf education has been centred around different methods of teaching, though this would be a longer and unresolved contest.⁷⁷

⁷¹ WGAS, D D S/B, Swansea and South Wales Institution for the Blind, ‘A Souvenir’ (c.1935).

⁷² Colin Lees and Sue Ralph, ‘Charitable Provision for Blind People and Deaf People in Late Nineteenth Century London’, *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 4:3 (2004), 152.

⁷³ Swansea Blind Institution Annual Report 1887, 27.

⁷⁴ Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society*, 133.

⁷⁵ Gordon Phillips, *The Blind in British Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 215.

⁷⁶ Swansea Blind Institution Annual Report 1884, 3.

⁷⁷ The similarity in educational debate in blind and deaf pedagogy is pointed out in Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 96.

Voluntary deaf education before 1870

This section will introduce the picture of deaf education in Britain, however it is important to note the international context which informed early deaf schooling. The roots of mass education for deaf children can be traced to sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spain. This is where the monk Pedro Ponce de León taught speech to deaf children of wealthy parents, and Juan Pablo Bonet published his *Reducción de las letras y arte para enseñar a hablar a los mudos* (Summary of the letters and the art of teaching speech to the mute) considered the first written compendium of signs in deaf education. Yet as Susan Plann points out in her study of Spanish deaf education, Spain's international prominence faded after their tenure.⁷⁸ Thus, the influential schools founded in France and Germany in the seventeenth centuries without doubt form the beginnings of institutionalised, international deaf education. The hugely different experiences of these two countries encapsulated the variation and complexity to be found in deaf education worldwide. The first free school for the deaf was founded in Paris by Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée in 1760. Abbé de l'Épée is largely credited with the spread of sign language (including, misleadingly, its invention), because his contact with pupils using sign language led him to conduct his lessons in this manner.⁷⁹ Eighteen years later, another notable deaf school was founded in Leipzig by Samuel Heinicke, a writing and mathematics tutor who taught a deaf pupil to lip-read and speak.⁸⁰ Abbé de l'Épée and Heinicke's schools represented major steps towards openly-available deaf education, rather than simply tuition for children of richer parents, previously the only group able to afford private tuition. Abbé de l'Épée and Heinicke's methods were also to ignite what would be the most important, passionate and, above all, complex debate in the history of deaf education, the contest between speech and sign.

This conflict is visible throughout the entire development of education for the deaf and symbolised in the debate between the French and German educators, who

⁷⁸ Susan Plann, *A Silent Minority: Deaf Education in Spain, 1550-1835* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 81.

⁷⁹ Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 99. See also Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (New York: Random House, 1984), 42-57.

⁸⁰ Lang, 'Perspectives', 13.

exchanged letters with each other throughout their careers arguing the cases for each of their methods. Abbé de l'Épée's school utilised signs in their teaching, a style which has since given the banner of 'manualism' and is often portrayed by historians of the deaf as synonymous with mainstream respect and acceptance of deaf people.⁸¹ The school was - and is - so revered that the story of Abbé de l'Épée's encounter with the deaf community and formation of the Paris school has formed the beginning of what Catherine Kudlick calls a deaf 'creation myth'.⁸² Heinicke, meanwhile, discouraged the use of signs altogether and focused on articulation and lip-reading, forming a speech-centred methodology is known by his own term of 'oralism'. This outlook has since come under intense criticism from historians, particularly those who uphold the 'linguistic minority' model of deafness outlined in the previous chapter.⁸³ These two concepts – both of which were complex and fluid – appear throughout this thesis and are the subject of a detailed look at their application in the Cambrian Institution in Chapter Five.⁸⁴ The interest in deaf education and subsequent conflict of methodologies in France and Germany set the scene for developments in Britain, which were to follow an even more complex path, with neither oralism nor manualism wholly dominating deaf education.

Traces of Britain's history of deaf education can be found before the onset of the institutions. Borsay finds the first recorded deaf education in the early modern period, when wealthy families paid for private tuition for their deaf children. Publications such as John Bulwer's *The Deaf and Dumb Man's Friend* in 1642 served to strengthen the call for private deaf education.⁸⁵ Yet even before institutions, early discussions of deaf education were beginning to reflect the debate between oralism

⁸¹ See Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003), 105, 109; Francois Buton, 'Making Deaf Children Talk: Changes in Educational Policy towards the Deaf in the French Third Republic' in David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg (eds.), *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity* (London: Routledge, 2006), 117.

⁸² Catherine J. Kudlick, 'Disability History: Why We Need Another "Other"', *The American Historical Review*, 108:3 (2003), 783.

⁸³ See Harlan Lane, 'Constructions of Deafness' in Lennard J. Davis. (ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), 154; Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 7.

⁸⁴ Of course, neither Abbé de l'Épée nor Heinicke stuck rigidly to (respectively) signs or oralism. Heinicke in particular made some use of gestures in his education, despite espousing on the benefits of primarily teaching speech. See Lane, *When the Mind Hears*, 102.

⁸⁵ Anne Borsay, 'Deaf Children and Charitable Education in Britain 1790-1914' in Anne Borsay and Peter Shapely (eds.), *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid: The Consumption of Health and Welfare in Britain, c.1550-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 71.

and manualism occurring elsewhere in Europe. Dr. William Hoder and Dr. John Wallis, despite both undertaking only a limited amount of teaching, took up the debate in the mid-seventeenth century, Hoder espousing articulation and Wallis using a manual technique.⁸⁶ In Wales, little exists about private deaf tuition, but it may well have been available. The National Library of Wales includes a pictorial dictionary made by Eliza Pughe, a deaf girl aged around twelve from Coch y big, Clynnog, who lived from 1831 to 1850. This significant artefact points to a prehistory of Welsh deaf education that is yet to be realised.⁸⁷

Before large-scale deaf institutions, deaf education in the rest of Britain appears to have been primarily restricted to the upper classes. Indeed, the first professional teacher of deaf children in Britain, Henry Baker, spent his career in the eighteenth century teaching only children of wealthier parents.⁸⁸ Perhaps the most important and widely-discussed name in early British deaf education is Thomas Braidwood, a mathematics teacher who became involved in deaf education after being approached by an Edinburgh merchant to teach his deaf boy to write. Braidwood founded the first British deaf school in 1764, providing education to one pupil.⁸⁹ From there, Braidwood and his family heavily influenced British deaf education. His nephew, Joseph Watson, established the Asylum for the Support and Education of Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor in London in 1792, the first widely-available institution for deaf children. As Patrick Beaver explains in his history of that school, the secrecy of the Braidwood family's methods created an 'unethical monopoly' of deaf education, restricting knowledge of the techniques only to those in their inner circle.⁹⁰ This reached the extent that, when American manualist educator Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet visited Britain in 1815 to examine its teaching methods, he found their secrecy impenetrable. Inadvertently, this sparked the second half of the 'creation myth', as he instead met Laurent Clerc, who had been taught manually at Abbé de

⁸⁶ Peter Jackson, *A Pictorial History of Deaf Britain* (Winsford: Deafprint, 2001), 51.

⁸⁷ National Library of Wales Aberystwyth, 'Pictorial Dictionary by Eliza Pughe' <<http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=583>> Accessed 3 July 2012.

⁸⁸ Kenneth W. Hodgson, *The Deaf and Their Problems: A Study in Special Education* (London: Watts & Co., 1953), 139.

⁸⁹ Jackson, *Pictorial History of Deaf Britain*, 52; Brian Grant, *The Deaf Advance: A History of the British Deaf Association* (Edinburgh: Pentland Press, 1990), 2.

⁹⁰ Patrick Beaver, *A Tower of Strength: Two Hundred Years of the Royal School for Deaf Children Margate* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1992), 35.

l'Épée's school, and the two formed the American Asylum for the Deaf, America's celebrated first deaf school, in 1817.⁹¹

Braidwood's methods primarily involved using mouth instruments to teach children the sounds of words. Signs were not wholly absent from his school, but Braidwood did not practice any manualist teaching methods. In Braidwood family schools, the emphasis probably shifted from signs to speech according to the tastes and conveniences of individual educators. Thus it seems unlikely that Braidwood and family were motivated by any strong linguistic ideologies of language like those which influenced Heinicke or de l'Épée. There was no outright ban of signs, but neither were the structured signing techniques used in France embraced, and their methods placed great importance on spoken and written English. For example, Watson took a very visual approach to letters and grammar.⁹² Early British education for deaf children, then, was characterised by a changing and somewhat incoherent educational method which defied easy categorisation.⁹³

Nevertheless, signs were used in the classroom and socially, and the institutions acted as a place to build the foundations of communities bound by language. In Edinburgh, where Braidwood had started his first school, the availability of deaf education led to literature such as *The Edinburgh Messenger*, a publication which began in 1843.⁹⁴ Organised communities campaigning for recognition and free use of sign language began to appear, their pupils having met each other through the schools. The Refuge for the Deaf and Dumb emerged in 1841, the work of George Crouch, father to five deaf children. This began as a charitable group to tackle the problem of deaf unemployment through workshops and relief. After a campaign to provide freely-

⁹¹ Kudlick, 'Disability History', 783; Douglas Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 7.

⁹² Jan Branson and Don Miller, *Damned for their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2002), 127.

⁹³ This point is argued by Branson and Miller, who suggest that the 'oralist heritage' which is sometimes used to characterise this period is far more complex. Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 123.

⁹⁴ George Montgomery, *Silent Destiny: A Brief History of Donaldson's College and the Origins of Education of Deaf Children in Edinburgh, Scotland and the World* (Edinburgh: Scottish Workshop Publications, 1997), 27.

available religious services for deaf people conducted in signs, the Refuge eventually became the Royal Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb, bringing together both deaf and hearing 'missionaries' to the deaf poor. The Association founded the first church for deaf people, St Saviour's Church in London, in 1870, with the first service held in 1873.⁹⁵

The early nineteenth century saw continuing expansion of deaf education despite being temporarily limited by the Braidwood family's monopoly - institutions in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and Exeter established what has come to be described as the 'Asylum System' of large, voluntary institutions for teaching deaf children. These institutions were located mostly in large cities and took in children to board and educate, with a community of headmasters who regularly contacted each other.⁹⁶ Many teachers in these schools were themselves deaf - though the majority were ex-pupils employed as 'assistant teachers' on a low wage - and thus could communicate with pupils using signs (the role of these teachers in the Cambrian Institution will be discussed in Chapter 6).⁹⁷ Despite this acceptance of signs, written and spoken English remained the 'language of education', British deaf education was thus constantly veering between the methods of both manualism and oralism.⁹⁸ Many - including the Cambrian Institution - referred to the balanced teaching as the 'combined method', and passionately argued their case for its supremacy.⁹⁹ The complex linguistic hierarchy which lay at the heart of this method will be a key consideration of Chapter 5.

⁹⁵ Lees and Ralph, 'Charitable Provision', 157. The history of the Association and St Saviour's Church is explored in Neil Ashley Pemberton, 'Holiness, Civilisation and the Victorian Deaf: A Social History of Signing and Speech in late Victorian England, 1865-1895' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2004), 39-73.

⁹⁶ Beaver, *Tower of Strength*, 49; M.G. McLoughlin, *A History of the Education of the Deaf in England* (Liverpool: G.M. McLoughlin, 1987), 2.

⁹⁷ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 142.

⁹⁸ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 142.

⁹⁹ Preferences changed according to context and taste - the headmaster of a deaf school at Doncaster in 1829 embraced a French method centring solely on sign language, calling articulation a 'specious accomplishment'. When the Swiss teacher Louis du Puget took over from Braidwood as head of the General Institution for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Children at Birmingham in 1825, he openly criticised oral methods in favour of a French-inspired finger-spelling method. Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 100; Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 26.

Above all, the defining characteristic of early deaf education was its voluntarism. Whilst the Poor Law was utilised to pay for children to attend, most institutions relied crucially on money from the public and mostly wealthy local elites and philanthropists. The mechanics and social implications of this particular method of philanthropy forms the subject of Chapter 4 of this thesis. Schools held public meetings and demonstrations, in which pupils were introduced to a fascinated public, and tested on their abilities. They were presented as ‘miracles’, proof of the supposed wonders of special education. Public reports and events also contributed to many schools’ sincere attempt to gain as much public funding as possible.¹⁰⁰ In the case of Braidwood’s enterprise, special education could also be a profit-making business concern, with the fees provided by wealthier parents proving lucrative.¹⁰¹

All early special education institutions had a religious slant, however few shared the denominational character of mainstream schools. However, there were exceptions to this; a Catholic deaf school was founded in 1874 and the Jews’ Deaf and Dumb Home (later to become a key site for the oralism movement) opened in London in 1863.¹⁰² Therefore, the Anglican dominance of mainstream voluntary education did not necessarily apply, and neither did nonconformist education organisations such as the British and Foreign Schools Society take an interest in special education.¹⁰³ Despite this largely nondenominational character, the need for special education was frequently formulated in religious terms: it would be the only way which disabled children could learn what were perceived as their moral and religious duties.¹⁰⁴ Alongside religion, industrial training became a priority for many early special schools, and its role in the curriculum of the Cambrian Institution will be discussed in Chapter 6. The doctrine of economic rationality, which implied that disabled children must become independent contributors to society, was visible from the beginning. Indeed, as Borsay points out, the very concept of preparing disabled children for the workforce reveals an economic motivation from the educators.¹⁰⁵ This formed part of an increasingly loud call for disabled people to be taught to be ‘useful’. The Charity

¹⁰⁰ See Borsay, ‘Deaf Children and Charitable Education’, 74-6.

¹⁰¹ Tomlinson, *Sociology of Special Education*, 35; Beaver, *Tower of Strength*, 43.

¹⁰² Jackson, *Pictorial History of Deaf Britain*, 68.

¹⁰³ Sally Tomlinson, *Sociology of Special Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 35.

¹⁰⁴ Borsay, ‘Deaf Children and Charitable Education’, 79.

¹⁰⁵ Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 108.

Organisation Society [COS], formed in 1869, provided apprenticeships and training for disabled children, with an overt message that they should become economically self-reliant and contribute to society. The ideology was based on a selective approach to charity which epitomised the concept of the 'deserving' poor: only those who could prove themselves willing to commit to self-sufficiency would receive any help.¹⁰⁶ The COS' work with blind children in the 1870s aimed towards integration, offering apprenticeships under sighted employers.¹⁰⁷ Many deaf schools included similar programmes or apprenticeship schemes aimed at teaching their pupils skills to become valuable members of the workforce, and ensured their extracurricular activities were of a 'useful' nature.¹⁰⁸ The interpretation of special education as a force for economic rationality was therefore visible long before loud calls were being made for state intervention specifically in special education.

Disabled children and the Elementary Education Act 1870

The Education Act, introduced in 1870 by the Liberal MP William Forster, was the first nationwide act of state intervention in mainstream education and a defining landmark in British educational history. Yet it arrived amongst a scene of dissent, argument and scepticism. The idea of mass education and its potential consequence of an educated British people caused concern among some. Much of this centred upon the fear that a literate population could discover dangerous literature and turn to rebellion. Another worry was that state education would permanently damage the voluntary sector.¹⁰⁹ Voluntary education was built upon complex factors which ultimately affirmed the social order: they positioned their pupils firmly as helpless subjects, and the schools' organisation was linked to the local elites. Thus any attack on this package was bound to cause controversy. The debate over state intervention carried with it religious tensions, materialised in the rivalry between the dominant Church of England National Schools and the British Schools run by the

¹⁰⁶ See Anne Summers, 'A Home from Home – Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century' in S. Burman (ed.), *Fit Work for Women* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 53-6.

¹⁰⁷ Ashton Phillips, *Blind in British Society*, 209.

¹⁰⁸ Borsay, 'Deaf Children', 80.

¹⁰⁹ James Murphy, *The Education Act 1870: Text and Commentary* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1972), 9.

nonconformist British and Foreign School Society. The nonconformist protests in Wales were certainly an indicator of rising religious tensions in the field of education, as nonconformists began to rebel against an Anglican near-monopoly of education, despite the rise of their own religious movements.¹¹⁰ Indeed, such was the problematic religious situation that previous minor attempts by the state to influence the running of denominational voluntary schools had frequently been met with resistance.¹¹¹ Yet the question of education (and indeed religious teaching) was becoming too pressing for the government to leave to warring voluntary schools.

By the 1860s, parents and reformers increased the urgency of their call for compulsory elementary education. As the child labour market declined, parents felt the need to educate their children for an extended period. The standard pattern of work and family life was shifting from one which encouraged children to become economically useful members of society early in life, to one which began to stress education and the sentimental value of children.¹¹² As F.M.L. Thompson points out, this change in lifestyle may have reflected the changing aspirations and ambitions, particularly of the middle classes.¹¹³ Elsewhere, lack of funds and a general recognition of the need for state education was beginning to weaken the voluntary movement.¹¹⁴ This was especially true in Swansea, where the collapse of the Voluntary Normal School triggered a decline in voluntary education. As Evans points out, this did not cause voluntary schools to disappear, but something was urgently needed to 'fill in the gaps'.¹¹⁵

The 1870 Education Act promised compulsory education for all schoolchildren. It created School Boards which, if voluntary societies could not provide adequate

¹¹⁰ Evans, *History of Wales 1815-1906*, 264.

¹¹¹ Murphy, *Education Act*, 24.

¹¹² Of course, the implication that children only recently have been treated with parental emotion and sentimentality, or that childhood is a recent 'discovery' is overly simplistic. For a good summary of these issues in the history of childhood, see Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Children in History: Concepts of Nature and Society' in Geoffrey Scarre (ed.), *Children, Parents and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3-24.

¹¹³ F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana, 1985), 61

¹¹⁴ Murphy, *Education Act*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Evans, *History of Wales 1815-1906*, 264.

schooling in a particular area, would ensure children between 5 and 12 were educated. School fees remained, but if parents were too poor to afford them, the Boards would pay.¹¹⁶ Of course, after its inception, the debates surrounding state education remained, particularly regarding religion. The Cowper-Temple clause aimed to address the continuing religious divide though, as Murphy points out, it has been misread as an attempt by the government to abolish sectarianism, which was not the case.¹¹⁷ The clause did, however, allow parents to withdraw their children from specific religious teaching. Its heavy use in Wales, where a quarter of usage occurred, reflected the religious debate occurring there.¹¹⁸ Smith argues for the 1870 Act as another key point in Welsh educational debate, a chance to respond to the failures outlined by the Blue Books whilst avoiding its judgments on Welsh people and character, placing education as ‘essential to the well-being of the nation’.¹¹⁹

The Act was undoubtedly a turning point in education in Wales and Britain as a whole, but its effect on disabled children is very much questionable. At a base level, nothing included in the Act directly mentioned special education or disabled children. Certainly, disability was not directly counted as a valid exception for going to school. The Act states that a child could be exempt from school ‘by sickness or any other unavoidable cause’, or if there was no school open within three miles.¹²⁰ Yet disability was not listed as a ‘sickness’, and did not count. In 1876, the exemptions were more clearly defined in a further Act, yet disability was again nowhere to be seen. This is not to say, however, that the 1870 Act stopped these children from going to school. Disabled children did begin to appear in the new classrooms alongside non-disabled children. Indeed, the Leeds School Board directly asked Forster in 1872 if the Act allowed them to educate blind and deaf children. His response simply confirmed that the Act would not prevent them from doing so.¹²¹ Mission societies began to send blind children to mainstream schools, a response to what was perceived

¹¹⁶ Elementary Education Act 1870, 5-6 in Murphy, *Education Act*, 87.

¹¹⁷ Murphy, *Education Act*, 62.

¹¹⁸ Smelser, *Social Paralysis*, 192.

¹¹⁹ Robert Smith, *Schools, Politics and Society: Elementary Education in Wales, 1870-1902* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 15.

¹²⁰ Elementary Education Act 1870, 74 in Murphy, *Education Act*, 108.

¹²¹ Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 104.

as the harmful ‘enforced separation’ of blind institutions.¹²² Humphries and Gordon’s interviewees further confirm that children with disabilities were integrated into mainstream schools: some were educated, but their impairments were often misinterpreted as evidence of low ability or, in the case of one deaf girl, misbehaviour. This was not a universal pattern however, as, disabled children were denied places in many mainstream schools for fear of ‘disturbing’ others.¹²³ The somewhat vague acknowledgement from the Act of the educational needs of disabled children echoed its general uncertainty. The Act did not exclude disabled children, but neither did it make any particular effort to educate them.

Looking beyond its lack of direct action, the indirect effects of the 1870 Act may have been the most powerful. In redefining elementary education, it in turn opened up new questions about special education. Reflecting Lennard Davis’ arguments about the definition of disability against normality, the 1870 Act made universal elementary education a norm, thus quickly reassigning those excluded a new role. Ian Copeland’s study of the ‘dull and defective’ children educated by the 1870 Act draws heavily on Foucauldian theory. He argues that the ‘sudden comprehensive nature’ of elementary education allowed for the presence of uneducated working-class children which, alongside the new ‘payment by results’ system, rapidly created a new category of ‘dull, deficient and backward children’.¹²⁴ Copeland’s conclusions allow for a different perspective on the effects of 1870 Act: it normalised elementary education, leading to social effects on those excluded or struggling with the new system.

This effect did not go unnoticed by those involved in special education. Indeed, a series of letters exchanged between inspectors in London, Manchester and Swansea in 1886 noted how the Act failed to include deaf children, leading to a condemnation of the Act’s ambiguity:

¹²² Ashton Phillips, *The Blind in British Society*, 203.

¹²³ Humphries and Gordon, *Out of Sight*, 47-52. Anna Davin also found evidence of deaf and blind children being unidentified in schools. Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram, 1996), 122.

¹²⁴ Ian Copeland, ‘The Making of the Dull, Deficient and Backward Pupil in British Elementary Education 1870-1914’, *British Journal of Education Studies*, 44:4 (1996), 378.

The Education Act of 1870 made it obligatory that every child should be educated, unless reasonable excuse can be shown for non-attendance at school. Is the infirmity of being deaf and dumb a reasonable excuse? I most certainly think not.¹²⁵

Some government officials were thus becoming suspicious and critical of the Act's failure to increase special education. Amongst members of the movement for blind schools, the Act served to ignite the debate about sending blind children to mainstream schools and continuing the development of voluntary blind education. While blind children continued to be sent to mainstream schools, institutional education was also formulating a response to their exclusion. The British and Foreign Blind Association, for example, was formed in 1868, and used the recent events in elementary education as an influence in its early development – the Association wanted to see greater co operation between the government and voluntary organisations.¹²⁶ Despite the main debates in special education continuing, the lack of state intervention in the education of disabled children was constantly looming. The 1885 conference for the headmasters of deaf institutions, asked, 'How is it that it then is now fifteen years since [the 1870 Education Act] was passed, and yet "The State takes no cognizance of the Deaf."'¹²⁷ The Act may therefore not have consciously tried to affect disabled children's lives, but its impact on special education was huge: its exclusionary policies made the role of the state an unavoidable issue.

Oralism and eugenics in British deaf education: the 1889 Royal Commission

If 1870 represented the defining moment of state intervention in elementary education, the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c. of the United Kingdom of 1889 was perhaps its counterpart for special education.¹²⁸ The process which led to its final report was long and delayed. Having originally been proposed in

¹²⁵ H.M. Inspector H.E. Oakley, Esq., 'Deaf and Dumb Children' in Reports on the Education of Deaf and Dumb Children in the Metropolitan, Manchester, and Swansea Inspection Districts (1886), 4.

¹²⁶ Ashton Phillips, *The Blind in British Society*, 201-2; 215.

¹²⁷ *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf & Dumb, 1-3 July, 1885* (Margate: W.H. Allen, 1886), 106.

¹²⁸ This study of the Report will focus on its recommendations for deaf children, as they highlighted important shifts in deaf educational thought.

1885 solely to recommend state action for blind education, it expanded to include recommendations on deaf children and ‘idiots and imbeciles’.¹²⁹ The Royal Commission was confirmed in 1886 to encompass deaf education, and was to be led by Lord Egerton, with 116 sittings held in London before the Report’s final publication in 1889.¹³⁰ It was a crucial document which indicated state attitudes towards educating disabled children, acknowledging the context of contemporary educational debates, both domestic and international. Observations and recommendations were made about a wide range of issues, making it something of a barometer of educational feeling in Britain. Yet it is also an indicator of the complexity of educational debate at this time, and the message of state-assisted education in the oral technique was informed by a long discussion about deaf education.

The report came as the question of oralism surged into discourses of deaf education. Chapter 5 of this thesis will argue that the complex application of the methodology in individual institutions, however the legislative context behind oralism will be explored here. Indeed the panel included the oralist Benjamin St John Ackers and the Reverends W.B. Sleight and C.M. Owen, both supporters of signs in deaf education.¹³¹ A group of educationalists campaigning for the use of oralism was gaining increasing recognition in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Residential School for Jewish Deaf Children, which opened in Whitechapel in 1864, was one of the earliest institutions to return oralism to the deaf curriculum. The school’s founder Baroness Mayer de Rothschild, impressed with the children’s techniques of articulation, held the first meetings of the newly-formed Association for the Oral Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb at her house in 1871. From there, the Association established a teacher training college and school which was devoted solely to oral techniques. Benjamin St John Ackers’ own society, the Society for Training Teachers of the Deaf and Diffusion of the ‘German’ System in the United Kingdom, had formed in 1877, with their own training college in Ealing following in

¹²⁹ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 95.

¹³⁰ Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c., of the United Kingdom [RCBDDO] (1889), xi-xii.

¹³¹ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 96.

1878.¹³² Through these societies and their educational activity, the oral method was becoming a serious feature of the curriculum in many British deaf schools.

The debates about oralism in Britain were once again influenced by developments abroad. The USA was undergoing the passionate debate between oralists and manualists experienced in eighteenth-century France and Germany. In the USA, the discussion was centred around two key figures, namely Alexander Graham Bell, whose experience with oralism led him to found an oralist group, and Edward Miner Gallaudet, an advocate of the combined system of deaf education and son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, who had founded the first American deaf school at Hartford, Connecticut. Bell was vocal in his distrust of sign language, arguing that it impeded deaf integration into wider society.¹³³ The views of both men appeared in the 1889 Report, providing an international template for the arguments to unfold in Britain.¹³⁴ From the 1860s, the American model of deaf education began to shift from one which valued the use of sign language in the classroom, to one which promoted oralism as heavily as possible. Douglas Baynton has detailed how, despite the refusal of many deaf communities to abandon sign language, oralism had firmly ingrained itself common feature of American deaf schools by the turn of the century.¹³⁵

The most powerful watershed for the international shift towards oralism came in 1880 with the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf in Milan. The attendees of the conference almost unanimously praised oralism, and recommended the German method established by Heinicke for use in deaf education worldwide. Its conclusions centred around the ‘incontestable superiority of speech over signs, for restoring deaf mutes to social life and giving them greater superiority in language.’¹³⁶

¹³² The early activity of the oralist training colleges are documented in P.H. Butterfield, ‘The First Training Colleges for Teachers of the Deaf’, *British Journal of Education Studies*, 19:1 (1971), 51-69.

¹³³ Harry G. Lang, ‘Perspectives on the History of Deaf Education’ in Mark Marschark and Patricia Elizabeth Spencer (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Deaf studies, Language and Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15.

¹³⁴ RCBDDO, 391-2.

¹³⁵ Douglas C. Baynton, ‘“Savages and Deaf-Mutes”: Evolutionary Theory and the Campaign Against Sign Language in the Nineteenth Century’ in John V. Van Cleve, (ed.), *Deaf History Unveiled: Interpretations from the New Scholarship* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2000), 93-4. Baynton portrays the resistance put up by deaf people in America. See Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*.

¹³⁶ Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf (1880) cited in Lang, ‘Perspectives’, 15.

This encapsulated a number of the most common contemporary defences of oralism – signs were seen as restrictive to deaf children’s interaction with hearing people, and a barrier to a full understanding of language. The attendance of the conference was weighted in favour of oralists. Exact numbers vary according to source but, of its 164 attendees, over half were Italian, and the pupils which made up the demonstration were carefully selected to illustrate oralism. Only two delegates were deaf.¹³⁷ As such, the arguments in favour of the German oral method centred around religion: learning speech was the only way deaf children could hear the word of God, and sign language could potentially lead to subversion of the religious message.¹³⁸ Deaf voices were nowhere to be found: this movement would be led by hearing teachers and religious leaders.

The Milan conference had a significant international impact, both directly and as an indicator of the direction in which deaf education was heading. From the 1870s in France, individual teachers had begun to promote oralism as an alternative to French Sign Language, previously the solid base of French deaf education. The recommendations of Milan, however, had an immediate effect, with an oral curriculum brought into French schools the same year. Deaf people were unable to teach the new method, and FSL was banished in schools until the 1990s.¹³⁹ Likewise, the conference came at the height of the American shift towards oral education.¹⁴⁰ Yet focusing too heavily on the Congress might give the inaccurate impression that oralism became universally adopted as a result of its actions. Branson and Miller point out that its effect has been ‘overstated’ in legislation as it did not wipe out signing as intended.¹⁴¹ Indeed, the Congress attracted a significant level criticism from outside those involved in special education. The complete lack of voice given to deaf people led to anger in deaf communities across the world, spurring on organisations such as American group the National Association of the Deaf to voice their dissatisfaction. What is undoubtable is the unique symbolism and infamy it created, as summarised

¹³⁷ Jonathan Rée, *I See a Voice: A Philosophical History of Language, Deafness and the Senses* (London: Flamingo, 1999), 228; A.F. Dimmock, *Cruel Legacy: An Introduction to the Record of Deaf People in History* (Edinburgh: Scottish Workshop Publications, 1993), 30-31.

¹³⁸ Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 121.

¹³⁹ Buton, ‘Making Deaf Children Talk’. 117-19.

¹⁴⁰ Lang, ‘Perspectives’, 15.

¹⁴¹ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 153.

by Paddy Ladd: ‘What could [the Deaf community] have been had not sign language and Deaf teachers been removed from Deaf education after the Milan ‘Congress of 1880, a date as pregnant with meaning for us as 1492 is for Native Americans.’¹⁴² The impact of Milan was to establish an interpretation of deafness as defective and curable; whilst signing continued to survive, particularly among deaf communities, the Congress made clear that it wanted no place for signs in deaf education.

True to its complex relationship with oralism, British deaf education did not wholeheartedly embrace the conclusions of the 1880 Congress. However, it was indicative of a rise in oralist practise in British schools, as seen in the newly-formed schools and training colleges which devoted themselves to the technique. A paper was devoted to oralism at the following year’s Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf & Dumb in London, which reflected on the implications of Milan: ‘So radical are its recommendations, so confident are its assumptions’ that it must be considered by all involved in deaf education.¹⁴³ The paper’s author, Richard Elliott, the headmaster of the Old Kent Road and Margate schools, summarised the British mood as enthusiastic but cautious: ‘I say, try it – but try it without sacrificing the interests of any child in the enlightenment it seeks at your hands.’ Concerns were raised about the cost of the system, compared to the combined and manual approaches.¹⁴⁴ The Conferences – established in 1877 as a forum for teachers of the deaf – brought together advocates both for and against oralism and showcased the multi-faceted debate. Headmasters in Britain seemed receptive to the recommendations of Milan, but it did not wholly adopt the German method, as the Congress recommended.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 4.

¹⁴³ *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf & Dumb, July 24th-26th 1881* (London: W.H. Allen, 1881), 7.

¹⁴⁴ *Conference of Headmasters 1881*, 18.

¹⁴⁵ The conferences and their significance for bringing together the deaf teaching community are discussed in Pemberton, ‘Holiness’, 120. Some attempts at organising a deaf teachers’ conference had been made prior to the 1877 meeting including an informal discussion in London in 1851 and one the next year conducted by Charles Baker, headmaster of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, which also questioned the place of articulation in deaf children’s education. See Boyce, Anthony J. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf, 1829-1979* (Doncaster: Doncaster M.B.C. Museums and Arts Services, c.1990), 25.

The authors of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c, however, came down firmly on the side of oralism. The Commissioners offered a defence of the methods which criticised the perceived ‘prejudice’ shown towards oralism in British special schools.¹⁴⁶ For the Commissioners, having discussed in detail the manual and combined methods through interviews with figures in deaf education, oralism was the most effective method despite its cost. Manualism, they argued, could be used for religious instruction, but it should only be used by the ‘dull’ children unable to succeed in their speech training.¹⁴⁷ Oralism’s increasing use in schools, they argued was ‘a step in the right direction.’¹⁴⁸ This argument for oralism was, like so many others at the time, delivered in terms of integration into wider society, but the message went far beyond basic integration. This passage demonstrates the deep social implications of the Report’s recommendation of the oral system:

We have observed how the use of signs creates a tendency to live apart as a class rather than to mix with the world, and upon the consequent intermarriage of the deaf, which in German and Switzerland does not occur to the same extent under the oral system.¹⁴⁹

The manualism and oralism debate was attached to wider social concerns which went beyond education. The Commissioners demonstrated their dislike of deaf communities (presented here as an inferior class to hearing people), and attacked sign language for strengthening these. It also showed how the international context shaped British special education discourse – the commissioners wish to follow the example set by countries which use the oral system and drew heavily on the arguments of Alexander Graham Bell, who had emerged as a prominent American critic not just of sign language, but of the idea of a deaf community.¹⁵⁰

The most striking feature of their observance, however, was the discouragement of the intermarriage of deaf people. The report frequently states that one of the goals of

¹⁴⁶ RCBDDO Report, 486.

¹⁴⁷ RCBDDO Report, 386.

¹⁴⁸ RCBDDO Report, 406-489.

¹⁴⁹ RCBDDO Report, 427.

¹⁵⁰ RCBDDO Report, 278.

British special education was to integrate deaf people into wider society, and the only way to do this would be to teach deaf children to speak: ‘the knowledge of a little speech’, they argued, ‘enables them to communicate on more equal terms with the rest of the world than the language of signs or the finger alphabet.’¹⁵¹ Therefore, the Commissioners hoped, more relationships with hearing people were made possible, and intermarriage would decrease. The report used research from Bell, who warned that deaf schools ought to do as much as possible to discourage deaf people congregating and intermarrying.¹⁵² Included as evidence in this argument was a paper by Dr Buxton of the Medical Society at Liverpool, who reported that congenital deafness in children was seven times more likely if both parents were deaf, rather than just one.¹⁵³ This caused the Commissioners to warn against signs (which established deaf communities) and mixed-sex classrooms (which could lead to relationships) to avoid intermarriage: ‘We think there is sufficient evidence to prove that there is a real danger of an increase in congenital deafness [from intermarriage], and recommend that the inter-marriages of the toto-congenitally deaf should be strongly discouraged.’¹⁵⁴ Their recommendations for deaf schools carried distinct undertones of social engineering.

The Commissioners’ instructions to avoid the spread of deafness tapped into contemporary fears for the physical and mental state of British society. A number of scientific and social discourses were being formulated which found their way into educational thought from the late nineteenth century. The publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species* in 1859 spurred on attempts to translate his findings to the human race.¹⁵⁵ The resulting movement, which became known as ‘Social Darwinism’, was not a direct reading of Darwin’s work – it had its own context-specific ideologies and social objectives. While Darwin wrote about adaptation to different environments, Social Darwinism saw race as permanent

¹⁵¹ RCBDDO Report, 427.

¹⁵² RCBDDO Report, 313.

¹⁵³ RCBDDO Report, 298.

¹⁵⁴ RCBDDO, 307.

¹⁵⁵ Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 90.

structures indicative of a human hierarchy.¹⁵⁶ This skewed reading of human history became widespread and diverse, projected onto the inhabitants of British colonies and working-class people at home. It was used for a number of political purposes – it could be used in conservative attacks on the working-class birth rate, as well as liberal critiques of the dominance of the aristocracy.¹⁵⁷

Francis Galton, a half-cousin of Darwin's, played a major role in bringing this discussion of race and class into British consciousness. Through his writings, most notably *Hereditary Genius* in 1869, Galton argued that mental and physical efficiency in humans – and thus the tendency towards poverty and criminality – was hereditary.¹⁵⁸ Galton's work led him to coin the term 'eugenics', which in the late nineteenth century began to develop the idea of improving the human race, most notoriously through negative eugenics – the attempt to prevent racial deterioration by halting the breeding of supposedly weaker members through forced sterilisation.¹⁵⁹ The ideology of eugenics was based around human classification – mental and physical qualities were determined by race and social class. It would be misleading to directly slot oralism into the developing eugenics movement; the complexity of the debate forms part of Chapter 5 of this thesis, which will also look at the recent historical debate questioning the impact of the movement itself. Yet the arguments for its support made by the Commissioners certainly displayed some of these characteristics. Signs began to feature in arguments of human evolution, for both manualists and oralists, as anthropologists asserted that humans used primitive sign language before speech. For supporters of sign language, this could mean that signs were closer to creation; more commonly, oralist educators argued that until they gained spoken language, deaf people were restricted to the level of 'savages' or apes, a recurring metaphor in publicity material about deaf education.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ See for example, Michael Banton, 'The Idiom of Race: A Critique of Presentism' in Les Back and John Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), 57-8; G. Jones, *Social Darwinism in English Thought* (London, 1980); Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan), 1982.

¹⁵⁷ G. Jones, *Social Darwinism in English Thought* (London, 1980), 35.

¹⁵⁸ Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences* (London, 1869).

¹⁵⁹ Jones, *Social Darwinism*, 115.

¹⁶⁰ Baynton, "'Savages and Deaf-Mutes'", 98-102.

The 1889 Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c. of the United Kingdom, by publicising calls to prevent the spread of a deaf 'race', thus shared a number of social concerns with Social Darwinism and eugenics, and mirrored these movements' methods of classification. The Report was concerned about the numbers of deaf children, and recommended that schools keep detailed statistics of numbers of deaf children and deaf relatives, which should be transmitted regularly to the state.¹⁶¹ Deaf children were constantly positioned as inferior to hearing children, and were recommended to be classified according to their 'degree of deficiency' (the 'classes' being congenitally deaf or those who became deaf after birth).¹⁶² The Commissioners' outlook on the experience of deaf people was consistently bleak, pointing out that deaf children were 'at a disadvantage compared to the blind' as they could not be taught with hearing children in the way blind children could be taught with those who could see.¹⁶³ The Commissioners' portrayal of disabled children, therefore, was a significant attempt at redefining deafness as something in need of cure and categorisation, the warnings against intermarriage revealing a desire to eliminate deafness entirely.

Yet the Report also made a significant attempt to address the issue of state intervention in special education. It pointed out that, in the 37 years prior to the Report, the number of deaf people in education had doubled, and began to make recommendations about how deaf education should be handled by the state.¹⁶⁴ The Commissioners were critical, for example, of the activity in special education following the 1870 Education Act, because it did not put compulsory powers into operation. They campaigned for compulsory deaf education for a longer period of time than was generally available in the voluntary special schools, a recommendation which would be echoed in later legislation.¹⁶⁵ The recommendations for the blind included in the Report also argued for greater state intervention; it advocated compulsory education between the ages of five and sixteen, paid by school

¹⁶¹ RCBDDO Report, 572-5.

¹⁶² RCBDDO Report, 283.

¹⁶³ RCBDDO Report, 336.

¹⁶⁴ RCBDDO Report, 325.

¹⁶⁵ RCBDDO Report, 353.

authorities.¹⁶⁶ The Commissioners attempted to reinforce the link between special education and work, recommending manual training for older children and an apprenticeship fund for institutions.¹⁶⁷ Concern was shown about the standards of teaching in the institutions and lack of training colleges for teachers of the deaf, but in the Commissioners' view this came at the expense of employing deaf and female teachers, who were 'seldom such as would obtain good appointments in schools for the hearing...'¹⁶⁸ This was in marked contrast to the usage of deaf assistant teachers at the existing 'Asylum System' institutions.

The Royal Commission was a significant document which signposted emerging attitudes and paradigm shifts in state attitudes towards special education. It has been studied in detail here because of its symbolic importance, but it has very clear limitations as a historical source. It represents only the views of its Commissioners, and was in no way representative of government as a whole, far less of the voluntary institutions which did not all share the Commissioners' enthusiasm towards state intervention. At the 1885 Headmasters' Conference, Ackers' paper recognised what he saw as the 'few, very few' institutions which objected to state aid and state control.¹⁶⁹ The scepticism was perhaps more widespread than Ackers thought, as will be seen in the study of the Cambrian Institution. Moreover, the impact of the Report amongst deaf people was immense. Frances Maginn, an Irish ex-pupil of Gallaudet's National Deaf Mute College, spoke at the 1890 first conference of Adult Deaf and Dumb Missions and Associations in London, invoking the Royal Commission as well as the Milan congress by praising the combined system and stating that he '[defied] the conclusions of the Milan conference and of similar packed conventions'. Maginn founded the British Deaf and Dumb Association the same year to bring deaf people together and campaign for the combined system.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, argues Neil Pemberton, what has been left out of the narrative of the Royal Commission is the active resistance shown by deaf people. His thesis expertly shows how, in meetings of the British Deaf and Dumb Association, at deaf missions and in the pages of deaf

¹⁶⁶ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 97.

¹⁶⁷ RCBDDO Report, 363.

¹⁶⁸ RCBDDO Report, 516.

¹⁶⁹ *Conference of Headmasters 1885*, 112.

¹⁷⁰ Grant, *The Deaf Advance*, 11. Grant's book is a comprehensive history of the Association.

magazines, a critical deaf voice emerged almost instantly after the report, espousing the value of the combined system, of signs, and of deaf intermarriage and communities.¹⁷¹

With regards to the Commissioners themselves, the Royal Commission represented a shifting official perspective of disability and deafness. As Copeland points out (referring to its section on mental disability), by constantly referring to the limits and needs of disabled children, it created a hierarchy of children who could ‘cope with the system’ and those who could not, strengthening attempts to categorise and medicalise the children.¹⁷² For deaf children, the Report campaigned for oral methods and demonstrated a shift towards the belief that the state should essentially have responsibility to educate deaf children and integrate them into hearing society, with overtones of eliminating deafness altogether.¹⁷³ Indeed, the Report directly linked state aid to the social integration of deaf children, via oral methods.¹⁷⁴ The Royal Commission was the climax of events and attitudes which were already beginning to take place and the catalyst for a long-delayed and problematic but eventually fast-moving programme of state involvement in special education.¹⁷⁵

State intervention in special education

State intervention had, it must be said, begun before 1889. Indeed, the Poor Law reforms and grants given to special schools were state involvement. Likewise, even if the 1870 Act largely failed to provide compulsory, state-sponsored education for disabled children, some efforts were made. Perhaps the most notable was on the part of the London School Board, which began to address the issue in a distinctive way. In the years after the 1870 Act, Sir Charles Reed, the second Chairman of the London School Board [LSB], began to enquire about special education. From 1874, children

¹⁷¹ See Pemberton, ‘Holiness’, 157-92.

¹⁷² Copeland, ‘Making of the Dull, Deficient and Backward Pupil’, 380.

¹⁷³ The Report’s short final summary, which collects all these themes, is an excellent indicator of this. RCBDDO Report, 620.

¹⁷⁴ RCBDDO Report, 531.

¹⁷⁵ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 107.

were taught in special classes in mainstream schools beginning in Bethnal Green, where a significant section of London's deaf population was concentrated.¹⁷⁶ The Board also rapidly expanded their involvement in blind education.¹⁷⁷

The LSB's deaf education was significant for two main reasons. Firstly, it adopted the day schools approach which was then a largely novel concept in deaf education.¹⁷⁸ This differed from institutions, which boarded their pupils and ensured they were under observation and instruction at almost all times except the holidays. Children in the LSB's classes stayed with families, though occasionally teachers visited.¹⁷⁹ Secondly, from 1879, the LSB's classes exclusively used the pure oral system – signs may have been used at home, but had no presence in the classroom.¹⁸⁰ It is important to point out that the London School Board's approach was somewhat exceptional, as very few other School Boards were involved in special education at all. Likewise few educators – whether voluntary or assisted by the state – were adopting either the day school method (despite being more common in Europe) or its German method of teaching.¹⁸¹ Most governmental action on special education came after Egerton's Report in 1889.

The Report's recommendations for state-sponsored special education caused much discussion in the years after its release. Egerton met the headmasters and governors of deaf schools to discuss the recommendations, including establishing training colleges.¹⁸² A bill for elementary education for blind and deaf children was proposed shortly afterwards, but it received a number of telling delays – the National Education Association objected to the bill's alleged sectarianism, furthering again the problematic religious debate in education. There were also financial delays. Interestingly, Lord Norton voiced opposition to state funding. 'It is introducing,' he protested, 'a pauper principle if you only charge the ordinary fee to cover the much

¹⁷⁶ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 76; Tomlinson, *Sociology of Special Education*, 26.

¹⁷⁷ Ashton Phillips, *The Blind in British Society*, 205.

¹⁷⁸ See RCBDDO Report, 531.

¹⁷⁹ RCBDDO Report, 531.

¹⁸⁰ Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 100; Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 79.

¹⁸¹ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 80.

¹⁸² Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 107.

greater expense of education at one of these special schools.¹⁸³ State intervention thus attracted a significant hostility from both special educators and government officials.

The bill eventually became the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893. It was bold and comprehensive in its recommendations. ‘School authorities’ (these could be School Boards, officials from district councils or boards of guardians) were now required by law to provide elementary education (up to the age of sixteen) for all blind and deaf children.¹⁸⁴ This was to be in a day school or institution, but voluntary institutions had to comply with the Act’s instructions and have regular visits by Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools.¹⁸⁵ For the first time, special education was to be significantly regulated and inspected by the government. The 1893 Act addressed the ambiguity of the 1870 Education Act regarding blind and deaf children, removing the ‘distance excuse’ which exempted them from education if they lived more than 3 miles away, and recommending that schools be built if this was the case.

The 1893 Act signalled a shift in government attitudes, but the actual effects and execution of the Act are subject to debate. It was impossible to know how many blind and deaf children there were in Britain, as it is unlikely that all parents identified them to the school authorities. Indeed, the financial implications of the Act may well have dissuaded some school authorities to search for them.¹⁸⁶ Though it undoubtedly had an effect, questions remain as to how successful the Act was in sending blind and deaf children to school. Moreover, many disabled children were receiving no state-funded education at all. The system was deliberately slow for mentally disabled children: the 1893 Act imposed restrictions if the blind and deaf subjects were ‘idiots or imbeciles’.¹⁸⁷ A separate Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act followed in 1899 which allowed school authorities to classify children according to their mental ‘defect’. However, the details of how this was to be carried out varied

¹⁸³ Lord Norton cited in Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 109.

¹⁸⁴ Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act 1893 [EEBDC], 1-3.

¹⁸⁵ EEBDC Act, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream*, 106.

¹⁸⁷ EEBDC Act, 2.

very much according to locality. Copeland's research confirms this by comparing the approaches in Leicester and London. Leicester used a widely-available special class in an existing elementary school which separated its pupils according to educational testing, whilst in London, a network of special schools emerged which classified children on entry by medical inspection.¹⁸⁸ 1914's Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act eventually allowed Local Education Authorities to provide special education.¹⁸⁹ Thus whilst the 1870 Act had permitted education for disabled children, the new legislation represented the first attempt at mandatory education.

The state began to change further the educational landscape for disabled children in 1907, with the foundation of the School Medical Service [SMS], set up to cater for mainstream schools. The 1907 Education (Administrative Provisions) Act legislated regular medical inspection, offered grants for medical treatment in schools and began the process of a regular report by the Chief Medical Officer.¹⁹⁰ It was a radical revision of the role of the state and parent in children's health, but sparked problems and discussion. As Hirst demonstrates for Wales, many parents were at first sceptical of the public nature of the treatment, as medical care for children was no longer a private issue. This blurring of public and private created issues such as a distrust of the medical examiners, some who were viewed by some as unsympathetic to the perspective of the children.¹⁹¹ The early SMS balanced voluntary and state duties with occasionally problematic results: its early guidance assured that the 'primary duty of the state is to point out defects and disease and... to leave treatment as far as possible to the ordinary channels', but this often meant that parents were now forced to use the overcrowded and reluctant voluntary hospitals.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Copeland, 'Making of the Dull, Deficient and Backward Pupil', 387-90.

¹⁸⁹ Jane Read and Jan Walmsley, 'Historical Perspectives on Special Education, 1890-1970', *Disability & Society*, 21:5 (2006), 459.

¹⁹⁰ J.D. Hirst, 'The Early School Medical Service in Wales: Public Care or Private Responsibility?' in Anne Borsay (ed.), *Public Service or Private Commodity?: Medicine in Wales c.1800-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 65; Roger Cooter, *Surgery and Society in Peace and War: Orthopaedics and the Organisation of Modern Medicine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 66; Borsay, 'Deaf Children', 84.

¹⁹¹ Hirst, 'Early School Medical Service', 68.

¹⁹² Hirst, 'Early School Medical Service', 70-2.

Nevertheless, the state was beginning to increase its involvement in medical issues of education. Like the 1870 Act, the main effect of the SMS for disabled children was its attempts to socially redefine them. As Borsay points out, this was a major step in the ‘medicalisation’ of schoolchildren: the worlds of medicine and education were brought together, turning ill or disabled pupils into ‘patients’ for the first time.¹⁹³ The SMS further strengthened the hierarchy of schoolchildren that the 1870 Act had begun to put into place, as seen in its relentless categorisation of its subjects. ‘Physically defective’ children, who until now had had little state recognition, were now being addressed by the SMS, which encouraged grants for medical treatment.¹⁹⁴ In Swansea, the School Medical Inspector for 1910, David J. Morgan, took the step of publishing a full report of ‘Cripple Children’ in the area. This detailed each of the 62 physically disabled children he had noted across the town. Each case was outlined as to whether the boy or girl attended school, how he or she got to school (a number were carried by siblings), any special equipment which needed to be provided, and whether the child was a ‘case for special class’.¹⁹⁵ The ‘Special Report’, nestled amongst the Inspector’s standard reports on the general health of schoolchildren and visits to special education institutions, illustrated the increased attempts at locating physically disabled children and integrating them into elementary education.

Mainstream education’s increasing concern with finding ‘defective’ children coincided once again with wider anxieties in society. By the turn of the twentieth century, fears about the supposed deterioration of the British population, as elaborated by the Social Darwinists earlier, were becoming louder and more widespread. Likewise, the rise of imperialism in popular culture and thought, symbolised by Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and in the jingoistic music halls of the era, strengthened what Malik calls the ‘moral duty’ of Britain to show its superiority.¹⁹⁶ The years after the Boer War, in which British soldiers were found in many cases to be unfit for service, created an atmosphere of tension. This concern was addressed by the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904, which warned of

¹⁹³ Borsay, ‘Deaf Children’, 84.

¹⁹⁴ Cooter, *Surgery and Society*, 66.

¹⁹⁵ WGAS, HE 2/1, Annual Report to the Swansea Education Authority of Medical Inspection of School Children 1910, 25-36.

¹⁹⁶ Malik, *Meaning of Race*, 116.

decreasing fitness in the working classes. As Thomson points out, the general picture of 'national efficiency' has become something of a 'historical cliché', and the Interdepartmental Committee itself were not actually explicitly pessimistic about the 'degeneration of the race'.¹⁹⁷ These historical concerns have also been applied to the role of the eugenics movement, and will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Nevertheless, the discourses of eugenics and special education became further intertwined, ideologically if not directly, in the early twentieth century. This is most clearly seen in discussions of educating mentally disabled children. The 1908 Radnor Commission, for example, recommended that underperforming children were removed from schools into 'mental deficiency colonies'. This idea was encapsulated in the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, a piece of legislation largely seen as one of the most coherent legislative outcomes of the eugenics movement – the Eugenics Education Society had recommended segregating mentally disabled people.¹⁹⁸ The development of IQ tests was lending legitimacy to the theory that intelligence was hereditary, indicating that mentally disabled children needed to be separated and monitored.¹⁹⁹ Elsewhere, aspects of special education were beginning to show explicit eugenic undertones. Borsay argues that eugenics affected both mental and physical disability in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, and from the twentieth century its ideas began to interlink with those of special education. This can be seen in the economic and social motivations evident in discussions of special education. For example, George Newman, the first Chief Medical Officer, framed his interpretation of special education in explicitly eugenic terms by suggesting that disabled pupils be removed from the mainstream of education, so that society would run more smoothly.²⁰⁰ The early twentieth century saw not just a belated realisation by the state of its need to intervene in special education, but also the introduction of shifting attitudes to disability, focused heavily on medicalisation.

¹⁹⁷ Thomson, *Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 20.

¹⁹⁸ Stepan, *Idea of Race in Science*, 118. As Thomson points out, the Act itself was not entirely devoted to eugenics, and encompassed moral concerns as well through its incarceration of 'moral imbeciles'. Thomson, *Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 10.

¹⁹⁹ Tomlinson, *Sociology of Special Education*, 46; John Welshman, 'Eugenics and Public Health in Britain, 1900-1940: Scenes from Provincial Life', *Urban History*, 24:1 (1997), 59.

²⁰⁰ Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 109; Greta Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1986), 7.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a top-down and chronological account of the key themes and legislative history of special education in Britain. Its purpose has been to form the context to the rest of the thesis, which will argue that it is necessary to look beyond broader patterns ideology legislation and place special education in an individual setting. The chapter has shown a diverse but ultimately connected set of debates, opinions and political events, all of which affected social attitudes towards disabled children. It has been argued that special education did not emerge as a unique entity, instead being enveloped with developments and concerns in mainstream education, and in society as a whole. Early voluntary bodies for special education utilised the categories of disability laid out by the Poor Law, many of which took children who had been on relief. Early blind and deaf schools responded to more general calls for education which, in Wales through the 'Blue Books', brought with them particularly damaging and passionate issues of national identity and prejudice. Thus, blind and deaf children were included in wider social discourses – whilst participating in wholly separate, international debates on the methods of education. The most fierce and complex of these was the methodological contest taking place in deaf schools, in letters and at conferences, in which the place of sign language was being argued for by some and forbidden by others. When elementary education emerged with the 1870 Act, disabled children occupied an ever-shifting place in the national educational debate. Excluded almost entirely from the Act itself, subsequent legislation introduced new ideas about the education which should be offered to the disabled child. This was no longer envisioned as a voluntary service but as a statutory duty, and the Commissions and Acts introduced in the following decades all took on a specific identity informed by the fears and prejudices of the Commissioners themselves, and wider social anxieties about physical wellbeing and, occasionally, concerns for the future of the race.

However, the following chapters will argue that it is not enough to concentrate solely on the state and the headmasters of institutions. The second part of this thesis will be dedicated to looking deeper into the mechanics and settings of special education.

Questions will be asked about the children's experiences and how they were treated. A social study of life in the Cambrian Institution will fill in some of the gaps left by this primarily legislative overview of special education, to explore the effects of special education on disabled children's lives and what they did in reaction to it, both inside and outside the institution. Firstly, however, it is necessary to introduce the Cambrian Institution by examining how the school reacted to the national debates about education and disability outlined in this chapter. It will portray a voluntary institution reacting largely with suspicion and hostility to the increasing role of the state, and illustrate how individual institutions for special education had the capacity to respond to broader developments with a distinct character.

Chapter 3

Politics and Pupils

The remainder of this thesis will be a detailed case study of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. The Institution began in Aberystwyth in 1847, the result of public meetings and an initiative to educate deaf children in Wales, set up largely by the educational reformer Hugh Owen. Its first Principal, Charles Rhind, operated the school from a house where he accommodated two day scholars at first, rising to thirteen by 1849.¹ Only three years later, the Institution moved, along with all its pupils and staff, to a house in Swansea. The move was conducted and discussed originally in practical terms. Aberystwyth was an ideal geographical centre-point on paper, but the Institution was experiencing problems sending its pupils there. Swansea offered better transport and access links. The Committee unanimously decided in November 1849 that the change of location would make for 'greater efficiency... both in regard to its own support, and in regard to the afflicted individuals themselves.'² The Institution took over a house in Picton Place, Swansea, in 1850 and moved to its larger premises in 1857.³ From there, the number of pupils expanded according to budget and building projects (see Chapter 6), reaching 40 pupils in 1874-5 and 83 by the 1914 term.⁴ From the beginnings of the Institution, the organisation was conducted by an ever-present Principal and Matron and a Committee who met regularly, mostly separately from the Principal, to discuss domestic arrangements and matters relating to the Institution's finances and publicity. As we shall see in Chapter 4, this group often consisted of well-recognised figures in the town's social and philanthropic makeup.

¹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Second Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Aberystwyth, for the year ending 30th June 1849* (Aberystwyth, 1849), 8.

² WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 28 November 1849.

³ H. Jones, 'An Outline of the Historical Development of the School for Deaf Children in Wales', *The Journal of the British Association of the Teachers of the Deaf*, 9:3 (1985), 9-10; Neil J. Alderman, *Joseph and Mary: A Case Study in Deaf Family History* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2011), 75.

⁴ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Second Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1889* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1889), 21; Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Seventh Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1914* (Swansea, 1914), 10.

As Wales' first and largest deaf school, its records offer insights into the role of deaf education in Wales, and the lives of pupils studying in institutions. The central argument will be one of perspective, that historians' focus needs to be centred on agency and experience, and the problems which these present to the historian. Thus, a balance will be struck between considering the political and legislative issues and the pupils' own everyday lives. This chapter will examine the Institution's response to the broader patterns in state legislation for deaf education that were introduced Chapter 2. The Principal and Committee's often harsh criticism of the Acts and Commissions illustrates the individual institution's capacity for response to these national developments. It will then introduce the backgrounds of the pupils who were educated in the Institution. Often the political operation of the Institution affected the characteristics of the children who were brought in as pupils of the Institution. The decisions being made by the staff and committees of the Institution were interlinked with the everyday lives of the pupils, and it will be argued that a consideration of the details of both these perspectives is essential to a rounded study of special education in history. This approach will help reveal themes, details and contexts which would be invisible if historians focused only on the dealings of the people running the Institution, and inform the discussions of children's experience and agency to be explored throughout this thesis.

The Cambrian Institution and legislation before 1889

From the earliest days of operation, the Cambrian Institution merged a strictly voluntaryist attitude with state support from the Boards of Guardians. The Cambrian Institution utilised a combination of school fees, with supplemental philanthropic income which was in keeping with the voluntary model of Victorian charitable institutions, and was used by the majority of early deaf institutions.⁵ These extra funds helped keep the institution afloat during difficult times and often sparked important developments in the Institution's history. After utilising houses in Aberystwyth and Swansea, the main building in Mount Pleasant - erected in 1856 - went through a

⁵ See, for example, Anthony J. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf, 1829-1979* (Doncaster: Doncaster M.B.C. Museums and Arts Services, c.1990), 6.

number of developments and extensions, which were paid for primarily through voluntary contributions. The expansive new Victoria Wing, erected in 1899 at a cost of £3,000, was funded entirely through a Building Fund of voluntary subscriptions. This was a source of pride to the staunchly voluntaryist committee and a response to their distaste for government intervention; a pamphlet of the history of the Cambrian Institution in the early twentieth century proudly stated that, 'No part of the cost of the [Victoria Wing] came out of "Public Money"'.⁶

Lauren Goodlad argues that whilst 'historians of charity and the Poor Laws have tended to steer clear of one another', throughout nineteenth century, philanthropy and the Poor Law worked side-by-side.⁷ The Cambrian Institution exemplifies her model of an institution which organised itself primarily through a selective model of philanthropy yet utilised the bureaucratic Poor Law through the Guardians. An 1872 article in *The Cambrian* newspaper showed how these two worlds (philanthropy and the Poor Law) overlapped in Swansea. When the Swansea Board of Guardians met to discuss the annual subscriptions at the Swansea blind and deaf institutions, a participant at the meeting suggested that, instead of raising the annual subscription paid by the Board of Guardians to the institutions themselves, 'the most proper and the most effectual way of helping these valuable institutions was by all the members of the Board who were not so already, becoming personal subscribers to the funds.'⁸ Though he was unsuccessful, this concept of merging personal and organised funding exemplifies Goodlad's concept of their interrelationship.

The Cambrian Institution experienced a number of issues in their dealings with the Poor Law. Particularly in early days when faced with potential financial issues, Boards of Guardians who did not pay for pupils sometimes received warnings that the pupils they were meant to be funding were to be discharged. A girl in 1854, for example, was threatened with discharge if the Gower Union failed to pay a bill of

⁶ The National Archives, Kew [TNA], ED 32/227, 'Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb Swansea: Brief History of the Institution'.

⁷ Lauren M.E. Goodlad, "'Making the working man like me": Charity, Pastorship and middle-class identity in nineteenth-century Britain: Thomas Chalmers and Dr James Phillips Kay' *Victorian Studies*, 43:4 (2001), 592.

⁸ *The Cambrian*, 25 October 1872.

£2.10.9 for fees acquired for her clothes.⁹ A particularly heated discussion occurred with the clerk of the authorities in Brackley, Northamptonshire in 1873, illustrating that these correspondences could turn into political disputes. The Committee of the Institution had removed a pupil being paid by the Brackley Union after 'having been found to be totally deficient in intellect, and uncleanly in his habits'.¹⁰ When the boy returned to the Brackley Workhouse, its Medical Officer told the Committee that he found 'numerous evidences of ill treatment' including bruises on his body and the fact that, when approached, the boy 'set up a plaintive cry as if dreading some punishment about to be inflicted'.¹¹ Principal Alexander Molison took great offense at the charges of mistreatment, sending evidence from the assistant teacher and two pupils that he was never physically harmed. He added his own charges, this time political: the Medical Officer 'must either have been imposed upon or have lent himself as a tool in the hands of some other person.'¹² Eventually, the Committee apologised to the Brackley Union for suggesting any 'imputed motives' of the Principal, and the Committee resolved to have an inspection of the Institution.¹³ Nevertheless, an incident such as this reveals the organisational and political problems which could arise between the Institution and Poor Law authorities.

Relationships between the Cambrian Institution and individual Boards of Guardians mostly changed according to the payment of fees. When this became a matter of financial necessity to the Cambrian Institution, the intervention of the centralised state was seen as the last resort. For example, angered at the number of Boards of Guardians failing to pay the full amount, the Honorary Secretary wrote to the Local Government Board in November 1883, asking them to authorise all Boards of Guardians to pay the Institution the maximum 7/- per week for each 'pauper' child.¹⁴ Though he received a reply sanctioning the maximum rate, the problems continued. Exactly a year later, when an application for assistance for a girl was fruitless, the Institution's secretary was asked by the committee to write to the heads of the Boards

⁹ West Glamorgan Archive Service [WGAS], Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 3 November 1855.

¹⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-1887, 3 September 1873.

¹¹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-1887, 10 October 1873.

¹² WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-1887, 10 October 1873.

¹³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-1887, 14 November 1873.

¹⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3 Minute Book 1867-87, 5 March 1883.

of Guardians in her home town, 'quoting the Act of Parliament which empowers Boards of Guardians to pay for the cost of each child's board and education, as the Committee could not admit her as a free pupil.'¹⁵ However, by 1891, relations appeared to have improved, as the Institution campaigned against an attempt by the Manchester Schools for the Deaf and Dumb to repeal the powers of the Boards of Guardians. Principal Benjamin Payne wrote, 'Since 1877,' [when a particular pupil was secured payment via the Boards], 'the Boards have been our best friends'. Their powers were 'varied and valuable and ought not to be made such a clean sweep of as the Bill proposes,' The Cambrian Institution thus declined to sign the petition.¹⁶

The Cambrian Institution exhibited this sceptical but open attitude to the involvement of the state throughout its existence. For the committee, the role of state aid raised questions about institutional independence and autonomy. As a voluntary institution, the Principal and Committee wanted as much control over educational practice as possible, but the Institution was not entirely opposed to the idea of governmental assistance. In the years before elementary education, it was still seen as important for the Institution to be certified by the Poor Law Board. The Merthyr Board of Guardians pointed out in 1868 that without a certificate they could not legally subscribe.¹⁷ The Institution became officially certified in June that year.¹⁸ Likewise, the need for government grants was consistently flagged up in times of financial need. The Committee signed a letter in 1884 to press the government to provide 'some help towards the cost of the education of the Deaf and Dumb'.¹⁹

Yet with the onset of state aid in compulsory education, the Cambrian Institution entered into an unavoidable dialogue about the role and limits of government in deaf education. This began with the 1870 Education Act which, despite largely excluding blind and deaf children, had an impact on the Cambrian Institution, which regularly needed to liaise with the School Boards. As we saw in Chapter 2, the Act signalled a

¹⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3 Minute Book 1867-87, 5 March 1884.

¹⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 2 April 1891.

¹⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 5 February 1868.

¹⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 10 June 1868.

¹⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 10 November 1884.

new era of state involvement in education and, particularly in Wales, highlighted the inadequacy of a purely voluntary system of education to educate its populace.²⁰ Swansea's School Board was the first in Wales, with its first election held in December 1870.²¹ By 1880, as Lorraine Cook points out, 10,219 of 13,500 school-age children in the town were being educated.²² Yet the Institution recognised the Act's lack of provision for deaf children. The 1892 Annual Report expressed their disappointment at the lack of support deaf children received from the Act:

Your Committee can only hope that the time is not far distant when the deaf and dumb will have the advantage of the full time required for the development of their powers. It must be born in mind that they have not yet reaped any advantage from the generous provision of free elementary education recently made by the Legislature, of which their hearing brothers and sisters very generally avail themselves.²³

Furthermore, the Cambrian Institution's relationship with the new School Boards was uncertain and beset by occasional miscommunication. This continued when the School Boards transferred their powers to Local Education Authorities, which caused confusion amongst the Committee. In 1903 the Principal was enquiring whether the Honorary Secretary will 'gradually ascertain when the duties of the School Boards will be taken over by the new authorities'.²⁴ Financial powers and duties were being transferred to School Boards and Local Education Authorities, bringing in a new role for the state and local government in the running of the Institution.

²⁰ See Gareth Elwyn Jones and Gordon Wynne Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press: 2003), 77-8; Neil J. Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-Class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1991), 190.

²¹ Jones and Roderick, *History of Education in Wales*, 79.

²² Lorraine A. Cook, 'The Contribution of Nonconformity to Elementary Education in Swansea from the mid-Victorian Era to the End of the Nineteenth Century', *History of Education*, 26:1 (1997), 51; G.W. Roderick, 'Education in an Industrial Society' in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *The City of Swansea: Challenges & Change* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1990), 182.

²³ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1892* (Swansea, 1892).

²⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 4 September 1903.

The Cambrian Institution and the Royal Commission: ‘State-help, but not State-hindrance’

Attitudes shifted when the disappointment and uncertainty surrounding the 1870 Act gave way to the 1889 Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c. of the United Kingdom, the effects of which were explored in Chapter 2. The Principal and staff of the Institution were interviewed for the Commission, and passed on details of pupil numbers, accommodation and – crucially - whether they were educated by the manual, oralist or combined method of deaf education. Chapter 5 will explore the complex relationship which the Cambrian Institution shared with oralism. However, the Institution's opposition to the Royal Commission's oralist recommendations was made immediately made clear when Principal Benjamin Payne contacted the Commissioners, informing them that 'I did not intend to convey that I considered exclusively oral instruction would be more suitable for any of the pupils than the methods now in operation here.'²⁵ Payne's relationship with oralism was detailed in the Royal Commission's appendix, as well as a testimony to the 'very remarkable' character of the past pupils. Yet the report was immediately presented to the public with suspicion. The 1889 Annual Report discussed the Royal Commission and encapsulated the sceptical attitude, in which financial assistance was welcomed but with an eye on bureaucracy and independence:

Desirable as such a subsidiary provision may be, its acceptance by Institutions of the Deaf and Dumb will depend upon the conditions under which it may be offered, and it is to be hoped that these will not be so complicated and impracticable as some of those which have lately been sent forth.²⁶

The situation the Institution required, therefore, was to receive financial assistance without being subjected to complications and impracticalities. As Payne put it in a

²⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to the Secretary, Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c. of the United Kingdom, 5 April 1889; Letter from B.H. Payne to the Secretary, Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c. of the United Kingdom, 15 April 1889.

²⁶ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Second Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1889* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1889)

letter the same year, 'We do want State-help, but not State-hindrance.' The Institution, wrote Payne, wanted freedom in management and admission of pupils. Causing the most worry was the thought of inspection: 'We want to be free agents, not mere machines in the hands of an Inspector or a Department.'²⁷

These feelings reflected the contemporary debate amongst headmasters of deaf schools about the role of state aid. At the 1885 Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf & Dumb, Benjamin St John Ackers of the oralist Training College in Ealing presented a paper entitled 'The State in Relation to the Deaf' which sparked discussion about these issues, arguing that the financial benefits were essential 'to secure the efficient education of all the Deaf and Dumb Children in the United Kingdom', a goal upon which the 1870 Act had failed to deliver.²⁸ A number of other positive opinions about state aid were brought out in the subsequent discussion. George Haley, a deaf missionary from Liverpool, argued that 'the deaf and dumb want very much help from the state for their education', as it would enable poor parents to educate their children. Mr Sleight from the Brighton Institution then framed the idea of state aid as a progressive move forward away from the Poor Law, as he had come across 'parents [who] would rather keep their children at home than take aid from the Guardians... Deaf and dumb children should be as free from the stigma of pauperism and crime, as are the children who attend Board Schools.'²⁹ For Sleight, the dissemination of grants would have social benefits for deaf children and remove the 'stigma' of pauperism brought on by the Poor Law. Thus the Cambrian Institution was responding to a complex discourse in deaf education.³⁰

²⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to the Reverend Charles Manfield Owen, 27 November 1889. Original underlining.

²⁸ Benjamin St John Ackers, 'The State in Relation to the Deaf' in *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 1-3 July, 1885* (Margate: W. H. Allen, 1886), 106-8.

²⁹ Ackers, 'The State', discussion 116

³⁰ As mentioned in Chapter 2, Pemberton has explored this picture of deaf schools' reaction to the Royal Commission in detail. Neil Ashley Pemberton, 'Holiness, Civilisation and the Victorian Deaf: A Social History of Signing and Speech in late Victorian England, 1865-1895' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2004), 119-123.

The Cambrian Institution and the 1893 Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act: 'unmixed evil'?

The Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893 set in stone the Cambrian Institution's fears of state involvement. The Act recommended a programme of grants, with the Commissioners being in favour of day schools and pure oralism, in direct opposition to the Institution. In some cases, undoubtedly, the Act proved helpful to the Institution. It allowed an opportunity to help locate deaf pupils and remind local councils of their legal obligation to educate them.³¹ Yet, in terms of ideology, it was deeply opposed. A draft of the bill in early 1893 was savaged by the Cambrian Institution's Principal, who described it as 'clearly produced by those who know nothing about the Deaf and Dumb and little about the Institutions'.³² Only three years after its implementation, the effects of the Act were being referred to as 'unmixed evil'. 'We used to mould character,' wrote Payne, 'now we cram. We were specialists: now we are to petition the Government to let us creep in at the tail end of the lowest elementary schools and behind the most vulgar of their teachers.'³³

Their fears of the independence of deaf schools, then, were apparently being realised, as a programme of grants and governmental inspections was applied. In 1900, four inspectors from the Education Department visited the Institution, leading to it being described as 'over-regulated, and over-advised'.³⁴ This reflects the sometimes personal attacks which the governmental inspectors received in the deaf media. *The British Deaf Mute* ran an article in 1895 entitled 'The New "Inspectors"', which criticised the appointment of 'people who know little or nothing of the teaching of the deaf'.³⁵ For

³¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to J. Hepworth, 9 February 1904. In this letter, Payne reminded the recipient that a pupil's application was 'founded upon his legal rights', stressing the legal obligation to educate deaf children.

³² WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 31 January 1893.

³³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to the Reverend J.W. Scarlett, 26 February 1896. This strongly-worded criticism continued. Writing to the same individual in 1898, Payne referred to inspection as 'a necessary evil, just as schools are necessary evils.' Letter from B.H. Payne to the Reverend James W. Scarlett, 2 November 1898.

³⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to J.J. Bircha, 8 February 1900.

³⁵ *The British Deaf Mute*, 4:43 (1895).

the Cambrian Institution, the criticism was not simply a question of financial autonomy and avoiding bureaucracy but of keeping deaf children educated by those who had been teaching them for decades beforehand.³⁶ The Annual Report of 1903 criticised the state's understanding of deaf education, claiming 'the social, moral and religious sides of the child-nature are entirely ignored' in favour of intellect and physique, referring in part to the focus on medical assessment recommended by the Act.³⁷

Much of the criticism from the Institution was directed at the longer financial processes which were now required. Most problematic was the 'one third' clause of the Act, which demanded that one third of the income of the Institution must be 'defrayed out of sources other than "local rates"'.³⁸ This led to financial complications regarding the source of the assistance given to pupils. This was, indeed, a common grievance amongst the early deaf institutions, as many struggled to obtain the 'third' needed, with a number of previous supporters dropping their funding with the arrival of that state support.³⁹ The one-third clause also ignited a religious debate which the Principal was keen to avoid; at one point in 1900 the Institution struggled to obtain the 'one-third' because 'it is imagined that we are sectarian'.⁴⁰ As we shall see in Chapter 4, the question of the religious persuasion of the Cambrian Institution's financial backers became a source of controversy, and the 'one-third' clause brought these differences further into light.

Perhaps the biggest ideological difference between the Cambrian Institution and recent state developments revolved around the question of whether day schools or institutions were the most suitable format for deaf education. The Commissioners had

³⁶ This was perhaps part of a broader awareness that enthusiasm for the 'Asylum System' of deaf education was fading as the originators of the early institutions passed away. See Pemberton, 'Holiness', 103.

³⁷ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, The Fifty-Sixth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1903 (Swansea, 1903).

³⁸ Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act 1893, 7 cited in WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 21 August.

³⁹ Pemberton, 'Holiness', 190.

⁴⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Dr Roe, 12 May 1900.

not fully advocated either, finding advantages in both systems; institutions offering 'supervision, continuous attendance, and extra discipline', whilst day schools offered decentralisation and smaller class sizes.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the new schools created by the 1893 Act were primarily day schools in which pupils travelled from home, and the Cambrian Institution felt the need to affirm its long-standing belief that boarding institutions were the superior option. From 1894, the Institution's Annual Report included extracts of a paper entitled 'Day Schools or Institutions?' which outlined their argument - that institutions allowed for regular attendance, more time spent with people 'who understand their nature and wants' and children were 'removed from the contamination of the streets'. The paper also criticised the London School Board's day classes, saying an institutional education would have been favourable for the children.⁴²

The 1893 Act did indeed create a system of day schools in South Wales, supplementing the Cambrian Institution with new options for parents. Three new schools emerged in the years immediately following the Act, which are explored in Cedric Moon's book *A Tale of Three Deaf Schools in South Wales*. Cardiff Oral School for Deaf Children was formed in 1894 as a day school for pupils in the Cardiff area, transferring to a new site in 1907. Its operation demonstrated the preference of a number of councils for the day schools system. The Cambrian Institution had regularly received pupils from the area, however some new applications were now refused due to the opening of the new school.⁴³ The Cardiff Oral School introduced pure oralism to Wales, with a number of parents specifically sending their children to the school instead of the Cambrian Institution because of a desire for the children to be educated under the pure oralist method.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c., of the United Kingdom [RCBDDO] (1899), 338-46.

⁴² Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1894* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1894), 36. Reprinted every year following. The extract originated in the *Blackburn Times*, 18 November 1893.

⁴³ Cedric J. Moon, *A Tale of Three Deaf Schools in South Wales* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2010), 5-10.

⁴⁴ Moon, *Tale of Three Deaf Schools*, 58.

Two more schools opened in South Wales soon afterwards, both of which were the result of local councils responding to the need to implement the 1893 Act. A deputation from the Ystradfodwg School Board visited the deaf and blind institutions at Bristol and Swansea, reporting on their findings and discussing the issues of teaching methodology (no comment was made about the Cambrian Institution's combined method) and the question of institutions versus day schools. Again, the advantages and disadvantages of both were considered, but day schools were preferred after the evidence of the London School Board was considered, as well as the fact the Cambrian Institution currently had a lack of vacant places.⁴⁵ The system in place at the Porth school also used the oral method, though the deaf teacher installed there was immediately and scathingly criticised by the Cambrian Institution for being unqualified for the post.⁴⁶ The school eventually closed in 1905, with its pupils and teacher transferred to the Cambrian Institution.⁴⁷

The Pontypridd Deaf and Dumb School experienced a similar fate. This opened in 1896, and again transferred existing Cambrian Institution pupils from the area to the day school. It installed a deaf headmaster and shunned the oral method.⁴⁸ However, the school again lasted only eleven years, its log books showing a small school size of around ten pupils and Inspectors' reports which became increasingly critical. Eventually, the 1904 report from Her Majesty's Inspectors recommended that, 'In view of the small number of children attending the School, the Committee would be well advised to close it and send the children to suitable Institutions.'⁴⁹ One of these was the Cambrian Institution. However, it is notable that the school's pupils were dispersed to various institutions, including two as far away as Staffordshire, something Moon attributes to the institution there focusing its teaching on oralism.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Glamorgan Archives, ESBMT 121, Merthyr Tydfil School Board and Education Committee, Report of a Deputation to the Deaf & Blind Institutions at Bristol and Swansea, June 1894.

⁴⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 June 1895.

⁴⁷ Moon, *Tale of Thee Deaf Schools*, 55.

⁴⁸ Moon, *Tale of Thee Deaf Schools*, 31-46.

⁴⁹ Glamorgan Archives, EPP15/1, Pontypridd Deaf and Dumb School, Log book 1896-1906, transcript of HMI Report 1904.

⁵⁰ Glamorgan Archives, EPP15/1, Log book 1896-1906, 27 October 1905; Moon, *Tale of Three Deaf Schools*, 41.

The clearest indication of the gulf between the Cambrian Institution and local government's interpretations of the 1893 Act came in a long exchange beginning in 1910, when representatives from councils and Education Committees in Wales convened at a conference in Neath to discuss the problem of the lack of special education in South Wales, and how this should be rectified.⁵¹ A sub-committee was formed to investigate the current state of blind and deaf education in Wales; the question of institutions or day schools was once again raised, as was the oralism question. Over several meetings, it was suggested that the Local Education Authorities be given either majority or complete control over the Cambrian Institution, but this was fiercely resisted by the Institution's staff. Indeed, it was noted that total control by the LEAs would be impossible due to the opposition of its Honorary Secretary, Joseph Hall, and Principal Benjamin Payne, 'a resolute opponent of the oral system'.⁵²

With the advice of Dr. Eicholz, the first Inspector for special schools appointed by the central Board of Education, the committee began discussing the future of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb.⁵³ By May 1912, it was agreed that the best plan of action was that both the blind and deaf institutions were 'as regards curriculum, out of date' and should be taken over by the Authorities for up to five years.⁵⁴ The transfer went through a long series of negotiations over several meetings, and by 1913 the Board of Education suggested a joint institution for both blind and deaf children with around 250-300 places, based on the 'fresh air principle' of outdoor education; the curriculum aspects of which will be explored in Chapter 6.⁵⁵ A statement signed by the representatives of Educational Committees confirmed this solution was due to 'widespread dissatisfaction with the Swansea institutions':

⁵¹TNA, ED 32/227, Proposed Central Institution for Blind and Deaf Children in South Wales, memorandum of Conference Representatives of Education Committee of Wales and Monmouthshire, 21 July 1910.

⁵² TNA, ED 32/227, Board of Education Minute Paper, 17 October 1911.

⁵³ Eicholz was a prolific figure in the early-20th century period of state-organised special education. He headed the first Medical Branch of the Board of Education and was the first Her Majesty's Inspector for Special Schools. See P.H. Butterfield, 'The First Training Colleges for Teachers of the Deaf', *British Journal of Education Studies*, 19:1 (1971), 60; A.F. Dimmock, *Cruel Legacy: An Introduction to the Record of Deaf People In History* (Edinburgh: Scottish Workshop Publications, 1993), 34.

⁵⁴ TNA, ED 32/227, Form signed by A.W. Halden, I.H., 1 June 1911; TNA, ED 32/227, Extract of the Minutes of Conference of Education Authorities held at Swansea, 23 May 1912.

⁵⁵ *South West Daily News*, 11 April 1913.

In return for this slight increase [in costs] the Welsh authorities will have the satisfaction of knowing that their Blind and Deaf children are being educated on the most modern lines and they are doing all that can be done to mitigate the terrible misfortunes of these hapless children.⁵⁶

However, the plan collapsed, with a Board of Education minute note claiming that it 'would always have been liable to have been wrecked by some timid or parsimonious Authority breaking away at the last moment.'⁵⁷ Though the negotiations came to nothing, the episode highlighted how important questions of financial and educational autonomy were in the history of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Pemberton has pointed out that the implementation of the 1893 Act was hardly a smooth transition, a judgment confirmed by this long exchange.⁵⁸ The attitudes of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb demonstrate the immense complexity surrounding the contested role of the state in deaf education. The political climate of the Cambrian Institution affected the pupils' lives and in many cases affected the characteristics of the pupils who were admitted. However, focusing only on the legislative developments of the Institution potentially obscures the lives and backgrounds of the pupils themselves. This chapter will now introduce the range of those who entered the Cambrian Institution.

Pupils' backgrounds

From its very beginnings, the Cambrian Institution presented itself as a school which accommodated deaf children from all backgrounds, including poor children who would otherwise have no means of education. Early Annual Reports described the Institution as a rescuer of 'poor deaf and dumb children in Wales'.⁵⁹ The link between disability and poverty featured heavily in advertising not just for other deaf

⁵⁶ TNA, ED 32/227, Draft statement of scheme for the provision, 1913.

⁵⁷ TNA, ED 32/227, Minute note, undated c.1913-14. The Glamorgan Education Authority was the main target for this ire, having pulled out of the negotiations.

⁵⁸ Pemberton, 'Holiness', 193.

⁵⁹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fourth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1851* (Swansea: W. Morris, 1851), 8.

institutions, but in more general contemporary discourses of disability and public health.⁶⁰ Poverty and hardship would indeed have been a daily reality for many pupils. However, to automatically cast the children of the Institution as universally poor and helpless would be to oversimplify both the Cambrian Institution and the wider picture of Victorian and Edwardian disability. This section will use case studies and available census results to examine some of the pupils' backgrounds, taking into account questions of nationality, family, age and class.

Undoubtedly, economic and social hardship was the background from which many pupils of the Cambrian Institution came. The Institution heavily utilised the Poor Law to pay for many pupils' clothes, travel and maintenance. 'The fact that so large a proportion are maintained by the Boards of Guardians,' Principal Benjamin Payne told a clergyman in Cardiff in 1891 (when there were 52 pupils in the Institution), 'is itself enough to show that the parents are poor.'⁶¹ Indeed, many parents could not pay the full school fees, and the school made a continuing effort to scrape together enough for many pupils to begin their education through dealings with local Boards of Guardians. In the financially tumultuous early years, this need for support from those paying for the children took its toll on the Institution. A minute from 1852 bemoaned the Honorary Secretary having 'some difficulty' obtaining school fees from 'certain Parents and Guardians'. The Committee resolved to allow the Secretary to write to them, 'and if necessary to threaten to take proceedings in the County Court against such as either decline to liquidate the debt or reply to letters'.⁶²

Minutes from later years show more of a willingness to bring in the Guardians to tie up various loose ends, and a number of pupils in particularly difficult circumstances were received as 'free pupils', though the Institution's financial circumstances limited who could be admitted free. The situation in which these free pupils entered varied. Some were only temporarily allowed free admission (one boy was admitted after a

⁶⁰ See Colin Lees and Sue Ralph, 'Charitable Provision for Blind People and Deaf People in Late Nineteenth Century London', *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 4:3 (2004), 160.

⁶¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Reverend J. Cynddylan Jones, 14 March 1891.

⁶² WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 3 December 1852.

summer essentially on trial as a free pupil), whilst others took into account an agreement to contribute to the ‘services of the house’.⁶³ In the first months of 1861, two pupils were refused entrance as free pupils, one ‘in consequence of the great falling off the subscriptions from West Wales’; the other because ‘the funds of the Institution will not allow of [the child] being elected’.⁶⁴ The admission of pupils – whether for free or reduced fees – shows the varying financial and social backgrounds which the children came from, and which the Institution deemed worthy of support. An older pupil who had previously been rejected was admitted after the Committee noted an increase in subscriptions from her home county of Brecon, and realised her case was ‘one deserving of much sympathy’.⁶⁵ This distribution of ‘sympathy’ according to home lives was dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Two pupils were considered for reduced fees or cancelled debts in one Committee meeting in 1881, one whose mother was ‘a widow... in humble circumstances’, another ‘as the father had become nearly blind’.⁶⁶ When possible, parents unable to pay had their fees renegotiated or applied for further support from Guardians.⁶⁷ The different types of fees and supports pursued by the Cambrian Institution sheds light into the pupils’ home lives. Family losses or personal financial problems could frequently have an effect on how, or indeed whether, the pupil entered the Institution.

Given the frequent dealings with the Boards of Guardians and the constant references to poverty, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that only a few pupils were recorded as coming directly from the workhouse. When they did, they were seen as rare cases and treated as particular objects of sympathy.⁶⁸ A boy, whose father had been a soldier, entered the Institution in 1891. He was sent by the Master of Swansea Workhouse (where he had lived with his mother), ‘weak and awkward and apparently weak-sighted.’⁶⁹ The boy, presented in the letters as delicate and from a tragic background,

⁶³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, Minute Book, 1 September 1864; Minute Book, 7 August 1860.

⁶⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 23 January 1861; Minute Book, 6 February 1861.

⁶⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 22 August 1864.

⁶⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 17 January 1881.

⁶⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 5 August 1879.

⁶⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to J.J. Birchen, 10 May 1892.

⁶⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 29 October 1891.

stuck in the unforgiving workhouse, was therefore depicted as in particular need of education.

Before entering the Institution, pupils experienced fluctuating circumstances which affected parents' and guardians' economic ability to send their children to school. Using the census and letter books, a study of younger pupils reveals a range of parents' occupations. Many parents were employed as labourers – often in docks or in agriculture – or worked in the coal mines of Wales. The results from the 1881 census, however, include parents who worked as bakers, carpenters and a 'Bankerman', whilst 1891's census traces children to the families of a boiler maker and a printer.⁷⁰ Most occupations show that the majority of children came from working-class, industrial or agricultural backgrounds, but may also hint at a more diverse range of backgrounds than might have been expected. It should also be remembered that these census results may not be representative of the pupils as a whole: many excluded from this sample would have been referred to other relatives, relieving officers, friends or other figures from the community.

Some of the more detailed Committee Minute Books reveal the circumstances in which parents and guardians sent their children to the Institution. The Committee noted in particular detail a number of cases in 1886-7, many of which involved being rejected by the child's local Board of Guardians, often with the Institution urging the Boards to reconsider.⁷¹ Even more complicated was the case of a girl in the same year, whose collier father 'can only contribute 1/- per week'. When it was found that

⁷⁰ These results are based on a spreadsheet created by cross-referencing the addresses found in letters sent home to parents at Summer and Christmas vacations in the years around 1881, 1891 and 1901 with the corresponding year's census. The results are very limited: they do not include orphaned children or children who stayed in the Institution over the holidays, and many have been impossible to trace using the information available. However, it has been possible to achieve a snapshot of some aspects of home and family life: who they were sent home to at the holidays (and therefore, assumedly, where they came from before they entered the Institution), how many siblings they had, and parents' or guardians' occupation.

⁷¹ One family of small tenant farmers, for example, could only contribute £5pa to the rate of £18/4/- needed for each child. The Boards rejected his case, however he was admitted nonetheless on the £5 contribution. WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 8 March 1886. A parent who, 'being a labourer, and very poor, can not afford to pay anything towards his son's board and education', had his child admitted anyway after communicating with a local minister. Eventually an agreement was made in which the Boards of Guardians paid 'the usual fees of 7/- per week'. Minute Book, 12 December 1887; Minute Book, 15 November 1887.

the Boards of Guardians ‘refuse to assist’, a contributor was found to supplement £3 per annum, and the Boards were eventually convinced to make the total up, albeit only to £12/2/0.⁷² These negotiations shown here illustrate not just financial struggle, but the potentially arduous and complicated procedure which many families experienced in sending their children to the Institution.

But the experience of admitting children involved more than simply economic hardship. Individual examples also demonstrate the varying levels of sympathy and urgency attributed to specific cases. For example, the Committee noted in 1887 that one applicant came from a tenant farmer ‘who has lost one of his arms’.⁷³ The added factor of physical disability acted as a catalyst for further action. In some cases, the presence of extra support, whether from Boards of Guardians or their replacements at the School Boards, did not necessarily indicate that the child came from a family in absolute poverty. Discussing the payment of clothes and repairs for a girl, Principal Benjamin Payne was concerned about the School Board of Newport paying the entirety of these costs, considering her father’s status as ‘an Insurance Agent and Drill Master in comfortable circumstances’ whilst another Newport case, where the father was a Police Constable, experienced ‘treatment by the Board... very different indeed’.⁷⁴ This suggests that not all pupils came from the same background of poverty. Added to this, the Cambrian Institution may have had a more complex relationship with class than appeared on the surface.

Parlour pupils

Class differences at the Cambrian Institution manifested themselves most blatantly in the debate over private ‘parlour pupils’. These pupils were educated and accommodated privately with the headmaster, often kept separate from the other children and educated with a focus on articulation over signs. The parlour pupils were

⁷² WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 10 May 1886; Minute Book, 10 June 1886; Minute Book, 4 August 1886.

⁷³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 12 September 1887.

⁷⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal’s Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to J. Hiscott, 30 August 1905.

a common feature of early- and mid-nineteenth century deaf schools of the ‘Asylum System’, their increased fees often providing essential extra income for the school.⁷⁵ The disproportionate attention paid to private pupils became a controversial area of early deaf education. Patrick Beaver tells how the first headmasters of the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor in London – Joseph Watson and his son Thomas – both garnered a reputation for spending almost all their attention and resources on private pupils, leaving the poorer children in the Asylum to be taught only by an assistant.⁷⁶

The first private pupil of the Cambrian Institution entered in 1849, ‘received into [Principal Charles] Rhind’s family as a Parlour Boarder... at no expense to the Charity’.⁷⁷ In a year full of financial uncertainty (prior to a large tour of Wales to gather subscriptions and support), the income from the pupil was clearly appreciated the programme was presented publicly as a boost to the Institution and an ideal lifestyle for deaf children from wealthier families. The Annual Report of 1850 proclaimed that they ‘enjoy the privilege of additional instruction, and every effort is paid to their domestic happiness’.⁷⁸ However, with the departure of Rhind in 1852 came a debate about the inequalities of the system and an attempted reversal:

It be deemed by the committee, that the practice of the Principal having private pupils boarded with himself and family was objectionable, and likely to prejudice the interests of charity, the permission formerly granted has been withdrawn; no difference henceforth is to exist amongst the Pupils...⁷⁹

⁷⁵ See Anne Borsay., ‘Deaf Children and Charitable Education in Britain 1790-19144’ in Anne Borsay And Peter Shapely (eds.), *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid: The Consumption of Health and Welfare in Britain, c.1550-1950* (Aldershot, 2007), 87; M.G. McLoughlin, *A History of the Education of the Deaf in England* (Liverpool: G.M. McLoughlin, 1987), 6; J. Branson. and D. Miller, *Damned for their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 127.

⁷⁶ Patrick Beaver, *A Tower of Strength: Two Hundred Years of the Royal School for Deaf Children Margate* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1992), 43, 60.

⁷⁷ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Second Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Aberystwyth, for the year ending 30th June, 1849* (Aberystwyth, 1849), 8.

⁷⁸ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Third Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1850* (Swansea, 1850), 36.

⁷⁹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1852* (Swansea, 1852), 9.

Any pupils whose parents wished to pay extra fees, it was decided, would only have limited privileges such as sitting at the Matron's table. Yet only one year later the decision was reversed entirely:

The plan of taking parlour-boarders, as they are called, where rather different food and appurtenances of living are supplied to pupils from the more respectable families, at the rate of £20 each, has decidedly answered, having this two-fold use, - first, of benefitting the funds, and secondly, of raising the tone of the other pupils.⁸⁰

The episode continued to demonstrate the important role which parlour boarders played in the finances of the Institution, but the moral issues addressed the year before were now completely turned on their head. The poorer children were now to benefit from their richer classmates by learning how to raise their moral 'tone'. This fluctuating opinion demonstrates how quickly attitudes towards class and equality could change in the light of financial worries. This fluidity also seems to have affected the position of the pupils themselves. 'Parlour boarders' moved from being private pupils sheltered by the headmaster to more regular pupils. It was hoped that the manners that they had grown up with were to be passed to the rest of the children. Private pupils continued to be welcomed into the school, their admission being announced at meetings to sighs of relief from the committee.⁸¹ The Annual General Meeting of 1873 justified building new accommodation partly so that more separate accommodation could be built for the 'paying class of pupils – parlour boarders', and thus 'add materially to [the Institution's] income'.⁸² Fees for parlour boarders, too, continually rose.⁸³ The 'parlour pupils' of the Cambrian Institution, therefore, were a controversial but constant presence, demonstrating the range of backgrounds from which deaf pupils came.

⁸⁰ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1853* (Swansea, 1852), 8.

⁸¹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 5 February 1868: 'Resolved that he be admitted at once'.

⁸² *The Cambrian*, 7 November 1873.

⁸³ New boarders in 1868 and 1872 were charged fees of £20pa, whereas a boy from Ireland was admitted for £40pa in 1881. WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-8, 5 February 1868; Minute Book, 5 June 1872; Minute Book, 6 September 1881.

Adult pupils

The age at which pupils entered the Institution was also a contentious issue amongst the committee. The minimum age for a pupil of the Institution dropped to seven in 1863 having began somewhat high; a boy of eight was rejected in 1853 for being too young.⁸⁴ Perhaps this close regulation of age was a result of the uneducated deaf child being considered by many in deaf education being close to that of an infant. An 1897 teaching manual by Richard Elliott of the Margate branch of the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in London demonstrated this: 'The pupils for whose use [the manual] is intended are, as yet, in intellect, little more than infants, and as such require to be treated.'⁸⁵ Parents with - or philanthropists who knew - younger deaf children were told to inform the Institution beforehand so they could be ready to accept them at that age. In some cases, pupils too young to begin their instruction were received as day pupils.⁸⁶ After the rule change, it was made clear that an early entrance was clearly the preferred situation: when the dormitories were noted to be particularly crowded, younger applicants were given preference.⁸⁷

This did not, however, change the ongoing issue of pupils much older than seven entering the Institution with no previous training. When these pupils underachieved in school, the Principal would bluntly tell their parents that they should have sent their child to the Institution earlier.⁸⁸ The Committee and Principal began to worry and complain about the number of uneducated older deaf pupils entering the Institution, which might send the public message that the Institution is 'a sort of Asylum, Home, or Reformatory School into which cases - adult, unsatisfactory, and difficult may be

⁸⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 3 November 1853. The age change came After an investigation in 1863 into ages of entry in various deaf institutions, which ranged from six in Claremont to nine in Yorkshire. WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal's Reports 1860-76, 4 March 1863.

⁸⁵ Richard Elliott, *A Course of Lessons in Elementary Language for the Deaf Together with a Course of Elementary Lessons in Arithmetic, following an Intuitive Method of Teaching* (London: Deaf and Dumb Children's Asylum, 1897).

⁸⁶ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Thirtieth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1888* (Swansea: The Cambrian Steam Printing Works, 1888), 6; WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 7 August 1860.

⁸⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principacl's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 5 April 1889.

⁸⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 4 February 1891; WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Thomas Davies, 11 April 1878.

thrown'. The then-recent control by the state was partly seen as to blame: Payne was, of course, interested in these adult case but 'considerations have changed: thematically it is a "privately-managed" school, but really one under the control of two Government Departments, and we have not the free hand we had.' It is, of course, important to recognise the influence that state control had on this issue, but this was but one of many factors influencing the decision to reject adult pupils: the moral and logistical issues of adult pupils had been mentioned long before the 1893 Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act had come into place.⁸⁹ The school was indeed somewhat unusual in how many adult pupils it accepted, and taking many cases where other schools would have rejected them. However, this receptive attitude seemed to translate into a crisis for the Institution's public image. An uneducated adult living in the Institution, it was feared, would be seen as less deserving of charity than a new child about to start school.⁹⁰

A letter from Principal Payne to Honorary Secretary Joseph Hall in 1889 further outlined the differences in behaviour and experience for the adults and children: 'It is hardly proper to have even trained and educated young persons of, say, 18 occupying the same bedrooms which accommodate children of seven, but if they come to us at eighteen, ignorant, unregulated and unrestrained, it is worse.'⁹¹ The issue, therefore, was both logistical (adults and children needed separate sleeping and bathing hours) and moral. Though the Principal assured that there was no 'insubordination', the gap in behaviour between the adults and children was clearly seen as a problem. A 16-year-old boy was noted as 'disobedient to the teachers', having 'not the sense of younger boys'.⁹² Adult pupils with no moral training were seen as potentially damaging to the younger pupils, who may well have looked up to them or been influenced by their

⁸⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 12 September 1898.

⁹⁰ Occasionally the Institution also had to convince the Boards of Guardians to pay for the adult pupils as well: the committee noticed that one Board of Guardians had decreased their contribution for one pupil, and tried to return it to the usual rate of 7/- per week. WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, Minute book, 9 February 1880.

⁹¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 9 July 1889.

⁹² WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to unknown recipient, 1890.

behaviour. The parent or guardian of a seventeen-year-old pupil was warned of this delicate balance in an 1892 letter:

You might please tell him that he is to be obedient to the teachers, and truthful, and he is take no notice of the servants or female pupils as long as he is a school boy... He will soon be the eldest here and he must be perfectly straight-forward and proper in his behaviour.⁹³

These strict guidelines demonstrate the importance placed on behaviour, conduct and particularly, the relationship between male and female deaf pupils, which will all be explored as important issues in Chapter 6. Older pupils were seen as potentially initiating inter-gender relationships deemed unsuitable for the children. By 1908, a tense discussion about adult inmates had taken place between the Principal and Honorary Secretary, in which a full list of matters with older pupils was produced with 'morals' and 'discipline' given priority over the longstanding issues of where to accommodate and how to supervise them separately. An older boy telling the girls in the washhouse that an assistant was 'a liar' had caused particular anxiety.⁹⁴ Yet despite the many references to adult pupils misbehaving and misleading younger pupils (both in real and in potential scenarios), the Institution still provided an educational and social centre for a select few adult deaf people.

Geographical backgrounds

When discussing adult pupils, much debate and controversy amongst Principals and Committees concerned where in the UK they came from. If an adult applied from Wales, he or she was given more preference for education at the Institution than an application from England. A letter from the Midland Deaf and Dumb Institution in Derby enquiring about a prospective adult pupil from Peterborough promised that 'there is no deaf-mute [in Wales] "too old" for instruction', but the Peterborough case

⁹³WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr D. Leyshon, 16 January 1892.

⁹⁴WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 12 October 1908.

would be dismissed: 'We try to serve our own district'.⁹⁵ The rejection not only reminds us that adult pupils were welcomed to the Institution despite the moral concerns, but also raises the question of where its pupils came from.

The Cambrian Institution initially presented itself fundamentally as an institution for Welsh deaf children, and, indeed, most of its pupils throughout its history came from South Wales. This table collects together the counties from which pupils were sent, from 1847 to 1914. It is taken from the 'Statistical Notes' section of the 1914 Annual Report and purports to show all children admitted in the history of the Cambrian Institution up to that point:

⁹⁵WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to W.R. Roe, 28 January 1890.

Table 3.1: County of origin for pupils of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1847-1914.⁹⁶

County	No. of pupils
Glamorgan	271
Monmouthshire	57
Carmarthenshire	55
Cardiganshire	37
Pembrokeshire	30
Brecknock	21
Middlesex	9
Montgomeryshire	6
Merioneth	4
Herefordshire	5
Radnor	4
Anglesey	3
Salop	3
Lancashire	3
Gloucestershire	3
Carnarvonshire	2
Denbighshire	2
Surrey	2
Wiltshire	2
Somerset	2
Flintshire	1
Bedfordshire	1
Northamptonshire	1
Devon	1
Kent	1
Essex	1

⁹⁶ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Seventh Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1914* (Swansea, 1914), 27. The figures are official statistics therefore it is difficult to discern whether some children may have been left out. However, this is the most accurate source of data available.

Ayrshire	1
County Wicklow	1
Yorkshire	1

As to be expected, the vast majority of pupils came from the surrounding area of Glamorgan and often from Swansea itself. Yet the Institution was by no means limited to Wales. Indeed, North Wales has very limited representation in the chart – more pupils came from Middlesex than from any specific North Welsh county. *The Quarterly Review of Deaf-Mute Education* in 1893 explained that North Welsh families found even Aberystwyth too inconvenient, preferring instead to send their children to Liverpool, ‘and thither it has sent them ever since.’⁹⁷ Similarly, though some pupils came from Welsh-speaking families, it was made clear that English was to be the language of the Institution, though respect was shown for the Welsh-speaking community. Parents who wrote letters in Welsh received English responses from the Institution, such as this reply to a parent in Caernarvonshire in North Wales: ‘I know that some kind friend will translate this letter to you... I hope your friends will teach [your son] a few English words when he goes home in the Summer.’⁹⁸

The national and local background of the pupils was taken into account when dealing with their misbehaviour. Attitudes towards Welsh families sometimes differed greatly. This was particularly apparent when discussing the industrial communities from which a number of pupils came. An incidence of public nudity was explained with, ‘Many of our pupils come from colliery districts, and all have to unlearn here what they learn elsewhere.’⁹⁹ As we shall see, the ‘spoiling’ of deaf children was regularly thought to be the explanation for many pupils’ bad habits, but here the pupil’s working-class, industrial, Welsh background was seen as to blame. This distrust of the everyday lives of Welsh industrial communities was in contrast to the

⁹⁷ *The Quarterly Review of Deaf-Mute Education*, 31:3 (July, 1893), 194.

⁹⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal’s Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Gadwallader Griffiths, 2 March 1900.

⁹⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal’s Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to E.A. Taylor, 21 September 1906.

flashes of Welsh patriotism which the Institution could show in public.¹⁰⁰ A pupil's 'composition' printed in the 1895 Annual Report described the pupil going to a miners' presentation: 'We should be proud of our Welsh people presenting before the Queen'.¹⁰¹ Welshness, therefore, could be presented simultaneously as problematic to the child's development (almost as an additional problem alongside their deafness), and as a matter of pride for the Institution's public profile. The following chapter will explore this relation to patriotism in detail.

Table 3.1 shows that despite the Cambrian Institution preferring to 'serve [its] own district', a number of isolated pupils came from some significant distances, including one each from Scotland and Ireland. This might have been a result of local Boards of Guardians or School Boards sending pupils to the Institution, or parents choosing the Institution specifically. Alternatively, it could be the result of an agreement between the Cambrian Institution and another deaf school. Though the Institution expressed a sense of pride for taking in cases who would otherwise be rejected by other schools, they could be a source of resentment for the Cambrian Institution's Committee and Principal. The Principal wrote of English pupils in 1906: 'We have received over twenty, all of them adult, difficult, exceptional or pauper cases or with "combined infirmities"... We are referred to as a "dumping ground"'.¹⁰² By now, with legislation in effect which should ensure English deaf pupils were educated, the Principal hoped that the limited accommodation would be given exclusively to Welsh pupils. This also shows the problems which the families or guardians of English pupils faced in securing their education: many appear to have been rejected by other Institutions, and had to negotiate going home in the holidays (or, more likely, staying at the Institution or elsewhere in Swansea) and managing their clothes, a task often given to the Swansea Union.

¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, a private letter to the Rev. M. Gilby in Derby worried that 'the Welsh are not so bright as the Irish or English, and their dullness and illiteracy for generations have affected the rising deaf one.' This was a private, personal letter, included in the sources due to being printed on official notepaper. WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Rev. M. Gilby, 29 April 1895.

¹⁰¹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Eighth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1895* (Swansea, 1895)

¹⁰² WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 1 May 1906

Yet the presence of English pupils seemed to cause worry, not just in relation to their poor backgrounds and difficulties in attending school, but also due to their effect on the profile and character of the Institution. The Principal warned the Honorary Secretary that, whilst it is necessary to accept as many cases as possible, 'It is for you to consider whether Welsh voluntary support would fall off' English pupils continued to be accepted. 'We have at least our own proportion of dull and unhelped children in Wales, and the admission of more of this class from England would handicap us and alter the character of the Institution.'¹⁰³ The implication was that some donors to the Institution viewed the acceptance of the English pupils as something of a weakness of the Institution.

Conclusion

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was Wales' first deaf school, and its history reveals a wide range of pupils. This eventually included adults and cases from England, both of which were regarded as problematic but essential to educate. The entrance of pupils to the Institution depended heavily on relationships with Boards of Guardians and later School Boards and Local Education Authorities, both of which were influenced by financial situations and political relations. Yet in further examining the backgrounds of pupils, this chapter has highlighted how factors like class, age and geographical background affected the entrance of pupils and their lives in the Institution. These factors are often ignored in institutional history, but they are crucial because they shed light into lives of deaf children which might otherwise be obscured. As such, they will form an important context for further discussion of these issues. Therefore, it is important to balance a historical perspective between the important debates and decisions made by the principals and committees of the Institution regarding legislation and finance, and the lives and backgrounds of the pupils of the school.

¹⁰³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 1 November 1898.

The Cambrian Institution's relationship with national legislation for deaf education highlights the complexity of its implementation, and the varied responses from individual deaf institutions and individuals. Throughout its early existence, the Cambrian Institution maintained a strictly voluntarist attitude, which was challenged by the emergence of state involvement in deaf education. When this began, it was partly appreciated due to its potential to alleviate financial insecurity, but hotly contested on methodological and ideological grounds. Eventually, the Act was publicly criticised by the Institution through its reports. The Annual Report for 1904 stated bleakly that 'the Act of 1893 by which the Legislature made the Education of the Deaf compulsory is, in fact, to a large extent a dead letter.'¹⁰⁴ The products of the Act in Wales - new schools in Cardiff, Pontypridd and Porth - were heavily criticised, and two were shut down only a decade after opening. A long-running attempt to transfer the Institution to the Local Education Authorities and merge it with the local blind institution ended with no impact. Early dealings with the state, therefore, were fraught with difficulty and clashes of opinion. Moreover, well after 1893 the prevailing attitude at the Institution was one that valued philanthropic giving above all other forms of income. It is this ideology, and its social implications for deaf children, to which the next chapter will turn.

¹⁰⁴ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Seventh Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1904* (Swansea, 1904)

Chapter 4

Philanthropy

Alexander Melville, the third Principal of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, left his position in 1862. His split from the organising Committee of the school was far from amicable. Two years earlier he had presented his report to the Committee, lamenting that the institution ‘does not prosper, there must be an excuse for it, you have gone on in the old stereotyped way and it has proved a failure... Now I would most respectfully invite the Committee to put an end to the system which has worked them so little good.’ Where usually these reports brought up routine matters of pupil numbers, illness and clothing supplies, here Melville took the opportunity to voice his dissatisfaction with the way that pupils were trained and the ‘weak government’ of the Institution. ‘I very much question,’ he said, ‘whether the Institution has even turned out a properly trained youth.’¹ Melville may well have had legitimate concerns about in-house disorganisation, but his conflict with the committee ran far deeper than his initial speech suggested. In May 1862, he showed hostility to the Ladies’ Committee, refusing them admission to the Institution beyond a designated ‘Committee Room’. The committee decided that ‘some of the expressions used by him were ungentlemanly and insulting’, and asked Melville for an apology or a resignation.² After a meeting with the Committee, Melville resigned in June.³

The fallout continued well after his exit, revealing a religious element to the existing hostility. The Bishop of Llandaff sent a letter to the committee explaining that Melville wished to set up another deaf school in Llandaff, as a result of his resentment at the religious composition of the Committee. ‘Mr Melville’, he wrote, ‘complains of interference by members of this Committee with his religious teaching’, citing the

¹ West Glamorgan Archives Service [WGAS], E/ Cam 2, Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb Principal’s Reports 1860-76, 3rd October 1860.

² WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Minute Book 1855-66, 23 May 1862.

³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 12 August 1862.

Unitarian element as the main obstacle.⁴ The argument was played out through letters printed in Swansea's local newspaper, *The Cambrian*, a year later. The Committee insisted that only three Unitarians were present on a committee of twelve, and that no effort had been made to suppress any religious differences 'till Mr Melville imagined or invented them.'⁵ Melville insisted that his new school would not harm the Cambrian Institution but instead allow him to teach religion in the way he saw fit.⁶ Yet for the Committee, the damage had been done. The Institution's Honorary Secretary, Rev. E. Higginson, resigned that year, dismayed at the 'sectarian jealousies interfering in this work of the purest benevolence' and 'damaging your subscription list in certain auxiliaries'.⁷ Higginson and other committee members saw this conflict of interests mostly as bad business and a blow to reputation.

The hostility between Melville and the Cambrian Institution's Committee is an example of the social, religious and power tensions which could affect many Victorian institutions. The Cambrian operated with a hierarchical structure in which the Committee, the Principal and the school's benefactors exercised varying levels of influence over how its pupils were taught and how the school was projected to the public. In the case of Melville's resignation, the backgrounds and aims of these actors caused a degree of dissatisfaction. It is crucial to understand the operation of those in control, as even this seemingly petty in-fighting had effects on children's lives, and contributed to popular attitudes towards the Institution and towards deaf children. Attention in this chapter will be focused on those who contributed to the running and the finances of the Institution – often wealthy or influential elites with a significant local profile. Richard Trainor identifies these 'urban elites' as a group highly visible in Victorian philanthropy. They were not necessarily the wealthiest in their city, but they occupied influential and well-known roles in its social, governmental and philanthropic activities.⁸ This chapter aims to explore the backgrounds of the Cambrian Institution Committee members, exploring their connections – with other

⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 1 Oct 1862.

⁵ *The Cambrian*, 27 March 1863.

⁶ *The Cambrian*, 3 April 1863.

⁷ *The Cambrian*, 27 March 1863.

⁸ Richard Trainor, 'Urban Elites in Victorian Britain', *Urban History*, 12 (1985), 1-17.

charitable institutions as well as with government – and how these alliances affected their involvement in Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb.

The motivations of those involved in this kind of philanthropy have been the subject of a wide-ranging historical debate. As charity and philanthropy was as an important aspect of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, historians have offered varying theories as to why so many were eager to engage in the organised assistance of others. As Alan Kidd explains, these historical readings have ranged from altruism and humanitarian kindness, to an agenda of social discipline based on keeping in place the rigid social hierarchies to which the philanthropic elite were accustomed.⁹ It is important to highlight Kidd's point that there are problems with both of these positions.¹⁰ A web of personal, social, civic and religious factors comprised what Trainor calls the 'mixed motives' of the philanthropist.¹¹ Local issues, for example, were always on the agenda of the Cambrian Institution. For its donors, ambitions of personal gain might have gone hand-in-hand with that of civic pride and local or national prestige.

Yet motivations for philanthropy are complex, and it would be simplistic and unfair to attach notions of cynicism to all involved. However, it is important to examine the nature of the Institution's voluntaryist organisational structure, and the attitudes this fostered. In its ongoing pursuit of funds, the Cambrian's pupils were occasionally presented as objects of charity and pity, with public meetings and examinations using disability and deafness as a tool for spectacle. Likewise, it is important to explore the roles of contemporary attitudes towards religion and gender in shaping the philanthropy of special education. The conclusions reached in this chapter will frame the thesis' later discussions of children's experience. Even if many pupils were not aware of the decisions made by the Committee responsible for them, they were affected via school life, home life and leisure, all of which were in some way shaped by the decisions of those in power. As such, the methods and consequences of philanthropy are an essential foundation for this study.

⁹ Alan J. Kidd, 'Philanthropy and the "Social History Paradigm"', *Social History*, 21:2 (1996), 181-6.

¹⁰ Kidd, 'Philanthropy', 186.

¹¹ Trainor, 'Urban Elites', 3.

National and local issues

Throughout its existence, the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb traded on a mixture of local pride and civic duty. Its publicity highlighted the prestige the Institution would bring to the town, the visitors and interested supporters it would attract, and the duty it was fulfilling. From the beginning, the school positioned itself as an important asset of both its host town and the country of Wales. This message was first sent when an ‘uncommonly well attended’ public meeting was held in Aberystwyth Town Hall to establish the school. *The Welshman* newspaper highlighted the presence of ‘the most respectable inhabitants of the town’.¹² It was immediately made clear that Wales was in need of a school for deaf children and had a duty to found one. A motion called attention to the fact that ‘there exist in the Country no means whatsoever for their instruction’.¹³ The Cambrian Institution was immediately portrayed as the only solution. There would, according to the plans formulated at the meeting, be one institution in Wales, to be placed in Aberystwyth at its ‘most central point’.¹⁴ The Cambrian Institution, it was argued, would be immediately occupying an important role in national and local consciousness.

Early publicity continued to explain this. The first Annual Report, circulated to current and potential subscribers, introduced the Institution as essential for Wales’ position on the national stage:

England, Ireland, and Scotland, have Institutions for their Deaf and Dumb, in which these afflicted sons and daughters of humanity are instructed in all that belongs to their present interests and their future welfare... Wales has at length awoke to a sense of her duty, in relation to this long neglected class of her children.¹⁵

¹² *The Welshman*, 5 February 1847.

¹³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55. From an account of the origins of the Institution at the front of the minute book.

¹⁴ *The Welshman*, 5 February 1847.

¹⁵ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The First Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Aberystwyth, for the year ending 30th June 1848* (Aberystwyth, 1848), 7.

The Report implied that Wales needed to provide institutional education to its deaf children, not just to relieve the ‘affliction’ of deafness but to fulfil its role as serious figure in the provision of special education. Indeed, the meeting came only a year after the publication of the ‘Blue Books’ (see Chapter 2), and was in all probability responding to the harsh criticisms levelled at Welsh education. In spite of the uproar at the commissioners’ Anglocentric perspective and insults towards the Welsh people, the ‘Blue Books’ sparked educational reformers to address issues of quality and sparseness of education for children in Wales.¹⁶ The formation of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was undoubtedly a response to a climate of national anxiety about education.

This is confirmed by the role played in its formation by Hugh Owen, whose 1843 ‘Letter to the Welsh People’ had made him a key voice calling for educational reform.¹⁷ Owen, in his role as honourable secretary of the reform group, the Cambrian Educational Society, was instrumental in setting up the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. He had been asked in 1846 by David Davies, an employee of the Society living in Twrgwyn, Cardiganshire, to make ‘as minute an enquiry as possible’ about cases of deafness in Wales. His research led him to the London Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, and he installed its teacher Charles Rhind as the Cambrian Institution’s first principal. Owen’s involvement largely seemed to come to an end once Rhind began teaching, and he was thanked at the 1847 public meeting at Aberystwyth for ‘the part he had taken in calling attention to the necessity of making provision for the instruction of the deaf and dumb of Wales.’¹⁸ Through Owen, the newly-formed Cambrian Institution immediately placed itself in the discourses of Welsh education and local pride.

When the Institution relocated to Swansea in 1850 to allow more pupils to attend, the move did not alter its sense of national duty, and its publicity material continued to

¹⁶ Gareth Elwyn Jones and Gordon Wynne Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press: 2003), 63; D.G. Evans, *A History of Wales, 1815-1906* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), 127.

¹⁷ Jones and Roderick, *Education in Wales*, 53; Evans, *History of Wales, 1815-1906*, 102.

¹⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55. From an account of the origins of the Institution at the front of the minute book.

remind potential subscribers of the national problem of deaf education, and its importance to Wales' identity and welfare. The Annual Report for 1851 maintained the urgent tone on which the Institution had been founded. Pleading for funds for a new building to increase the number of pupils who could be accommodated in the school, it asked how many 'poor deaf and dumb children in Wales must still be doomed to the helplessness and hopelessness of ignorance and dependence'¹⁹ The concept of deaf education as a national emergency had retained its place as a selling point for potential philanthropists. Yet a new location brought with it new issues of civic pride and the role the Institution could play in the town's status.

Even before it had been set up, the Swansea incarnation of the Cambrian Institution had carved itself a role in the discourse and reputation of its new town. In 1849 Rev. George Acklom (who a year later would become the Institution's Honourable Secretary) wrote in *The Cambrian* newspaper of the benefits of moving the Institution to Swansea. He saw the need for educating deaf children as part of his desire to ensure 'Swansea should occupy the position to which she may justly lay claim as a rising city.' Thus, for Acklom, special education slotted into a plan to improve Swansea in general:

[Swansea's] arms will soon extend themselves on every side, and her prosperity will draw influence to herself: she must not, however, forget her duty, or to realize her own proper pleasure... viz., the seeking to blend charity with trade, and combine within her walls institutions, which shall themselves become moral ornaments to the town, and objects of interest either to her inhabitants or visitors.

Acklom's enthusiasm revealed the businesslike ambitions underlying the move, and the excitement that a new institution could generate. The Institution is discussed almost like a tourist attraction, with its role in the town's cultural life given as much thought as the moral necessity of its existence. The two concepts are synonymous and

¹⁹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Thirtieth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1877* (Swansea: Herbert Jones, 1877), 8.

interlocking; Acklom finished by demanding that his town ‘must be able to say, not only “here are my ships, my warehouses, my merchandize,” but also “here are my charities, my institutions, my grateful hearts.”’²⁰

Acklom’s picture of Swansea brings to mind a town priding itself on a rising reputation. From the latter eighteenth century, Swansea’s entertainment and tourist opportunities were being used by its local leaders to represent the town as a fashionable seaside resort, dubbed the ‘Brighton of Wales’. As Peter Stead explains, the town’s status as a haven for upper-class pastimes and activities had declined by the mid-nineteenth century, when the Cambrian Institution came into being, though Swansea attempted to hold onto ‘echoes of that eighteenth-century fashionability’.²¹ The town was still projecting itself as a tourist destination, something which could be cemented by the respectability that the Cambrian Institution would bring. Acklom noted, for example, how new institutions in ‘Liverpool and other large towns’ brought an ‘influx of visitors to the town and its institutions... again a sure means of increasing influence, and assisting to raise the public character.’²² This focus on local character and visitor numbers was not unusual. In nineteenth-century Cardiff, pictures of its infirmary, Blind Institute and Seamen’s Hospital adorned postcards of the town, and contributed to what Evans calls a ‘massive architectural edifice which would reflect glory on the town’.²³ A sense of civic pride clearly reinforced the discourse of charitable institutions in any city.

Much of the Cambrian Institution’s early reputation was built upon its status as Wales’ only deaf school, the solution to a gap in the nation’s education and conscience. This was a distinction which could shine favourably on the town itself. Thus the school’s attitudes towards its first sign of competition are important to examine. The Llandaff School for the Deaf and Dumb, set up by Alexander Melville in 1862 after his exit from the Cambrian Institution, was the second deaf school in

²⁰ *The Cambrian*, 28 September 1849.

²¹ Peter Stead, ‘The Entertainment of the People’ in G. Williams (ed.), *Swansea: An Illustrated History* (Swansea: C. Davies, 1990), 246.

²² *The Cambrian*, 28 September 1849.

²³ Neil Evans, ‘Urbanisation, Elite Attitudes and Philanthropy: Cardiff, 1850-1914’, *International Review of Social History*, 27 (1982), 313.

Wales. It began with one pupil, adding more until moving to a converted pub in the mid-1860s, providing accommodation for 20 pupils by 1869.²⁴ The Cambrian Institution did not see the new school as a supplement to the limited places available in Swansea, but instead feared the possibility of pupils defecting. Indeed, in 1863 it emerged that two pupils simply disappeared from the Cambrian Institution, the principal only finding out through personal investigation that they had gone to Llandaff.²⁵ Some parents and guardians chose the Llandaff school because it was closer to their homes, others accepted offers directly from the school.²⁶ This may indeed have had financial implications; the Bishop of Llandaff's letter in 1862 tried to dissuade Melville from forming the Institution in the first place as 'I do not see the way clear to the setting up of a rival Institution, as the difficulty has been so great in obtaining funds to maintain the one that exists'.²⁷

Though there may have been some financial issues with the new school, another factor in the rivalry was its perceived threat to the Institution's identity and public image. The Cambrian Institution's Committee had already voiced concerns about the reputational damage caused by Melville's public feud, and his new school only heightened existing tensions. Thus in 1867, when the Cambrian Institution's committee noticed an article in a newspaper about the Llandaff School, the Honourable Secretary was asked to send the last report of the Cambrian Institution to the newspaper's editor 'with a letter calling his attention to the fact that this Institution was founded in the Year 1847'.²⁸ Clearly concerned by the attention being directed at the new institution, the Cambrian Institution here acted in defence. It attempted to use the length of its establishment as a selling point, projecting itself as a more reliable Institution than the fledgling Llandaff. It is unclear, however, whether this ongoing negativity extended to the Llandaff committee. Their Annual Report in 1874 reprinted a *Western Mail* article which compared the two: 'The School at Swansea has been a

²⁴ Doreen Woodford, *A Man and his School: The Story of the Llandaff School for the Deaf and Dumb* (Cardiff: Llandaff Society, 1996), 6. This account, written by the granddaughter of two of the school's pupils, provides an excellent summary of the school's history and foundation.

²⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal's Reports 1860-76, 4 March 1863.

²⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal's Reports 1860-76, 6 September 1865; WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 6 July 1863.

²⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 1 Oct 1862.

²⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 4 February 1867.

source of great advantage, and has been in existence for a longer period than that founded at Llandaff under the auspices of Mr Melville'.²⁹ Furthermore, a sermon given at the Llandaff school in 1865 used the notion of Wales' duty to educate its deaf children to *justify* having two schools. 'It is a mournful reflection' that only one school existed prior to Llandaff, it argued. 'Where is, I ask, Wales' much-vaunted patriotism?'³⁰ Though the Llandaff school may not always have taken part in the rivalry, both committees placed great importance the Institutions' public images, particularly the Cambrian Institution's treasured claim to be the first deaf institution in Wales.

For the Cambrian Institution, the sense of national and civic pride, and its role as the first and largest deaf institution in Wales, developed into a regular publicity tool. By fulfilling its duty of educating deaf children, the Institution gained the authority to instil a sense of responsibility into its potential subscribers and donors, and bring new supporters into the fold. A good example was its dealings with the various industrial works in South Wales, which became a source of income and an ally for the Institution. A Committee member suggested in 1861 that all workers employed in the 'large works' of the district should donate one penny a year from their wages.³¹ The idea spread quickly and later in the year *The Cambrian* newspaper announced the arrival of the 'Wonderful Penny' fundraising scheme. Each worker in 'the great coal, iron, copper, tin and other works in South Wales' was to give a penny to the Institution to help rescue it 'from a position of pecuniary difficulty to comparative ease'. The method appears to have been successful, with £11 7s. 9d raised from this first call.³² The works played a notable role in donating towards the Cambrian Institution, supported by approving reports in the local media. The £2 2s donation from Aberdulais tin plate workers in 1888, for example, was greeted with a plea for others to do the same: 'So excellent an example might well be followed by other works in the district.'³³ Gifts as well as donations from local colliers and industrial

²⁹ Llandaff School for the Deaf and Dumb, *Report of the School for the Deaf and Dumb established at Llandaff, 1874* (Llandaff, 1874).

³⁰ Llandaff School for the Deaf and Dumb, *Report of the School for the Deaf and Dumb established at Llandaff, 1875* (Llandaff, 1875), 12.

³¹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 24 April 1861.

³² *The Cambrian*, 9 August 1861.

³³ *The Cambrian*, 3 August 1888.

figures were acknowledged in Annual Reports and offered publicity and reputational benefit to the donors. For example, a free supply of coal for eighteen years was offered by C.H. Smith in 1872, with the Report commenting that they hoped the next proprietors of the colliery would do the same thing.³⁴ In addition to being a key source of income, the industrial sponsorship contributed to the sense of pride and duty being fostered by the Institution, as well as building networks across Wales.

National networks were crucial for the Cambrian Institution's fundraising. A series of networks were set up in locations across Wales, with local volunteers given the task of collecting subscriptions and 'auxiliary' funds, the local collections. The school's founder, Charles Rhind, took it upon himself to travel around the principality holding meetings to establish new auxiliaries.³⁵ A long list of their names and duties filled the back pages of every Annual Report, a status symbol which could no doubt be construed as a reward for their efforts. The Reports, as well as Annual General Meetings [AGMs] held in the town, regularly praised committee members' selflessness and benevolence. The 1895 Report praised the Institution's auxiliaries in this way: 'It is difficult to realize the self-denial required to make personal application (often more than once) to so many.'³⁶ With philanthropic work such a demanding exercise, and the social status and attention gained from appearing in Annual Reports and newspapers may indeed have been considered a reward. The promise of glory and respectability may also have been used as a practical way to increase funds. In 1859 the decision was taken, 'That if any Lady or Gentleman finish one Ward of this Institution, or subscribe £50 a ward shall be named after such benefactor whose name shall be placed over the door.' Sure enough, the ward on the left of the entrance hall was given to a Mr Parson Esq.³⁷

³⁴ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1872* (Swansea, 1872).

³⁵ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1869* (Swansea, 1869), 6.

³⁶ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Eighth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1895* (Swansea, 1895).

³⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 18 January 1859.

Occasionally the actions of those collecting money directly affected who was brought into the Institution. Districts built up reputations and relations with the Committee through the amount of money they were raising for the Institution, and this helped inform the decisions of whom to assign the limited places available. Thus a pupil from Aberdare was readmitted free in 1860 because the Aberdare Auxiliary had contributed £55 to the friends of the Institution. This was repeated in 1864, when a girl was admitted free ‘in virtue of the Llandilo contribution’.³⁸ Occasionally these decisions were directly informed by issues of publicity, localism and image. A place was offered to a pupil from Newport in 1863, the Secretary being asked to ‘call [the child’s backer]’s attention to the state of our finances and to express a hope that the lad’s admission on such terms will give rise to the exhibition of greater practical interest in Newport and its neighbourhood.’³⁹ The new pupil was seen as useful for the Institution to address financial problems and gain support from new towns.

The pupils, then, were drawn into the shifting and uncertain processes of philanthropy, becoming subjects of relationships between different sets of local elites. Examples such as the Aberdare and Newport pupils demonstrate that even financial and administrative decisions taken by the organisational Committee affected the children’s lives. Moreover, it is important to recognise the Committee members’ role in shaping public opinion, keeping the Institution running and cementing its local and national reputation. This chapter will now examine the identities of the philanthropic figures on the Committee of the Cambrian Institution and how their roles connected the school to the social and political landscape of Swansea. By doing this, a range of potential motivations become visible, and the wider social implications of philanthropy are opened up for discussion. Furthermore, it is important to question whether the hierarchical structures used by the Cambrian Institution created visible barriers and gaps in power: between donors and their subjects, and between the ‘afflicted’ and their sympathisers, between disabled and non-disabled people.

³⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 4 September 1860; WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 6 April 1864. Free pupils are mentioned throughout the minutes of 1864. This suggests a more stable financial period or a drive to increase the Institution’s numbers from neighbouring towns, though the varying styles of the Minute Books makes this somewhat unclear.

³⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66; WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 3 June 1863.

The philanthropic elite

The everyday internal affairs of the Cambrian Institution – the subject of the later chapters of this thesis – were largely handled by the Principal and Matron, with a varying and expanding set of teachers, assistant teachers, sub-matrons and servants. Issues of finance and publicity as well as some in-house decisions were taken by an elected Committee. This Committee (who met separately from the Principal) was full of well-known figures from local government, the clergy and those with general connections to Swansea's philanthropic scene.⁴⁰ The Cambrian Institution took great care to project those organising and donating as respectable and important. Victor Golightly notes that the management board of the Institution was taken from the elite social circles of Swansea, 'diligent and capable and professional men'.⁴¹ The identities of Committee members was an important consideration for the Institution and subject to scrutiny in the local press. A study of their backgrounds can help shed light on the inner workings of the Institution and the image it sought to maintain. Each Annual Report began with a list of staff and committee members. Cross-referencing these with contemporary Trade Directories reveals a richly varied picture of involvement, with members holding many other jobs and positions of power, as well as intellectual and recreational pursuits. These profiles have been constructed by collating those on the Cambrian Institution's Committee with local trade directories and records from other institutions.⁴² Appearance in trade directories has been taken

⁴⁰ There are of course limited sources regarding the Principal's involvement in finance and publicity. Some principals may well have had more contact with their committees and Auxiliaries than others – however the Principal's Reports of 1860-70 and B.H. Payne's personal letters both suggest a degree of involvement with this aspect.

⁴¹ Victor Golightly, "'Speak on a finger and Thumb': Dylan Thomas, Language and the Deaf", *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 10 (2005), 83.

⁴² The following sources were used: Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report* 1851, 1872, 1884, 1892, 1902, 1911; *Scammel's Bristol and South Wales Directory* (Bristol: W Scammel & Co., 1852); *Post Office Directory of Monmouthshire and the Principle Towns and Places in South Wales* (London: Kelly and Co., 1871); *Wright's Swansea Directory* 1883 (Swansea: Wright, 1883); *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (London: Kelly and Co., 1891); *Daily Post Swansea Directory* 1900 (Swansea: Daily Post, 1900); *Purrier's Swansea Directory 1910-1911* (Swansea: Purrier, 1911) *Swansea Hospital Annual Report* 1871, 1881; *Swansea General and Eye Hospital Annual Report* 1891, 1901, 1911; *Swansea Blind Institution Annual Report* 1881, 1893, 1902, 1911. The exercise took a sample as close to ten-year intervals as possible of the Cambrian Institution's records, cross-referenced with the trade directories and other institutions' annual reports from that year or as close as possible. The 1860s are missed out as the reports are unavailable. I have used the most comprehensive trade directories available for the period, though some differ from others in their levels of detail.

as what Corfield and Kelly call 'a sign of social status', though some directories may have missed out important roles or figures.⁴³

Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Cambrian Institution were drawn from the upper echelons of the local elite, and held positions in many other places of power. Henry Hussey Vivian, for example, kept his post as Vice-President for much of the duration of his term as MP for Glamorgan, and was also listed as trustee and patron of both Swansea Hospital and Blind Institution.⁴⁴ Sir John T.D. Llewelyn, the MP for Swansea Town in 1902, was given the position of Vice President, and also held patronages and offices in the Blind Institution, Swansea Hospital, the Royal Institution of South Wales, the Swansea Scientific Society and the Swansea and South Wales Nursing Institute and Private Hospital.⁴⁵ The involvement of these notable figures was undoubtedly a stamp of credibility for the Institution.

Many Committee members actively participated in other philanthropic, industrial, governmental and leisure pursuits, and hence were part of the social, religious and political elites of Swansea. In most years represented, very few of the Committee had no immediate local connections as listed in the Trade Directories or Blind Institution and Hospital records. Mayors, MPs and key figures from Swansea council were given positions on the Committee, as well as representatives of the legal profession. In 1852, seven of the twelve Committee members of the Cambrian Institution were included in *Scammel's Bristol and South Wales Directory's* list of the 'Nobility and Clergy' of Swansea.⁴⁶ Industry, too, was heavily represented. As well as members of the Vivian and Bath copper and shipowning families, Committees often featured key figures from other industries. For example, 1902's Committee featured Lawrence Tulloch - a figure in Swansea's shipowning community - and Morgan Bransby

⁴³ P.J. Corfield and Serena Kelly, 'Giving Directions to the Town: The Early Trade Directories', *Urban History*, 11 (1984), 22-35. This article explores the early history of trade directories, as well as their usefulness and limitations as historical sources

⁴⁴ *Wright's Swansea Directory 1883* (Swansea: 1883); Swansea Blind Institution 16th Annual Report (1881)

⁴⁵ *Daily Post Swansea Directory 1900* (Swansea: Daily Post, 1900).

⁴⁶ *Scammel's Bristol and South Wales Directory* (Bristol: W Scammel & Co., 1852).

Williams, the chairman of R. and S.B. Railway.⁴⁷ Peter Stead explains that the presence of industrial leaders in Swansea's gentry were established by Swansea's emergence in the eighteenth century as a town 'first realizing its industrial potential'. For Stead, this gave way to a nineteenth century 'distinctive pattern of local leadership' led by industrialists.⁴⁸ Jones points out the blurring of high-ranking local capitalists and the gentry in industrial Welsh town such as Swansea, as capitalists adopted 'the fashions and ways of life of the gentry.'⁴⁹ Their positions in the Cambrian Institution demonstrate the role philanthropy played in the emergence of this leadership.

Whilst many on the Committee were wealthy, this was not a prerequisite for involvement. Their profile very much matches Robert Trainor's definition of the 'urban elite': not necessarily the wealthiest citizens in the town, but 'individuals of whatever socio-economic standing who held positions of leadership within major local institutions.'⁵⁰ Trainor in particular notes the interconnectedness of local government and philanthropy. This was common in many Victorian towns and is illustrated by the Committee of the Cambrian Institution. Individual figures sitting on the Committee had other roles which traversed the lines of government and voluntary activity. The Committee of 1851, for example, included Robert Eaton, who was also a councillor of Upper Ward, Swansea and the President of Swansea Infirmary.⁵¹ Others firmly connected the Cambrian Institution to several branches of Swansea's administration. A key name in the Committee of 1872 was C.T. Wilson, who held positions both as a Borough Magistrate and a representative of Swansea School Board.⁵² What mattered, more than wealth, were connections, influence and respectability. This need for the Institution to attract respectable members of the

⁴⁷ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Fifth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1902* (Swansea, 1902); *Daily Post Swansea Directory 1900* (Swansea: Daily Post, 1900).

⁴⁸ Stead, 'Entertainment of the People', 246.

⁴⁹ I.G. Jones, *Health, Wealth and Politics in Victorian Wales* (Swansea: University College of Swansea, 1979), 19.

⁵⁰ Trainor, 'Urban Elites', 1-2.

⁵¹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fourth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1851* (Swansea: W. Morris, 1851); Scammel's Bristol and South Wales Directory (Bristol: W Scammel & Co., 1852).

⁵² Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1872*; *Post Office Directory of Monmouthshire and the Principle Towns and Places in South Wales* (London: Kelly and Co., 1871).

community was regularly discussed. Writing about a deaf visitor to the institution named Sir Arthur H. Fairbairn in 1905, Principal B.H. Payne and Honorary Secretary Joseph Hall discussed the possibility of giving him a reception at that year's AGM. 'Sir Arthur would "draw" locally,' assured Payne, 'and has a good deal of influence generally.'⁵³ The consistent appearance of well-known and well-connected figures on the committee confirms how important these influential links were to the Institution's public profile.

Some of the information found in contemporary trade directories also suggests that the Cambrian Institution was aligning itself with Swansea's intellectual culture. Louise Miskell has demonstrated that the formation of scientific and intelligent groups in the first half of the nineteenth century - such as the Swansea Scientific Society in 1835 - turned Swansea into what she calls 'Wales' most enlightened and cultured town'.⁵⁴ While this reputation is largely regarded to have peaked in the 1840s, the Cambrian Institution continued to fit in with this picture. Connections to the Royal Institution of South Wales lent the Cambrian Institution much positive publicity in this respect. Formed in 1835, the Royal Institution hosted many social and interest clubs in Swansea, serving as a forum for debates and readings which attracted a broad range of people.⁵⁵ Members of the Royal Institution often held spaces on the Cambrian Institution's committee, such its presidents Lewis Llewelyn Dilwyn in 1884 and Lieutenant-Colonel William L. Morgan in 1902.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Alexander Molison taught public science lessons at the Royal Institution whilst he was still Principal of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. At one point his classes were held at the Cambrian Institution, but this less central location dwindled the numbers. A letter-writer to *The Cambrian* newspaper in 1871 bemoaned that 'one must have a very great thirst for the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, which

⁵³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-06, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 2 January 1905.

⁵⁴ Louise Miskell, *Intelligent Town: An Urban History of Swansea 1780-1855* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 158.

⁵⁵ G. W. Roderick, 'Education in an Industrial Society' in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *The City of Swansea: Challenges & Change* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1990), 181.

⁵⁶ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1884, 1902*; *Wright's Swansea Directory 1883* (Swansea: Wright, 1883); *Daily Post Swansea Directory 1900* (Swansea: Daily Post, 1900). In 1900, Morgan was also the president of the Royal Institution of South Wales (as well as Swansea Scientific Society, Swansea Art Society and Sketching Club, Swansea Chess Club and the Horticultural and Gardeners' Association.

would allow him to make the journey up that steep hill...'⁵⁷ Molison later scaled back and eventually quit his science classes to concentrate on his principal position, but his involvement is nevertheless an indication of the Cambrian Institution's role in Swansea's intellectual community.

One advantage of having many influential people on the Committee was the financial income they could attract through their connections. The Minute Books show a clear awareness of this. In 1852, for example, a circular letter was sent to selected elites across Wales, 'begging them to assist by influence or otherwise in carrying out the objects of charity.'⁵⁸ In difficult times, locating and using 'influence' was of crucial importance. At a meeting in 1863, the Committee proposed having meetings 'at a few of the principal places where little support is at present received such as Cardiff and Merthyr.' A Committee member was identified as 'being connected with the leading gentlemen in the former town', and was given the task of ensuring the attendance of the elites of Cardiff.⁵⁹ This was a working example of how the Cambrian Institution's group of elites could be put to use to keep the Institution afloat. It is also a signifier of how widespread this elite-led approach to philanthropy was. The tightly-knit philanthropic communities and hierarchical structures were so engrained that the committee could rely on their connections with well-known and well-connected figures elsewhere.

The range of voluntary positions also reveal the interconnected nature of philanthropy in Swansea itself. Far from being isolated, the Cambrian Institution was part of a local network of philanthropic institutions shared many Committee members. The Swansea and South Wales Institution for the Blind, which began in 1865 as a visiting organisation called the Society for the Teaching and Helping the Adult Blind of Swansea, was undoubtedly the closest of the Cambrian's philanthropic neighbours.⁶⁰ The two regularly appeared together in local discourse about special education and, as seen in Chapter 3, came close to merging into one institution. From 1863 and

⁵⁷ *The Cambrian*, 20 October 1871.

⁵⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 27 April 1852.

⁵⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 19 June 1863.

⁶⁰ WGAS, D D S/B, Swansea and South Wales Institution for the Blind, 'A Souvenir' (c.1935).

throughout the tenure of Principal Benjamin Payne, Joseph Hall served as Honorary Secretary of both Swansea's blind and deaf institutions. Hall personifies the multi-faceted Swansea philanthropic scene. *The Cambrian* newspaper reported on a surprise presentation to celebrate his anniversary as Honorary Secretary of the Cambrian Institution, noting that he was 'actively engaged in promoting charitable institutions in the town'. The reporter also highlighted his commitment to the ideological voluntaryism which characterised Swansea philanthropy: 'If you had a secretary that was paid, I suppose he would receive £100 a year at the least. Now that would be enough to maintain four children in this home.'⁶¹ Hall was able to communicate between the institutions, binding together the Swansea philanthropic network.

Members of the Committee also spent time on the board of Swansea's infirmary and hospital. 1852's committee, for example, featured Drs George Bird and Edward Howell, both physicians at Swansea infirmary (Bird was also an alderman of Swansea Corporation).⁶² Swansea's provision of voluntary health care represents one of the earliest philanthropic movements in the town. The first infirmary in Wales opened in Swansea in 1817, with Swansea Hospital following in 1869. As T.G. Davies explains, uncertain finances left it vulnerable when dealing with increasing amounts of accidents from Swansea's ever-increasing industries.⁶³ Yet the hospital appears to have acquired a notoriety amongst the philanthropic community. In 1879, a letter-writer to *The Cambrian* outlined the tensions between the hospital and blind and deaf institutions, with regards to collections in churches and chapels:

in 1872, and yearly ever since, the Hospital Committee, making their collections more systematic and urgent than before, have deliberately ignored the existence of the other two institutions, while professedly quoting and copying the Birmingham plan, which equitably includes all the three large charities of that town. Monopoly, which is hateful in

⁶¹ *The Cambrian*, 14 September 1888.

⁶² Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1852* (Swansea, 1852); Scammel's *Bristol and South Wales Directory* (Bristol: W Scammel & Co., 1852); Swansea Infirmary, *Annual Report 1848*.

⁶³ T.G. Davies, 'Health and the Hospitals' in Griffiths (ed.), *City of Swansea*, 167.

business matters, is not more just or becoming, surely in matters of benevolence.’⁶⁴

The writer of the letter recognised the importance of keeping the philanthropic networks close together, charging the Hospital with engaging in a monopoly when they ‘ignore’ the blind and deaf schools. Other newspaper articles hinted at how closely linked the institutions had become. In 1878, discussing an application by the Cambrian Institution for Swansea Corporation to sell interest in the school’s site, a representative from the Corporation urged care in dealing with the issue ‘because it would be a precedent for all the other local institutions. If one of these institutions became defunct, the property might fall into the hands of private individuals.’⁶⁵

The group that might be termed the philanthropic elite at the heart of the Cambrian Institution, then, was a complex and heavily overlapping network. However, it is worth enquiring how they interacted with each other. The myriad links to other sources of power in the town – often emanating from one person – kept the Institution afloat, but also brought political and personal disputes. These potentially continued behind the scenes of the Institution well after the Melville conflict. Dr Alfred Eichholz wrote about this in his 1906 ‘Historical Retrospect’ about changes in medical and education organisation. His interview with the school’s medical officer, Dr. Arbour Stephens, explained that ‘the difficulties of the situation were due to political causes rather than to any hesitation on the part of the Committee to deal with the physical needs of the children.’⁶⁶ Letters from this era reveal that there were indeed changes being made to the curriculum and medical provision, although there is little record of any ‘political’ disputes. Competing interests on the Committee were perhaps unavoidable. Similarly, the presence of busy public figures appears to have caused organisational issues. ‘Great difficulty being experienced informing the Members of the Committee arising from more attendance of the Members,’ complained a member in 1855.⁶⁷ Early minutes seem to suggest that the main problem

⁶⁴ *The Cambrian*, 3 October 1879.

⁶⁵ *The Cambrian*, 16 August 1878.

⁶⁶ TNA, ED 224/18, ‘Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb: Historical Retrospect’, 2.

⁶⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 6 February 1855.

of having a high-profile committee was not political factionalism, but getting everybody in the same room.

Women and philanthropy

Though the Committee was almost exclusively male, the philanthropic role of women in the Cambrian Institution was fundamental. Their presence was visible from the early stages, particularly in money collection. Women held roles as secretaries and collectors in auxiliaries across Wales. In early reports of collection, the role assigned to women is carved out. An 1850 newspaper report of Charles Rhind's fundraising visit to South Wales congratulated a woman in Llandovery collecting 20 guineas for the Institution, 'an example worthy of imitation by the fair sex, and which we cannot but urge on their attention.'⁶⁸ From 1860, a specific Ladies' Committee was put in place 'consisting of one (if possible) from the family of each Committee man, for the purpose of inspecting the domestic arrangement and reporting to the Committee from time to time'.⁶⁹ This set the template for an active but highly gender-specific picture of female philanthropy in the Cambrian Institution: the Ladies' Committee was independent but defined strongly by links to husbands and families, with advice mostly restricted to issues of domesticity.⁷⁰ Despite this, the Ladies' Committee reported regularly and quickly developed an influential profile.

The role of the Ladies' Committee in the Melville conflict just two years after its formation is perhaps the best demonstration of its autonomy. One of the factors leading to Melville's exit was his 'ungentlemanly and insulting' conduct towards the members of the Ladies' Committee, whose physical access to the wider Institution he had blocked. According to the Chairman, Melville had complained that the Ladies' Committee was having an 'injurious effect at the Institution' and, revealingly, 'that his authority had been interfered with'. A comparison was made to the Ladies' Committee interfering at Swansea Workhouse, perhaps indicating a generally hostile

⁶⁸ *The Cambrian*, 5 July 1850.

⁶⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 17 July 1860.

⁷⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 24 July 1860.

attitude to the women's involvement.⁷¹ At a special meeting to discuss the incident, the main Committee's sympathies rested firmly with the Ladies' Committee; its members were to resume their work 'under the assurance that they will meet with no obstacle to the performance of their useful services.'⁷²

The resulting discussion revealed much about women's perceived status amongst the male Committee members. The Committee demanded that Melville should respect the Ladies' Committee 'in sustaining the credit and respectability of the establishment.' Again, their importance to the Cambrian Institution was framed by demography and gender: 'with an unmarried Principal at its head, and no educated woman resident in the house, the Ladies' Committee has been of signal service'.⁷³ This implied that the presence of 'educated women' elevated the social position of the Institution. It was also seen to counter-balance the potential moral issue of the unmarried Principal. This stress on marriage may likewise refer to the marital status of the other women in the Institution; the Matron (a widow) and a 29-year-old unmarried servant. Philanthropic connections through marriage appear to have been widespread throughout Swansea. In 1884, the committee of Swansea Blind Institution featured the wives of four of the men sitting on the Cambrian Institution's Committee.⁷⁴ A network of female philanthropic elites was firmly in place.

The actions of the Ladies' Committee of the Cambrian Institution illustrate the rise of the female visitor in nineteenth century institutions. The role of women in the Cambrian Institution – from members of auxiliaries to the formation of a powerful Ladies' Committee – mirrors the narrative set out in Frank Prochaska's work on women and philanthropy. Female visitors to charitable institutions often began with minor domestic observations, later becoming figures of power whose decisions were

⁷¹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 11 June 1862. These quotations are taken from a copy of the Chairman's letter to Alexander Melville on 5 June 1862, which was reprinted in the minutes.

⁷² WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 11 June 1862.

⁷³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 23 May 1862.

⁷⁴ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1884*; Swansea and South Wales Institution for the Blind, *The Sixteenth Annual Report, for the year ending 31st December 1881* (Swansea, 1881).

rarely challenged by male Committee members.⁷⁵ Of course, the ‘visitor’ was not a role limited to institutional visiting: there was a simultaneous expansion of women philanthropists visiting people in their own homes. Anne Summers has explored the home-to-home visiting of the female philanthropist, which could involve visiting sick residents of their town, organising social meetings or participating in Sunday schools.⁷⁶ The female philanthropists of the Cambrian Institution were thus participating in an increasingly open field of women’s philanthropy.

Prochaska’s argument that philanthropy represented ‘the leisured woman’s most obvious outlet for self-expression’ hints at the boundaries of action which were being set: women were finding themselves open to a public sphere, albeit one restricted by class and pre-defined gender roles geared towards notions of female domesticity. These gender roles played to existing Victorian notions of the female character. Prochaska highlights the concept of women’s ‘nature’ and ‘mission’; the image of woman as caring, compassionate, moral guardians opened up philanthropy as a respectable area of women’s involvement in the public sphere.⁷⁷ In other words, this was a type of public engagement fully informed by the private sphere. Historians such as June Hannam have discussed this public-private overlap in women’s philanthropy and its implications for women’s lives and opportunities. Hannam argues that philanthropy offered women opportunities outside of the home, but was restricted to individual voluntary work rather than any kind of political action. She points to figures such as Mary Carpenter, who worked with ‘juvenile delinquents’ but ignored the issue of women’s emancipation, as evidence that female philanthropists were more interested in ‘the problem of poverty rather than the specific needs of women.’⁷⁸ Summers continues this theme, pointing out that the gender roles set out for women were largely conservative. In some ways, the restriction of women to voluntary work rejected the notion of women as professionals, as most women were still financially

⁷⁵ F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 23; 143.

⁷⁶ Anne Summers, ‘A Home from Home – Women’s Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century’ in S. Burman (ed.), *Fit Work for women* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 34-5.

⁷⁷ Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 6.

⁷⁸ June Hannam, ‘Women and Politics’ in J. Purvis (ed.), *Women’s History in Britain, 1850-1945* (London: UCL Press, 1995).

dependent on their husbands.⁷⁹ The Cambrian Institution, with its Ladies' Committee drawn exclusively from the families of existing Committee members, demonstrates this complex relationship with the concept of women's independence.⁸⁰

A significant aspect of women's philanthropic work in the Cambrian Institution was organising the bazaars. These were large events which featured stalls and entertainment to raise money and awareness for the school. When the male Committee decided in December 1863 that a bazaar should be held, they found that 'the ladies have already moved in the matter', and the responsibility was handed to the Ladies' Committee. The result was a 'Grand Bazaar and Soiree' featuring handmade items by the women running the stalls, with musical entertainment in the evening. The organisation of the bazaar was accepted as the undisputed domain of women: *The Cambrian* newspaper wrote that women 'proved the motive power' of the event. 'Yesterday,' the reporter wrote, 'must be regarded as essentially guided, governed, and carried through, by the fair sex.'⁸¹ Prochaska again places the trend for bazaars – which were widespread in the nineteenth century – in the emerging discourses of female philanthropy. Once again they represent the merging of public and private: a chance to escape domestic routines, but governed by the prescribed definitions of the female character as compassionate and moral.⁸²

Bazaars were open to the general public, and attracted a wide variety of people willing to attend, buy from the stalls and dance; the 1864 bazaar was held in the new Music Hall. *The Cambrian* commented on this diversity of attendance, proclaiming that the bazaar had 'enlisted the hearty and unanimous approval of all classes.' Yet, at least in terms of organisation, this was very much a celebration of a female

⁷⁹ Summers, 'A Home From Home', 56-7.

⁸⁰ It is worth also drawing attention to a 'pupils' composition' included in the 1913 Annual Report which addresses the issue of women's independence. A 14-year-old pupil's account of a trip to London is reprinted (see Chapters 6 and 7 for a discussion of the problems with these sources): 'We saw lots of suffragettes standing about. I don't know what they were standing for. My mother told me they are wicked people.' Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Sixth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1913* (Swansea, 1913), 18.

⁸¹ *The Cambrian*, 2 September 1864.

⁸² Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 71.

philanthropic elite. The ‘patronesses’ were listed by name in the newspaper, their work very much fitting into the gender and class roles of the respectable woman and active participant in Swansea’s leisure life. A sense of gratitude towards the Ladies was expected from the Cambrian Institution’s pupils and workhouse children (who were also invited), ‘a kindness which they seemed richly to enjoy, and for the bestowal of which they doubtless felt extremely grateful.’⁸³ As we shall see in Chapter 7, entertainment and leisure could build a sense of reciprocity from the children - arguably a social hierarchy was reinforced, with the children asked to display gratitude and obedience towards the benevolence of the classes above them. Summers highlights the class divide as a complex and unavoidable issue in the history of women’s philanthropy. She argues for the multi-faceted nature of gender roles: female philanthropic work showed that those involved were both ‘reaching out for more power for women’ yet ‘sought to prevent that power from passing from a restricted social group to a wider one’.⁸⁴ The bazaars – displays of independence and power which also represented rigid definitions of gender and class – are a illustration of this complexity.

Religion and philanthropy

Religion played a crucial role in many aspects of the school’s public philanthropic image, with the Institution retaining links with local churches and clergy. The Annual Report for 1851 stated that, ‘All ministers of religion in Swansea who are members of Society’ had a role in the decision-making processes of the Committee.⁸⁵ The Institution’s desire for respectable figures – the ‘members of Society’ – necessitated links with local clergy. Religion also acted as an important source of collection and advertising. Collections were made at churches, allowing the Cambrian Institution to get involved in local life. This provided a bond with other local Institutions and individuals, as seen in 1867 when the Committee was asked to participate in ‘a simultaneous collection throughout the places of worship in the town for the various

⁸³ *The Cambrian*, 2 September 1864.

⁸⁴ Summers, ‘A Home From Home’, 60.

⁸⁵ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fourth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1851* (Swansea: W. Morris, 1851).

charities'.⁸⁶ The Blind Institution in particular proved an ally in collecting funds; a motion in 1875 asked the Secretary to inquire with the Blind Institution's committee about 'obtaining a portion of the collection now made in places of worship'.⁸⁷

Attaching a denomination to the Cambrian Institution's public religious identity is difficult. It was primarily an Anglican institution, as its dealings with local clergymen and children's visits to churches (including the Special Services for deaf people, discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis) were conducted at the Holy Trinity Church in Swansea, a Church of England institution.⁸⁸ The central Board of Education reported in 1914 – amidst the proposition to merge the Cambrian Institution with the Blind Institution – that the Institution was 'definitely connected with the Church of England'.⁸⁹ In other respects, however, it was a diverse and non-denominational school. According to the *Post Office* directory of 1871, the Cambrian Institution Committee included members of Swansea School Board representing Unitarian, Baptist and Church of England interests.⁹⁰ As well as their myriad social, industrial and philanthropic pursuits, the Committee also displayed religious diversity. As we have seen, Alexander Melville's charges of bias towards Unitarianism on the Committee were met with puzzlement and criticism. This was the first instance of 'religious sectarianism' in the Institution, announced *The Cambrian*. 'It has been uniformly supported and managed by persons of all denominations acting in concert, without any difficulty, in the pure spirit of benevolence to the afflicted.'⁹¹ Indeed, by 1893 the *Quarterly Review of Deaf Mute Education* praised the manner in which the school 'seems to possess the confidence of different religious denominations, and to enjoy the support of all political parties.'⁹² Yet the presence of several denominations made in-fighting inevitable. The early Swansea School Board (the first in Wales) was

⁸⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 6 November 1867.

⁸⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 13 July 1875.

⁸⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Reverend J.G. Gauntlett, 9 November 1891; WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-97, Letter from B.H. Payne to the Reverend A.A. Matthews, 21 June 1895; *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (London: Kelly and Co., 1895); *Crockford's Clerical Directory* (1899).

⁸⁹ TNA, ED 32/227: Proposed Central Institution for Blind and Deaf Children in South Wales, Minute Paper, 24 November 1914.

⁹⁰ *Post Office Directory of Monmouthshire* (1871).

⁹¹ *The Cambrian*, 27 March 1863.

⁹² *The Quarterly Review of Deaf-Mute Education*, 31:3 (1893), 195

marred by denominational rivalry, reflecting a general religious contest for education epitomised by the Cowper-Temple Clause of the 1870 Education Act.⁹³ Religious divides, particularly between Anglicans and Nonconformists, had the potential to permeate the sphere of voluntary education and philanthropy in general.⁹⁴

Simon Gunn's recent work on religion and philanthropy in Manchester presents an alternative viewpoint on religious sectarianism. Gunn argues that denominational factionalism in philanthropy has been overemphasized. He stresses that, after 1850, sectarianism amongst philanthropic elites was actually weakening, and a historical understanding of religion in philanthropy which focuses on denominational arguments obscures the complex social functions of religion.⁹⁵ While the religious identity of the Cambrian Institution was primarily aligned to the Church of England, its voluntarist attitudes were in tune with local and national religious developments, in particular the rise of Nonconformity. A huge increase in Swansea's population (from 6099 in 1801 to 46,907 in 1851), brought on by rapid industrialisation which made people flock to the industrial towns, made clear the demand for a religion which was more accessible than Anglicanism.⁹⁶ Nonconformity thrived in Swansea and played a large role in its early educational development. The National Society – largely seen as the educational mouthpiece of the Church of England – opened the National School on Oxford Street in 1848 and operated a number of Sunday Schools. Yet their educational facilities largely catered for better-off families able to pay school fees.⁹⁷ The British and Foreign School Society - the educational organisation linked to Nonconformity – set up the Queen Street girls' school in 1806 and the Goat Street boys' school in 1846, and was involved in a number of works' schools.

⁹³ Lorraine A. Cook, 'The Contribution of Nonconformity to Elementary Education in Swansea from the mid-Victorian Era to the End of the Nineteenth Century', *History of Education*, 26:1 (1997), 51; G.W. Roderick, 'Education in an Industrial Society' in Griffiths, *City of Swansea*, 182.

⁹⁴ Trainor, 'Urban Elites', 7.

⁹⁵ Simon Gunn, 'The Ministry, the Middle Class and the "Civilizing Mission" in Manchester, 1850-80', *Social History*, 21:1 (1996), 35.

⁹⁶ Cook, 'Contribution of Nonconformity', 41.

⁹⁷ F.G. Cowley, 'Religion and Education' in G. Williams (ed.), *Swansea: An Illustrated History* (Swansea: C. Davies, 1990).

Lorraine Cook argues that Nonconformity's popularity in Swansea and its domination of education can be attributed to its accessibility to poorer or uneducated people. Its churches, she argues, were 'dynamic places of worship', outposts not just for religion but social gatherings, culture and education.⁹⁸ In contrast to the perceived elitism of the Church of England and its National Schools, Dissent offered an alternative which was less overtly sectarian and more welcoming to the burgeoning working classes. It would have been almost impossible for the Cambrian Institution to ignore the growth of Nonconformity. As we have seen, the Institution had an uncompromising approach to voluntarism, a spirit shared by many Nonconformists, particularly those in Swansea and Wales who disliked the Anglocentricism of the Established Church.⁹⁹ The need to work with dissenting churches is mentioned in the minutes; at a meeting in Aberaynon in 1861, the Committee reported that 'the dissenting ministers were out of town' but needed to be met.¹⁰⁰ Nonconformity formed part of the religious networks of philanthropy which spread across Wales. Yet religious divides were apparent even amongst Nonconformist denominations. Robert Smith highlights ideological differences between dissenting education reformers, as some wanted secular schools whilst others preferred non-denominational religious instruction.¹⁰¹ Others disagreed on the extent to which it was possible to cooperate with the Established Church.¹⁰² The religious arguments breaking out amongst the elite of the Cambrian Institution therefore very much reflected a time of intense change, debate and tension amongst religious educational figures.

Yet the image that emerges from the Cambrian's records is very much one that rejected factionalism. In a letter from 1893, Principal Benjamin Payne made clear his dislike of the very idea of separating children into denominations. He pointed out that uneducated children may well have been 'of no religious persuasion whatever'. An attempt to divide deaf schools by denomination would be 'virtually an attempt to sectarianise the Institutions': 'The religious question does not and ought not to affect

⁹⁸ Cook, 'Contribution of Nonconformity', 43; Jones and Roderick, *Education in Wales*, 71.

⁹⁹ Cook, 'Contribution of Nonconformity', 44.

¹⁰⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 30 October 1861.

¹⁰¹ Robert Smith, *Schools, Politics and Society: Elementary Education in Wales, 1870-1902* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 5.

¹⁰² Smelser, *Social Paralysis*, 174.

Institutions.’¹⁰³ Payne’s position is a fascinating one, for it links the question of denominationalism directly to the children’s backgrounds and experiences, whilst revealing a seemingly ambivalent attitude towards the specifics of the Institution’s religious profile. This position may have stemmed from personal taste, or a recognition of the potential implications for fundraising if the Institution aligned itself with only one form of Christianity. The Institution remained open to influence from various denominations despite at heart being connected to the Church of England. The details are complex, but the centrality of religion to the philanthropic identity of the Cambrian Institution is undisputed.

Philanthropy and the construction of disability

The Cambrian Institution, then, quickly constructed an image and identity based around philanthropic values. The profile which has emerged so far is distinctive and complex, but very much fits with typical narratives of Victorian philanthropy, by way of its elite-centred Committee structures and roles for women and religious figures. The question remains of how its brand of philanthropy affected the lives of the pupils, and what change it had on social perceptions of disability and deafness as a whole. As we have seen, recent disability historiography has cast a sceptical eye over voluntaryism as a means of improving disabled people’s lives. It is important to consider the implications of charitable work and the motivations of those involved. This section will therefore explore philanthropy’s role in the construction of disability, and later consider the theory that philanthropy acted as a form of social discipline by separating its actors into benevolent, often wealthy philanthropists and helpless, poor deaf children.

The endless pursuit of funding by voluntary special schools necessitated turning disability into a public spectacle. The Cambrian Institution needed to publicise its work in order to raise funds and attract interest both from wealthy philanthropists and

¹⁰³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, January 31 1893.

the local and national communities. As we have seen, this created a public philanthropic profile for the Institution based primarily around duty, civic pride and the respectability of those involved. In turn, it also presented and spread a specific interpretation of disability and deafness. Nowhere was this more visible than in the public meetings, examinations and demonstrations held by the Cambrian Institution, in which the children were presented to the public and the carefully-constructed public image of the school's work was introduced to the attendees. D.G. Pritchard's 1963 work describes these demonstrations as 'distasteful' but 'the one certain way of raising money and obtaining publicity.'¹⁰⁴ More recently, Anne Borsay has explained how they created a 'spectacle' of disability based on exaggerated accounts of the 'miracle' of deaf education.¹⁰⁵ She notes the importance of the sensationalist rhetoric in these demonstrations in constructing a public image of deafness, comparing the public meetings to freak shows built around the idea of 'otherness', firmly separating audience and subject.

The Cambrian Institution's public fundraising meetings permeated this spectacle. Pupils were brought on stage to be publicly examined, or sit tests in front of the audience. At the foundation meeting in Aberystwyth in 1847, the school's founders presented a 16-year-old pupil from the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and a former pupil at the London Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor who was now employed in Aberystwyth as an 'excellent working engineer'. Both were asked questions through fingerspelling, which they answered on the blackboard, demonstrating what the reporter called 'the most satisfactory proof of the astonishing effect of culture upon the minds of those whom nature has deprived of so important an inlet to knowledge as a sense of hearing'. The demonstration as a whole was designed to contrast the importance of the school's work with what was perceived as the tragedy of an uneducated deaf child. An attendee related this to the sense of duty

¹⁰⁴ Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped*, 29.

¹⁰⁵ Anne Borsay, 'Deaf Children and Charitable Education in Britain 1790-1914' in Anne Borsay and Peter Shapely (eds.), *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid: the Consumption of Health and Welfare in Britain, c.1550-1950* (Aldershot, 2007), 73-9.

which characterised the formation of the school: ‘Although we cannot restore eyes to the blind and give speech to the dumb, yet it is our duty to relieve them.’¹⁰⁶

The Annual Report of 1853 included some ‘testimonials’ from a public meeting which help identify what was expected and appreciated at each demonstration. The headmaster of Swansea Grammar School was present that year, asking questions to the children about school subjects. After asking ‘easy’ questions for which the pupils had prepared, he ‘thought it my duty to put a few general, or abstract questions on Language, to the Deaf and Dumb pupils. But it was no matter of wonder to me that they were not answered’: the questions previously answered had been chosen specifically beforehand, and the children would likely only answer the questions for which they had prepared. The Vicar of Swansea also gave a testimonial, in which he praised ‘the interest they appeared to take in the Religious and Biblical questions proposed to them’. The demonstrations were carefully chosen to reflect what the Committee and the Principal wanted to convey, and to please specific interests.¹⁰⁷

Amanda Bergen’s work on the public examinations of deaf children, however, takes an alternative perspective which rejects a reading of them as oppressive, arguing that ‘to see the examination purely in terms of the generation of publicity and funding is overly simplistic’.¹⁰⁸ Instead, she argues, they were a ‘highly successful means of attracting a large and respectable audience’ and, in a distinctive way, helped to introduce the concept of deaf education to the public.¹⁰⁹ Crucially, she points out that examinations in her case study of Yorkshire were attended by deaf people, and provided a meeting place for former pupils and deaf adults in the town.¹¹⁰ Indeed, Chapter 7 argues for the centrality of institutions in the lives of both deaf adults and children in Swansea, and in Yorkshire, public examinations contributed to this. However, is difficult to discern what reactions the pupils themselves had, and the

¹⁰⁶ *The Welshman*, 5 February 1847.

¹⁰⁷ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1853* (Swansea, 1853).

¹⁰⁸ Amanda Bergen, ‘The Public Examination of Deaf and Blind Children in Yorkshire, 1829-1890’, *Northern History*, 41:4 (2004), 162.

¹⁰⁹ Bergen, ‘Public Examination’, 161.

¹¹⁰ Bergen, ‘Public Examination’, 155.

pupils of the Cambrian Institution may well have seen the examinations as a welcome respite from their school lives. However, Borsay's work suggests that preparation for the demonstrations and the experience of being part of the spectacle may have been a source of anxiety for many children.¹¹¹ Reading the examinations as an overt display of oppression would indeed be an unfair conclusion to make; they were a complex phenomenon. However, it is important to recognise the images and messages of deafness and disability being conveyed through them.

The public demonstration of the 'miracle' of deaf education fed into the widespread philanthropic discourse of 'saving' deaf children from a life of ignorance and poverty. Philanthropists, including those involved in work for deaf children, frequently portrayed themselves as what Pemberton has called 'slum savers' or 'adventurers of "Darkest England"'.¹¹² The rhetoric of saving children or observing their lives extended far beyond deaf children – Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851) provided perhaps one of the most vivid examples of the social investigator discovering uneducated dwellers of the street, analysing them and comparing them against the respectable majority.¹¹³ Lydia Murdoch's work argues for melodrama as a crucial element of Victorian popular philanthropy, providing a narrative and characterisation to its subjects which was often far removed from their actual lives.¹¹⁴ She focuses in particular on Barnado's institutions which utilised publicity material which portrayed hopeless stray children and neglectful parents. Particularly notable were the 'before and after' photos which emphasised the physical differences before and after the intervention of Barnado's. Yet, as Murdoch demonstrates, these created exaggerated images of the 'waifs and strays' being rescued by the society, sometimes with the 'before' and 'after' photograph taken the very same day.¹¹⁵ Perhaps the most revealing indication of these attitudes being fostered at the Cambrian Institution's public meetings came when *The Welshman's*

¹¹¹ Borsay, 'Deaf Children', 76.

¹¹² Neil Pemberton, 'Deafness and Holiness: Home Missions, Deaf Congregations, and Natural Language: 1860-1890', *Victorian Review*, 35:2 (2009), 69.

¹¹³ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Charles Griffin and Company, 1851).

¹¹⁴ Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 7.

¹¹⁵ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, 12-32.

reporter declared ‘the advantages to be derived by persons who before they were thus taught, differed little from the beasts of the field.’¹¹⁶ This was a clear and outspoken plea to the audience: without education, the deaf child was reduced to savagery.¹¹⁷

The link between uneducated deaf children and savagery was one of the most vivid examples of philanthropy being used to create publicity through an exaggerated construction of disability as the ‘other’. Martha Stoddard Holmes has outlined the idea of physical disability as ‘melodramatic machinery’ in the books and stage melodramas of the Victorian era: she finds disabled characters (with Tiny Tim as the quintessential example) frequently used as vehicles for intense emotion: the reader or viewer is asked to feel sympathy and concern for the afflicted characters.¹¹⁸ Holmes’ also research highlights the importance of literary and symbolic readings of Victorian disability in nonfictional texts. This includes Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, which she argues regularly used the stereotype of the afflicted, helpless disabled street performer or seller, whilst sometimes ignoring this overt emotion. Holmes’ work draws the association of disability with melodrama which, she argues, has resulted in disability becoming ‘emotional shorthand’ in modern culture as well.¹¹⁹

The Cambrian Institution’s public meetings were texts with their own emotionally-informed constructions of what it meant to be a deaf child, utilising the literary tropes of melodrama and pity which Holmes identifies. The 1863 Annual General Meeting, for example, decried the ‘painful spectacle of wretchedness’ that was the uneducated deaf child.¹²⁰ The meetings were also a form of entertainment, a place for the general public to examine and discuss the children. *The Cambrian* in 1866 recognised this and drew the distinction between public examinations and general Committee meetings: ‘the public... do not care to attend the annual meeting where the proceedings are of a

¹¹⁶ *The Welshman*, 5 February 1847. It is important to note that this quotation refers to the articulation demonstration at the meeting, and takes the viewpoint that deaf children’s only route out from savagery is speech. Chapter 5 will discuss oralism in full.

¹¹⁷ This point is argued in Borsay, ‘Deaf Children’, 79.

¹¹⁸ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 2004, 2-4.

¹¹⁹ Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, 192-5.

¹²⁰ *The Cambrian*, 11 September 1863.

formal and less interesting character.’¹²¹ Some press reports even portray the examinations as rich in comedy value: at 1868’s meeting the audience was ‘kept... in roars of laughter’ by pupils imitating professions such as doctors and shoemakers: ‘those present were not only interested and pleased at seeing the educational progress made by the pupils, but kept in the merriest mood by the various manipulations of the children.’¹²² Before Melville left the school, he stressed the need to be able to hold an examination in public in any town to ‘arouse the public from their lethargy by showing them that the education of the Deaf and Dumb was not a myth, but a... reality.’¹²³ Demonstrations of deaf education were therefore identified as a valuable draw of public attention.

Holmes’ call to examine the literary and emotional power of Victorian disability is therefore essential for understanding the public identity of the Cambrian Institution. By acting as a form of entertainment, public meetings arguably had some features in common with the Victorian freakshow, a viewing space for disability and a forum for the ways it could be cured.¹²⁴ They were carefully constructed and orchestrated to provide a pre-defined narrative. At one demonstration in 1849, the Committee wrote to the headmaster of the Birmingham Institution requesting that they ‘send a Boy in the advanced class of their Institution to accompany Mr Rhind, the Principal, in his intended tour throughout South Wales.’ When they declined, Rhind reluctantly took two of his own pupils with him.¹²⁵ This was a widespread process, as many schools used pupils from other institutions or local cases.¹²⁶ Much later in the Institution’s life, the stage-managed theatricality of these demonstrations seemed to irritate principal B.H. Payne, who rejected the Committee’s idea of a ‘programme of exhibition’ for the 1903 meeting, potentially reflecting a broader decline in the public

¹²¹ *The Cambrian*, 5 October 1866.

¹²² *The Cambrian*, 2 October 1868. Boyce notes that this reaction also featured in demonstrations of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Boyce, *History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf*, 18.

¹²³ WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal’s Reports 1860-76, 3rd October 1860.

¹²⁴ For a discussion of the role of the ‘freak show’ in constructing contemporary and modern perceptions of disability, see Fiona Whittington-Walsh, ‘From Freaks to Savants: Disability and Hegemony from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939) to *Sling Blade* (1997), *Disability and Society*, 17:6 (2002), 695-707. Borsay also draws this link. Borsay, ‘Deaf Children’, 77.

¹²⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 21st April 1849.

¹²⁶ The Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb’s first demonstration featured a pupil from the Manchester Institution and a local deaf man with five deaf children. Boyce, *History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf*, 2.

display of deaf children: 'They are proper for performances,' he complained, 'not examinations.'¹²⁷

The spectacle of the Cambrian Institution's public demonstrations firmly cast deafness as separate from the norm. The disabled body was identified as tragic and in need of help.¹²⁸ By presenting deaf children to the public and conveying helplessness and affliction, they were distanced from the benevolent philanthropists seen to help them. Borsay describes this as a 'double-edged sword' effect, in which compassion was offered, but only in a way which exploited and exaggerated the children's bodily deviations from the norm.¹²⁹ The pervading sense of pity could be read as a form of social discipline, reinforcing the boundaries between the children and those viewing them. A Foucauldian reading might suggest this was an outward display of power through status. This critique of the fundamental inequalities of philanthropy is a position taken by recent disability and deaf scholars such as Paddy Ladd, who argues that the separation between the benevolent, wealthy philanthropist and poor, helpless deaf child constituted social control, labelling deaf children and silencing discourses which presented deaf people as anything other than helpless and afflicted.¹³⁰ Certainly, philanthropic work could be seen to serve to reinforce the power gap between non-disabled philanthropist and afflicted child. Paul K. Longmore has placed this argument in the context of the modern American 'telethon', arguing that disabled people become passive objects of charity in a wider pursuit of social capital. This is what he calls 'conspicuous contribution', helping to 'demarcate the radical difference between socially valid Americans and their counterimage, the invalidated, disabled Others.'¹³¹

¹²⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 1st December 1903.

¹²⁸ We are reminded here of Lennard Davis' outstanding theory on disability and 'normalcy'. See Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995)

¹²⁹ Borsay, 'Deaf Children', 77.

¹³⁰ Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003), 119.

¹³¹ Paul K. Longmore, 'Conspicuous Contribution and American Cultural Dilemmas: Telethon Rituals of Cleansing and Renewal' in , David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (eds.), *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 154.

If philanthropy served to define perceptions of disability, we must ask how deafness fits specifically in this definition. Longmore and Umansky, discussing the ‘major redefinition’ of disabled people in the late nineteenth century through public policy and professional classification, argue that historians need to use a ‘cross-disability perspective’.¹³² The Annual Report for 1853 painted a bleak picture of deafness, highlighting the inferiority of deaf people to the rest of humanity: ‘There is something so appalling, so touching, so pitiable, in the deprivation – it claims the deepest interest and the readiest liability, to aid in rendering these unfortunates somewhat on a par with the human race in general.’¹³³ Later, in newspaper reports, the tone seem to shift to one which occasionally discussed multiple disabilities together. Reporting the 1863 AGM, *The Cambrian* compared deafness to blindness: ‘And really whether a life-long silence is not worse even than a life-long darkness it is difficult to say. In many respects the state of the born deaf and dumb is even more deserving of our pity than that of the born blind.’ Their reasoning was based on language: this is readily available to blind children whilst ‘all that passes before the deaf mute is merely dumb show’.¹³⁴ The discussions in Annual Reports and the local press are a useful indicator of the attitudes created by the images of disability that were fostered by the public presentation of deafness in the Cambrian Institution. A hierarchy of disability and charity was being created, with deaf children demoted to a lowlier status than blind, and far lower than the rest of humanity. This emotional picture of disability was aimed at raising funds through sympathy and spreading awareness, redefining the meaning of deafness in the process. Yet this image was only one presented to the public on special occasions like demonstrations or in sentimental reports and publicity material, and what happened inside the Institution's walls may well have been a different situation altogether. With this in mind, we now question the application readings of social discipline to the philanthropic processes of special education.

¹³² Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, ‘Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream’ in Paul K. Longmore, and Lauri Umansky (eds.), *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 22.

¹³³ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1853*.

¹³⁴ *The Cambrian*, 11 September 1863.

Social discipline

The rise of charitable institutions for disabled children in the nineteenth century undoubtedly had an effect on how disability was interpreted in the public sphere. As we have seen, some disability historians have interpreted charity as a conscious exercise in social discipline, with the aim to marginalise deaf and disabled people. The question of motivation is key; aims of normalisation and discipline might have been on the minds of the Cambrian Institution's philanthropists, but it is equally likely that these shifts in attitudes were by-products of a genuine desire to be benevolent and charitable. As established, attributing only one motivation to philanthropic work is misguided. This section will ask why the philanthropists themselves were involved, how this affected the social structure of the Cambrian Institution, and whether social discipline and the enforcement of hierarchies can be read as interlocking features of charity.

The recent historiography of philanthropy has discussed this issue in detail. Alan Kidd argues that the historian should avoid simply constructing 'moral hierarchies', instead recognising that philanthropy – perhaps unwillingly – had the potential to create dependence and inequality, and served to 'reinforce divisions and even generate resentments.'¹³⁵ Evans characterises Victorian Welsh philanthropy as something more complex than simplistic 'humanitarianism', as it needed to be 'compatible with a highly unequal society', feeding into local power and class structures.¹³⁶ It is indeed important to highlight contrasts between the philanthropists' promises of benevolence and kindness, and the inequality of social positions which these reinforced. Some historians have suggested that one motivation for many Victorian philanthropists was its usefulness for self-promotion and social status. We have seen how the Cambrian Institution valued respectability and status, and it is possible that Committee members regarded their involvement as an opportunity to raise their social and religious credentials. This has been the subject of much historical debate: Kidd suggests that voluntary charity could be used as a 'vehicle for self-aggrandisement' and 'enhancer

¹³⁵ Kidd, 'Philanthropy', 186.

¹³⁶ Evans, 'Urbanisation', 291.

of public reputability'. He points to the widely-spread publication of donors and committee members as evidence that charity could be used for status-enhancement.¹³⁷ He is right to identify this as a potential motivation, albeit one which likely went hand-in-hand with many others. Some historians have extended their critique further; Branson and Miller, for example, criticise the 'pursuit of social honour' which they argue lay at the heart of deaf charity, which positioned deaf children as passive objects to gain social capital.¹³⁸

If the Cambrian Institution's methods of charity did act as a form social discipline, the philanthropic class were elevated to a level above their deaf subjects by their very involvement. Thus existing class hierarchies were reinforced and promoted. This may have been particularly apparent in Swansea, where, as we have seen, a respected philanthropic elite was well-known. An 1876 article in *The Cambrian* entitled 'Our Wasteful Ways in Swansea' illustrated how central the issue of class was to discourses of philanthropy. Discussing the town's food supplies, it praised the middle and upper classes for having enough 'intelligence to use what they want and power enough to ensure their proper provision', whilst 'it is the lower classes who need consideration, and the fostering care of true philanthropists.'¹³⁹ Whilst this report may be partial, it demonstrates how engrained class differences had become. The Cambrian Institution, with its need to 'enlist... the generous charity of the more wealthy', very much fed into this class structure.¹⁴⁰ It should be noted, however, that the Cambrian Institution did not actively seek explicitly to portray its pupils as inferior to their philanthropists, rather this was perhaps a consequence of the social structures created by philanthropy. Occasionally the Annual Reports emphasized the social progress of deaf people: the Principal wrote in 1898, for example, that an Apprentice Fund which committed them to manual labour was needed so that pupils could 'rise to superior social and industrial conditions.'¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Kidd, 'Philanthropy', 189. See also Evans, 'Urbanisation', 306.

¹³⁸ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 125.

¹³⁹ *The Cambrian*, 22 December 1876

¹⁴⁰ *The Cambrian*, 15 June 1849. One should keep in mind that the pupils of the Cambrian Institution were by no means all poor, an issue to be discussed in the final two chapters of this thesis.

¹⁴¹ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-First Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1898* (Swansea, 1898).

The relationship between philanthropist and deaf child was more complex than pure subordination or malevolent social control. From 1892, each Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution included a section called ‘Hints to the Benevolent’ which outlined the bonds and relationships which would form through philanthropy. The Cambrian Institution wanted ‘the Benevolent’ to take an interest in the Institution itself: ‘Visit it, and you will become interested in its work and learn its requirements.’ Philanthropists were also asked to form personal relationships with the children: ‘Visit them and talk to them. If you desire to give them a treat, you can arrange it with the Matron.’ Philanthropists were also asked to meet deaf adults.¹⁴² This template for philanthropic relationships is deeply complex, relying on a personal bond which affirms the authority of the philanthropist yet reaches far beyond simplistic concepts of social discipline. Alan Kidd’s interpretation of charity as an essentially reciprocal device is applicable here. He argues that historians should interpret charity as a two-way device - albeit an unequal one - which could demand gratitude and dependence from its subject, in return for the gift given.¹⁴³ This complex reading of charity will be explored later in this thesis, particularly in relation to leisure activities.

The role given to deaf pupils – in which they were actors in a charitable relationship – reflects Victorian notions of the ‘deserving poor.’ This concept involved an individualistic reading of philanthropy which focused on the demographics, character and profile of who ‘deserved’ welfare, education or care. Many reformers believed that charity recipients needed separation into those who deserved their aid – by conforming to patterns of morality and self-help – and those who were fraudulent or criminal and thus voided their right to assistance.¹⁴⁴ It could be used in the identification and labelling of disabled people. As Cooter points out, the idea of

¹⁴² Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1892* (Swansea, 1892). This piece was reprinted in every Annual Report up to the end of our study (1914).

¹⁴³ Kidd, ‘Philanthropy’, 183-6. This is further explored in the context of eighteenth-century hospitals in Roy Porter, ‘The Gift Relation: Philanthropy and Provincial Hospitals in Eighteenth-Century England’ in Lindsay Granshaw and Roy Porter (eds.), *The Hospital in History* (London: Routledge, 1989), 149-178.

¹⁴⁴ The idea of the ‘deserving poor’ has been comprehensively studied by historians and applied to all areas of philanthropy and welfare. See Kidd, ‘Philanthropy’, 187; Evans, ‘Urbanisation’, 315; L. M. E. Goodlad, ‘“Making the Working Man Like Me”: Charity, Pastorship and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Thomas Chalmers and Dr James Phillips Kay’, *Victorian Studies*, 43:4 (2001), 595-6. Goodlad’s excellent study applies theories of charity to two differing but linked figures in charity and poor law history, James Phillips Kay and Thomas Chalmers.

‘deserving poor’ found its manifestation in the categories which emerged with the 1834 reform of the Poor Law. Those who were sick, aged or ‘infirm’ would be deemed deserving; those who were deemed fit to work or deceiving of their disability would not.¹⁴⁵ David Turner further traces this ideology to the Elizabethan Poor Laws; as soon as the Old Poor Law was put in place in 1601, suspicions arose as to whether its recipients were being fraudulent about their disabilities, or engaging in criminal or vagrant behaviour.¹⁴⁶ The Minute Books of the Cambrian Institution play out a discussion of how and why its pupils ‘deserve’ their charity. For example, the Committee accepted the second child of a Mr Waters into the Institution because, despite his poverty, he was ‘a very worthy man’ and ‘always speaks in grateful terms’. His respectability of character guaranteed approval, and it is highly significant that being ‘grateful’ was one of the factors that informed their decision, thus connecting social constructions of respectability with decisions informing who was deemed the ‘deserving’ poor.¹⁴⁷ The reverse could happen too, as evidenced in this letter written by Principal B.H. Payne in 1876:

Allow me to inform the public that the deaf and dumb “tramp” whose right arm is paralysed, and who is at present in this neighbourhood, is a mendacious character, and an unworthy object of indiscriminate charity.¹⁴⁸

These two sources draw the line between the deserving children and their grateful parents, and the undeserving ‘tramp’ who, despite being deaf, is seen as morally deficient and rightly denied his chance in society. This suggests that a code was in place which outlined what was deemed acceptable behaviour for a disabled recipient of charity. This demonstrates that the role of the charitable recipient was constructed and regulated, and a hierarchy of disability could be put in place which separated

¹⁴⁵Roger Cooter, ‘The Disabled Body’ in Roger Cooter and John Pickstone (eds.), *Companion to Medicine in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2003), 369.

¹⁴⁶David M. Turner, ‘“Fraudulent” Disability in Historical Perspective’, *History and Policy* (2012) <<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-130.html>> Accessed 19 August 2012.

¹⁴⁷WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 19 February 1862.

¹⁴⁸WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal’s Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to unknown recipient, 9th March 1876.

innocence from social deviancy. The 'tramp' violated the code, and is thus excluded and encouraged to be avoided.

Other examples further suggest that charity was seen as in need of regulation according to who was 'deserving' of their assistance. Former pupils came under attack for displaying such unworthy characteristics. Writing in 1897 to someone enquiring about a past pupil, Principal Benjamin Payne explained that the former pupil 'will not stay at work when he gets it, but gives it up or loses it through drink and misconduct, and then he tramps.' Apologising for the fact that people gave him money, he then suggested that 'a warning to missionaries and the Deaf & Dumb' should be put in *Ephphatha* [a deaf magazine] about him.¹⁴⁹ The prospect of fraud was also flagged as an obstacle for the legitimate giving of charity to deserving people. *The Cambrian* newspaper carried a story in 1869 about a 'a young man who pretended to be deaf and dumb', charged with 'fraudulently endeavouring to collect subscriptions on behalf of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, he not being duly authorised to do so'. The man had entered shops with a copy of the Institution's Annual Report, asking for money. He was sentenced to three months in prison, with the Institution's Honorary Secretary A. Davies giving evidence.¹⁵⁰ The incident shows not just that 'imposters' had the potential to exploit the Institution, but also that charitable giving to deaf people was portrayed, both by the Institution and the media, as a selective process in need of regulation. The incident recalls Turner's research on the longstanding historical trope of the 'fraudulent' disabled person, faking their disability to achieve their own ends. The eighteenth-century press, he argues, began to warn of beggars using false impairments, beginning a stereotype of the false disabled recipient of charity which continued into the nineteenth century and beyond.¹⁵¹

A division was created, then, between the deserving and undeserving recipient of charity. Religion could potentially play a part in enforcing this. Simon Gunn has

¹⁴⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Miss M.A. Francis, 17 February 1897.

¹⁵⁰ *The Cambrian*, 28 May 1869.

¹⁵¹ Turner, "'Fraudulent' Disability".

outlined the ‘civilizing mission’ to which church philanthropy assigned itself. By setting out to save the morally destitute working classes, he argues, the division between the respectable, philanthropic middle class and their working class subjects was emphasized.¹⁵² Branson and Miller argue that the idea of religious salvation through literacy – allowing deaf children access to the Bible, thus the word of God – legitimised the image of deaf children as savages in need of salvation.¹⁵³ The Cambrian Institution helped perpetuate this imagery, portraying the uneducated deaf child as lost without a concept of God. An editorial in *The Cambrian* in 1849 (as the Institution prepared to move to Swansea) outlined this attitude, arguing that the Institution was the only means of allowing access to communion:

without the succour of such an institution, the state of the deaf and dumb is far worse than that of the Pagan... No, the miserable deaf and dumb, left without instruction, remains ignorant not only of the scheme of redemption, but far less of an idea of the Deity.¹⁵⁴

The comparison to the uneducated ‘savage’ was again made here, and the lack of religious identification was used to make the situation more urgent. Religion was, of course, inextricably linked to Victorian ideas of charity, but here it is used to justify the school’s very operation.

Neil Pemberton describes Christian charity as a trope which fed into Martha Stoddard Holmes’ construction of disability as melodrama. Importantly, he identifies the ‘Biblical authority’ which missionaries could assign themselves; knowledge and practice of Christianity could act as the social boundary between philanthropist and subject.¹⁵⁵ At meetings and in promotional reports, the Cambrian Institution presented philanthropy as a triumphant religious act. The 1888 AGM featured a speech from Reverend J.A. Barrowclough tracing the history of philanthropy to the Bible, describing how ‘an eminent Christian writer compared charity to one surrounded by

¹⁵² Gunn, ‘Ministry’, 35.

¹⁵³ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 125-6.

¹⁵⁴ *The Cambrian*, 15 June 1849.

¹⁵⁵ Pemberton, ‘Deafness and Holiness’, 68.

the atmosphere of heaven, stretching forth a hand to relieve the necessities and sufferings of mankind'.¹⁵⁶ This placed the work of the Cambrian Institution in a lineage descending from the Bible. The comparison of philanthropy to religious salvation was made even clearer elsewhere; the 1856 Annual Report described how the Committee were given strength to continue by the knowledge that 'they are following in the steps of the Great Master... who has taught us that we are most Godlike when we emulate and follow His example of sympathy for suffering and pity for distress.'¹⁵⁷ Descriptions of the 'Christ-like work of educating the deaf and dumb' were a regular feature of the Report of the Committee which opened each Annual Report.¹⁵⁸

It is difficult to discern what attitudes lay behind these grand religious comparisons. They were an exercise in Committee members distancing from the children, but were more complex than conscious social control. Many Committee members might have seen their work as a part of their religious duty. Some may also have been motivated by the promise that their voluntary philanthropic work would be part of their Christian duty to proceed to heaven.¹⁵⁹ Joseph Hall, who was honorary secretary of both the deaf and blind institutions in Swansea, was told this at a surprise party to celebrate the anniversary of being given his position in 1888. The Chairman of the Committee told him that 'there is a greater reward in store for one who, like Mr. Hall, has worked so well and so faithful. In the great day when God will reward his servants, HE will reward him.'¹⁶⁰ Just as the Institution was seen to be the only path of salvation for the uneducated deaf child with no concept of God, so it was promised as a route to heaven for the philanthropist, though this motivation would undoubtedly have gone side-by-side with more secular interests.

¹⁵⁶ *The Cambrian*, 21 December 1888.

¹⁵⁷ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Ninth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1856* (Swansea: Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1856).

¹⁵⁸ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1894* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1894)

¹⁵⁹ Roy Porter notes that this 'giving today was a fact a form of investment for the hereafter' for many who donated to eighteenth-century voluntary hospitals. Porter, 'The Gift Relation', 162.

¹⁶⁰ *The Cambrian*, 14 September 1888.

It is a demanding task to identify how the children of the Cambrian Institution reacted to their roles as objects of charity, as most sources on the subject were written by those in positions above them. If a child had a reaction other than gratefulness or passivity, it would probably not have appeared in the Annual Report or the local press. Much of the history of philanthropy has tended to avoid the question of the recipient's experience. However, it is an essential aspect of the dynamics of charity. Alan Kidd asks the historian to understand the recipient's perceptions as well as those of the philanthropist: the recipient did have the ability to read the situation and react accordingly.¹⁶¹ Borsay applies this question of experience to deaf schools, highlighting the distance between the 'idealised narratives' of charitable reports and the actual opinions and reactions of deaf children.¹⁶² The following chapters of this thesis will argue that the children had a capacity to react to the education and conditions in the Institution. However, few commented specifically on the mechanics of philanthropy.

This is not to say that dissenting opinion from pupils in institutions did not exist. Some former pupils of other institutions published their views, such as Hippolyte van Landeghem, a blind scholar with 'twelve years' experience in an Exile Institution.'¹⁶³ Her 1864 book *Charity Mis-Applied* presented a hostile attitude towards the very notion of voluntaryism. The book opens with a call to reject 'pharisaical charity, which degrades both recipient and giver' This signalled her dissatisfaction at the hierarchical structures and elite-centred management of charitable institutions, which he argued would be ameliorated by state involvement (which would put an end to 'making a market of our calamity') and day school structures, as well as more emphasis on Christianity.¹⁶⁴ Her work suggests that there was indeed a contemporary recognition of the power structures in special education institutions, suggesting that their organisation – both social and financial – was disproportionately beneficial to those in power than the children they proclaimed to help:

¹⁶¹ Kidd, 'Civil Society or the State?', 339

¹⁶² Borsay, 'Deaf Children', 88

¹⁶³ Hippolyte Van Landeghem, *Charity Mis-Applied: When Restored to Society, After having been Imured for Several Years in Exile Schools (Where they are Supposed to be Educated, the Blind and the Deaf and Dumb are found to be Incapable of Self-support; hence They Often Become Street Mendicants or Inmates of Workhouses. Why?* (London, 1864).

¹⁶⁴ Van Landeghem, *Charity Mis-Applied*, 2, 31.

The officers of the Exile school... have a voice in the management of the funds, and those for whom the funds were intended have none; so the funds come to be administered chiefly for the ease and the convenience of the managers and their friends.¹⁶⁵

Van Landeghem's book was an astonishingly blunt attack on the workings of philanthropy, and it is extremely difficult to tell if this opinion was an unusual stance or a typical one.¹⁶⁶ The author was obscure and the book was self-published: it would be unfair to suggest that all pupils held similar resentments towards their role as objects of charity.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, it represents an important counter-argument to the dominance of philanthropy.

Conclusion

The finance and publicity of the Cambrian Institution was organised and administrated by a small Committee comprised of influential and sometimes (but by no means exclusively) wealthy people, with far-reaching connections across the country. Voluntaryism was at the heart of the Cambrian Institution even after the introduction of state legislation for deaf children in the late nineteenth century. The Institution prided itself on its position as Wales' only (or later, largest) deaf school and placed great emphasis on the benevolent acts of its philanthropists. This charity in effect kept the Institution afloat: the Cambrian Institution appreciated the financial

¹⁶⁵ Van Landeghem, *Charity Mis-Applied*, 30.

¹⁶⁶ A minor discussion of the social effects of charity took place at the Conference of Head Masters and Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 1885 in the context of a discussion of state aid. Mr Schonheil, the headmaster of the Jews' Deaf and Dumb Home in London (one of the first to introduce pure oralism) argued that 'the deaf and dumb have been looked upon as objects of charity, because they were considered unfit to take their place in society'. This argument supported his own opinion that deaf people should 'be educated as to take their place by the side of normal people to most intents and purposes of life'. Mr Barrett of the Margate institution countered that, whilst Schonheil said that 'charity is cold', 'I know that neglect is colder'. Benjamin St. John Ackers, 'The State in Relation to the Deaf', discussion in *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 1-3 July, 1885* (Margate: W. H. Allen, 1886), 113-16.

¹⁶⁷ Little is known about Van Landeghem, however he is discussed briefly in H. Tilley, 'Frances Browne, the "Blind Poetess": Toward a Poetics of Blind Writing', *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 3:2 (2009), 147-161.

gains and publicity which came from being associated with the town's social elite. It also benefitted from the national networks of funding which they could create. Yet recent historiography has cast a questioning eye on Victorian philanthropists' claims to selfless humanitarianism. Many were undoubtedly lured by the social status and religious credentials which came with a position on the Committee. The philanthropists also introduced a complex series of political and religious connections into the school which, as seen in the conflict between Principal Melville and his committee, could create tension and hostility amongst each other.

The decisions made by these philanthropists may not always have affected the children's day-to-day lives, but they set the foundations for life at the school and established the social environment of the Institution. Perhaps most importantly, philanthropists shaped public perceptions of the deaf children and of deafness itself. The publicity material of the Cambrian Institution presented its inmates as helpless and tragic figures struggling with an affliction that denied them access to religion or society at large. This vision of the deaf child was permeated through Annual Reports and newspaper articles, and most explicitly at public demonstrations, which symbolised the social position of the children as objects of pity and spectacle. This has led a number of historians to question whether charitable work can be interpreted as a form of social discipline, a subtle way of reinforcing existing social divisions and associating deafness with pity and – at least before their education – savagery. Every decision made by the Committee, no matter how small or inconsequential, would have affected the children in some way, whether directly or as a product of the attitudes being fostered. Moreover, the issues highlighted in this chapter remind the historian of the gulf between the profile of the Institution disseminated to the public and the actual day-to-day activity in the school. The next chapter will begin to address the latter, examining the school's attitudes to concepts which interfered far more directly with the children's lives: oralism and eugenics. Like the many different aspects and consequences of philanthropy, the results were complex and ever-changing.

Chapter 5

Oralism, Eugenics and the Medicalisation of Deaf Children

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb educated its pupils against a rapidly changing set of ideas in special education, and in disability and deafness more generally. In particular, two interrelated discourses were visible in the Institution, ever-present as a topic of discussion but only occasionally adopted as practice. These were the oral method of deaf education and the eugenics movement. Both of these themes (introduced in Chapter 2) heavily informed debate about the education of deaf children throughout the late nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. The ‘pure oral’ interpretation of deaf education advocated the abandonment of sign in classrooms, which was thought to hold back deaf integration to hearing society and frequently equated to savagery. Meanwhile, many in the scientific and medical professions were expressing fears about the British race, with disability cast as a ‘defect’ which could damage the future of the supposedly ailing British stock. The eugenics movement, which rose to prominence in the early twentieth century, provided a mouthpiece to articulate these racialised and class-based concerns. Oralism and eugenics shared an evolutionary slant and normalizing ideology which made them more than compatible with each other. Recently, a number of historians have pointed out this link. They have criticised oral teachers’ dismissal and suppression of any kind of deaf community and its language, as well as the general failure of the system to even succeed its main goal – enabling deaf children to write and speak English.¹

Chapter 2 introduced Britain’s relationship with oralism, which varied according to place and preference. There was, in a number of schools, wholesale adoption of the method after the conclusions of the 1880 Milan Congress, and the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c. Examples include the

¹ See, for example, Jan Branson and Don Miller, *Damned for their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled* (Washington, D. C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2002); Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003); Oliver Sacks, *Seeing Voices: A Journey into the World of the Deaf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

London School Board's day classes, and a number of residential institutions. Elsewhere there was continuing resistance, such as in Scotland, where Iain Hutchison notes that, in 1895, only 16% of Scottish deaf pupils were taught by the 'pure oral' method, as opposed to 80% in England.² This chapter hopes to introduce the complex role of oralism in the Cambrian Institution, illustrating the heated debates and multiple interpretations that characterised the oralism question. Its records - most significantly the collection of letters sent by principal Benjamin Payne - reveal an open but questioning, and frequently contradictory, attitude to the values and ideology of oralism. The school remained opposed to 'pure oralism' and regularly offered criticism to those who wanted to see it applied, but oral learning was discussed and trialled, and there were hints at its increasing influence. The chapter will also call for a more detailed interpretation of the role of eugenics in deaf education. Some of the Institution's attitudes and policies, such as increasing concern with recording the deaf population and intermarriage, were arguably informed by eugenic desires to eradicate deafness. Yet despite appearing in publicity material, in other ways the school cast doubts upon notions of a eugenic interpretation of deaf children. Finally, it also reacted to the increasing role of the medical profession in special education and the construction of deaf children as patients, but again was uncertain about the implementation of this medical model in the Institution.

This chapter will argue that, in order to understand the complexity of the situation, the historian needs to consider the implications for pupils, alongside the far more widely-documented opinions of educators and philanthropists. Payne's letters provide clues to the effects on the individual children's lives, whilst elsewhere, deaf newspapers reveal resistance to oralism's destructive effects on the deaf community. Though these deaf voices are hard to find, and in some cases require careful reading of institutional sources, they help to reveal the damaging effects of oralism and, crucially, the response and resistance from the deaf people whose lives it affected. Added to this, the ever-changing responses of the staff of the Cambrian Institution to the discourses of oralism and eugenics also acted as an example of the autonomy of Institutions to react to dominant discourses in special education. Whilst the Institution responded to

² Iain Hutchison, 'Oralism: A Sign of the Times? The Contest for Deaf Communication in Nineteenth-century Scotland', *European Review of History*, 14:4 (2007), 493.

local and national dialogues of oralism and eugenics, it may not have implemented them fully in practice. Focusing on response and debate will help reveal the complexity of oralism and eugenics, not just in the Cambrian Institution, but across Britain.

A fractured relationship with oralism

Until the 1930s, when a new oralist headmaster was installed, the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb never formally practised the oral method of deaf education.³ Its pupils were taught using a mixture of articulation and signs which varied from pupil to pupil. Yet from the outset, teaching deaf children to speak was on the agenda. The report in *The Welshman* in 1847, which detailed the public meeting to establish the school, described the event's customary display and examination of deaf children (the subjects here being a 16-year-old pupil at the Yorkshire Institution and a former pupil of the London Asylum). After answering a question fingerspelled to him by Principal Charles Rhind, one of the children pronounced vowels whilst placing his fingers on Rhind's throat to 'feel the muscles that were in operation in the pronunciation of articulate words.' The reporter noted the audience's fascination at 'this wonderful display of man's conquests over the difficulties and defects of nature.'⁴ The normalizing processes of oralism – casting deafness as a 'defect' which must be corrected – was visible from the beginning, and was here used as a key facet of the public spectacle of deaf education explored in Chapter 4.

The position of the Institution changed over time. It appears to have varied, partly according to the preference of the headmaster. Principal B.H. Payne (headmaster from 1876 to 1914) placed himself in the lineage set by Rhind of using 'oral, with other, methods'. However, the years between focused mostly on manual teaching.⁵ Principal

³ Victor Golightly, "'Speak on a finger and Thumb': Dylan Thomas, Language and the Deaf", *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 10 (2005), 73-97, 75.

⁴ *The Welshman*, 5 February 1847.

⁵ West Glamorgan Archive Service [WGAS], E/Cam 5/3Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Kinsey, 8 December 1896.

Alexander Molison (1862 to 1875) made his attitudes towards oralism known in a letter to *The Cambrian* newspaper in 1874, where he criticised a previous article in the newspaper which had proclaimed ‘the recent discovery of a new method by which dumb persons can hold communication with each other’. Molison wanted to inform readers that oral methods were not, in fact, new, but had ‘always been known amongst teachers of the deaf and dumb, consequently it is no new discovery’. This almost certainly referred to the early methods of Thomas Braidwood and Joseph Watson, who had taught speech.⁶ Molison felt the need to reassure the school’s supporters ‘that they are not supporting an old fashioned and exploded system of teaching the deaf and dumb.’ He outlined his doubts that articulation produces only ‘very feeble and imperfect indications for the words uttered’, and is largely unsuccessful for any deaf children other than those who had learned spoken languages before becoming deaf.⁷ The article was a reaction to the emerging support for oralism, coming six years before the decisions of the Milan Congress. Whilst his words do not confirm that the Cambrian Institution was entirely manualist at this time, they demonstrated the opinion of the Institution that teaching only speech would be amount to an insufficient education for deaf children.

The tenure of principal Benjamin Payne from 1876 to 1914 saw the oralism contest truly played out. Payne was one of few deaf headmasters in Britain, having lost his hearing through scarlet fever at ten years old.⁸ Deeply involved in the debates occurring amongst headmasters of deaf schools, he was a regular figure at the Headmasters’ Conferences organised for the heads of deaf institutions, and at times acted as its only deaf representative. At the 1877 conference, he used this position as a man who ‘for more than eighteen years had been most intimately associated with the deaf and dumb’ to highlight the specific requirements of the deaf community. He defended the ‘immense moral influence’ that manualist teachers possessed over their students. The report of the conference detailed this personal attack on oralism:

⁶ Patrick Beaver, *A Tower of Strength: Two Hundred Years of the Royal School for Deaf Children Margate* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1992), 32; Peter Jackson, *A Pictorial History of Deaf Britain* (Winsford: Deafprint), 52.

⁷ *The Cambrian*, 15 May 1874.

⁸ *Ephphatha* 1 (May 1896). 78.

the pantomimist [sign language teacher] did not bid a final good-bye to his pupil at the schoolroom door, but followed him into his walk in life... Did oralists do the like? No; they depended on others to do it for them, others who did not know half as much about the deaf and dumb as their teachers did, who could not communicate with them so well by any system, and whose influence over them was in the same small proportion.⁹

Payne's own experiences clearly informed his contribution to the debate, and oralism was here criticized solely for its failure to improve the lives of deaf children. It was a striking rejection of oral educators' inability to understand the workings of the deaf community, and an argument for the positive role of gestures, here referred to as 'pantomime'.¹⁰ Payne continued to attend the Headmasters' Conferences, but his arguments regarding oralism varied greatly. On one occasion in 1881, he doubled as a sign interpreter to deaf visitors at the conference. Yet he used his position as 'the only deaf-speaking member of the Conference' to *praise* the German pure oral system. At that conference, he addressed the prominent oralist St. John Ackers, thanking him 'on behalf of the deaf' for 'what he has indirectly done and desirous of doing'.¹¹ Thus, perhaps out of politeness or not wishing to appear out of line, he acted as a representative for the deaf community whilst simultaneously applauding the ideology intended to destroy it.

Payne oversaw the teaching of oral education to what were deemed the most able pupils, and its presence in the curriculum was not hidden. 'Articulation and lip-reading' appeared from the 1880s onwards under a list of subjects taught in the Institution's Annual Reports, and were on the curriculum before this.¹² Yet letters from Payne to his honorary secretary, Joseph Hall, reveal a deep anxiety about its

⁹ *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 24-26 July, 1877* (London: G. Hill, 1877), 104.

¹⁰ The comparison between sign language and pantomime had been made before, sometimes as an insult - indeed some modern deaf historians such as Susan Plann have spoken out against the medical model's historical portrayal of gestures as 'crude pantomime'. However, here it is used to refer to its expressiveness and nuance as a language. Susan Plann, *A Silent Minority: Deaf Education in Spain, 1550-1835* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 4.

¹¹ *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 22-24 June, 1881* (London: W. H. Allen, 1882), 138-9.

¹² Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Thirty-First Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1888* (Swansea: The Cambrian Steam Printing Works, 1888), 16.

efficiency. This uncertainty climaxed in 1879 with a lengthy discussion of the system's failings:

It has been admitted that articulation and lip-reading have generally failed ... that the time and means were found to be insufficient, that all pupils were not capable of developing the faculty of speech and acquiring the art of lip-reading, and that the manual means which were therefore resorted to eventually superseded the first in the affection and practice of the pupils.¹³

Oralism in its pure form appears to have been dismissed. It was costly, time-consuming and exclusionary, thus wholly unsuitable for a charitable institution for poor and uneducated children. The policy of the Cambrian Institution to take in children from all backgrounds contrasted heavily with the exclusionary attitude displayed by many oralist educators. For example, at a panel organised by the Association for the Oral Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb at the 1884 International Health Exhibition, W.B. Dalby – aural surgeon at St George's Hospital – admitted that he was unsure whether oralism would suit 'the labouring classes of the poorer sort' due to its expense.¹⁴

As discussed briefly in Chapter 2, preference for the 'combined system' was, of course, widespread, and it was not unusual for institutions to reject the universal adoption of oralism. Iain Hutchison's research notes the geographical differences between Scotland and England, where 'the old Scottish combined method' continued

¹³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B. H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 23 February 1879.

¹⁴ W.B. Dalby, 'Education of Incurably Deaf Children', *Conference on Monday, June 30, 1884 under the auspices of the Association for the Oral Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, International Health Exhibition, London* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1884), 6. The International Health Exhibition of that year appears hosted a debate about oralism's application to working-class children. William Van Praagh argued that the system should be available, but worried that pupils would 'imitate exactly the phraseology of those with whom they constantly associate, thus reproducing their error...' William Van Praagh, 'Oral Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb', *Conference on Monday, June 30, 1884 under the auspices of the Association for the Oral Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, International Health Exhibition, London* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1884), 5.

to be a preference, even whilst the oralism was gaining momentum.¹⁵ Yet Payne's conclusions in his letter suggest a more receptive attitude than first thought:

We have an oral class of eight. We are ourselves desirous of adding to it. When the Cambrian Institution is supported in the style of the oral schools of London articulation and lip-reading will be taught as extensively as subscribers may desire, compatibly with the education by other means of those who cannot profit from the first.¹⁶

Oral education appears to be encouraged as a matter of demand. Again, the issue of class influenced the proceedings, as wealthier parents with children supposedly able to succeed in articulation would be able to request oral education. Sign language was restricted to the 'other means' resorted to for the weaker pupils. This enthusiasm for oralism was not confined to his correspondence with Hall. The following year, Payne inquired for a student from the oralist teacher training school at Ealing to conduct his 'oral class' (though seemingly to no avail).¹⁷ In 1883, an assistant teacher was sent to the London Institution for Teaching Deaf Mutes by the Oral Method for two months, almost certainly with a view to putting her new skills to use when she returned to Swansea.¹⁸

Payne's attitudes to oralism presented a contradictory opinion; he wrote of oralism's many limits and failures, yet was looking to expand its teaching in the Institution. Many of his objections to the technique were about its practical application. A successful application of oralism was impossible because of the restrictions imposed by time and money. The Annual Report for 1884 showed a desire to continue with the

¹⁵ Hutchison, 'Oralism: A Sign of the Times?', 493.

¹⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B. H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 23 February 1879.

¹⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B. H. Payne to D. Buxton, 20 April 1880.

¹⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 15 October 1883. Her 'two months' special training in the oral method' was used as a recommendation in an employment reference nine years later. WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H.Payne to unknown recipient, 25 May 1892.

practice, but only when ‘we receive a considerable accession to the staff’.¹⁹ The barriers to oralism were occasionally linked to other factors. Payne wrote to Mr McCandlish of the Hull Institution to discuss the possibilities of both current and potential teachers to teach articulation. He worried that an applicant for the post of teacher from McCandlish’s institution would not be able to teach articulation, and pupils would not be able to lip-read him, due to ‘one side of the face being immobile’. Later, he expressed his concern that ‘one of our lady teachers is a little deformed, and cannot teach articulation’, thus any inspection of the Institution might ‘say our staff was inefficient if we pretended to do anything orally’.²⁰ This showed concern that any oralist programme for the Cambrian Institution would be insufficient, an argument made by linking it to another form of disability. This also reveals the influence governmental inspection had in oralist discourses in the Institution. His concern about teaching standards and oralism also took other forms. As the methods of pure oralism began to spread around the country in the late nineteenth century, Payne worried that unsatisfactory manualist teachers would lead to the appointment of ‘so-called “pure oral” teachers... as a reaction, and this will only be a calamitous change to the opposite extreme.’²¹ If the children were taught badly using manualist techniques, he thought, harmful and inefficient ‘pure oralism’ would be introduced in its place. Payne’s many different positions on oralism clearly took into account both practical and ideological considerations.

Overall, Payne’s criticisms of oralism seem far more sincere and numerous than his occasional flirtation with its methodology. Payne has earned a historical reputation as a campaigner for sign language and a critic of oralism, and fought against it using his position within the British Deaf and Dumb Association.²² He lent his support to the petition in favour of the ‘combined system’ over oralism, and criticised the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and the Dumb &c.’s championing of the pure oral

¹⁹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1884* (Swansea, 1884), 5.

²⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal’s Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to M. McCandlish, 18 March 1895; Letter from B.H. Payne to M. McCandlish, 26 March 1895.

²¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal’s Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to unknown recipient, 8 February 1896.

²² A.J. Boyce, *Deaf Lives* (Warrington: British Deaf History Society, 2001) cited in Neil J. Alderman, *Joseph and Mary: A Case Study in Deaf Family History* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2011), 81.

method.²³ The Institution clung to its use of manual methods even as calls to implement oralism grew louder as legislation for deaf education began to favour oralism, as seen in Chapter 2. Payne regularly rebuked requests for oralism, both from parents and officials in deaf education.²⁴ The appearance of oral schools in Wales in the 1890s (as mentioned in Chapter 3) proved a test for the Cambrian Institution's grip on their combined system, as some parents were given the choice to send their children to an oral school. An 1896 letter described how the Institution lost 'one or two bright children' to the new Cardiff Oral School for Deaf Children.²⁵ Cedric Moon has compiled stories such as that of one parent from Ferndale, who rejected the Cambrian Institution for his son in favour of the Cardiff school. This was partly due to problems with its location, but also as a result of his distrust of manualism – the parent had written to the Institution's Honorary Secretary, Joseph Hall, to request oral teaching.²⁶

Payne was also critical of the new oral schools in Wales, whose appearance signalled pressure to adopt the oralist system and created tension with government officials. The deputation from the Ystradfodwg School Board in 1894 - which was in part the foundation for the Porth Deaf and Dumb School mentioned in Chapter 3 - visited both the Bristol and Swansea institutions, complimenting the oralist system in place at Bristol but making no comment on the Cambrian Institution's combined method.²⁷ The Porth school's interpretation of oralism was subject to Payne's most vehement criticism, its appointment of a deaf teacher in an oralist post being 'a calamity to the young'.²⁸ Though this school only had a brief life and was clearly plagued with

²³ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Fifth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1902* (Swansea, 1902), 4; WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to , 6 February 1890 to B.H. Ackers; Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 128.

²⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Kinsey, 8 December 1896; WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 April 1907.

²⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 February 1896.

²⁶ Cedric J. Moon, *A Tale of Three Deaf Schools in South Wales* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2010), 58.

²⁷ Glamorgan Archives, ESBMT 121, Merthyr Tydfil School Board and Education Committee, Report of a Deputation to the Deaf & Blind Institutions at Bristol and Swansea, June 1894 (Ystrad-Rhondda: Thomas J. Davies, 1894).

²⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 June 1895.

difficulty, its appearance signalled a demand for the oralist system. Benjamin Payne represented perhaps the strongest anti-oralist voice in Wales, despite the Cambrian Institution's adoption of some oralist practices. Payne needed to respond to the increasing popularity of the oral method: he derided the damage it could cause, but felt the need to respond to pressures in his own school.

Manualism and oralism in the classroom

The divide between manualism and oralism was deeply pronounced in the Cambrian Institution, but it is rendered more complicated when considering the practical details of the techniques themselves. Neither 'manualist', 'pure oral' nor the 'combined method' had a distinct definition, and all varied according to practice. It is hard to place these methods in a classroom context due to the lack of sources, but some existing sources offer hints. An article in *The Journal of Larynology, Rhinology, and Otology* in 1902 detailed the educational methods used by the London School Board day classes, a flagship centre of the oralist method. Teachers began by 'training the organs' using breathing and facial movements, then introduced sounds of individual letters, the pupils placing their hands on the teacher's throat.²⁹ This method had an inordinate focus on learning speech, resulting in a very narrow curriculum. A transcript of a programme of oral classes taught by Joseph Babington Macaulay attests to this balance. Teaching in Paignton, South Devon, Macaulay taught some basic subjects such as history, arithmetic, geography and bible stories. Art was introduced later in the course. The programme was spread over ten years, with the time of oral learning reaching two hours a day by the eighth year, when most attention was focused on articulation, accents, simple sentences 'and here and there an attempt at more complex work.'³⁰ By year ten, the objective was to 'correct articulation, to temper redundant verbosity, and to encourage self-reliance in all things pertaining to education.'³¹ Macaulay's notes offer a window into the thought processes behind

²⁹ Atwood Thorne, 'The Provision in London for the Education of the Deaf', *The Journal of Larynology, Rhinology, and Otology*, 17 (1902), 668.

³⁰ Joseph Babington Macaulay, *Deaf and Dumb: A Transcript* (Paignton: W.A. Axworthy, 1892-98), 388.

³¹ Macaulay, *Deaf and Dumb*, 470.

oralism. Articulation was emphasised over other subjects, which was justified by emphasising the independence this would supposedly give the child.

When taught correctly, oralism could have the potential to work. Some success stories came out of oral institutions, which were presented to the public as proof of its success. Branson and Miller highlight the story of Abraham Farrar, born to a wealthy family in Yorkshire. He was educated privately by Thomas Arnold of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and became a hugely successful pupil who went on to study at Cambridge University. Farrar's achievements were publicised as a demonstration of oralism's ability to remove deaf children from the darkness and savagery associated with their affliction.³² Branson and Miller point out, however, that Farrar's extraordinary success, combined with privileged upbringing and education (with no contact with sign language), made him exceptional, an unrealistic poster child for the oralism movement.³³ Paddy Ladd describes the majority of oral school leavers as 'illiterate and emotionally crippled children', deprived of an education as well as their language and communities.³⁴

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb took in pupils from oral schools, many of whom knew little when they arrived. One pupil, who had been at a 'pure oral' school for eight and a half years, was given a test in 1908 on a variety of personal and school subjects. He was able to write his name and where he lived, and do some simple sums, but gave no answer at all for the more complex questions on maths, or whether he was born deaf. The religious questions, such as 'Who is our saviour?' and 'Have you a soul?' also went unanswered.³⁵ The boy was typical of the oral case which influenced Payne's distrust of the pure oral method: a 16-year-old pupil arrived after two and a half years in an oral school in London, only for Payne to find she 'knows absolutely nothing'.³⁶

³² Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 164-66. See also Mary Wilson Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society in Victorian England* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2010), 119.

³³ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 168.

³⁴ Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 126.

³⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, 17 January 1908. The test was written down in the letter book but no intended recipient is included. It is unclear how the boy would have been given the questions – it may have been administered orally or written down.

³⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 26 June 1900.

Moreover, even some oral educators recognised that deaf education without at least some sign-based learning was counter-productive. Macaulay used the manual alphabet only ‘to facilitate communication with others similarly afflicted, who have had no opportunity of adopting the oral method, but it is never used on other occasions.’³⁷ A very limited use of sign was allowed, but with severe boundaries, and with its inferiority stressed from the outset. A number of oralist educators also took this position. Branson and Miller point to major figures in the oralist movement such as Dr David Buxton and Reverend William Stainer, both of whom did not advocate an outright ban of sign language but lobbied for its recognition as unsuitable as a basis for education and insufficient as a primary language.³⁸ In many cases, oralism aspired to eliminate sign language, but even some of its most vocal advocates recognised the need for some form of sign. Institutions such as the Royal Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Poor in Margate struck a balance, using oral methods for three quarters of the children, reserving signs for pupils they deemed unable to succeed with the technique.³⁹ Boyce recalls how the Principal of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, when visiting the oralist Fitzroy Square training college in London, ‘fail[ed] to see how we can expect children to avoid using signs when they have no other language wherewith to express themselves.’⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, there were many who subscribed to the idea of the complete banning of signs, a position perhaps epitomised by the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c in 1889 (see Chapter 2). For Benjamin Payne, the Royal Commission left ‘a painful impression upon my mind’. ‘Certain teachers and writers refer to a “Pure Oral Method”’, he wrote to Ackers after its publication, ‘there is no such method.’⁴¹ Interpretations of oralism could therefore exhibit different degrees of essentialism.

The ‘manual’ and ‘combined’ methods could also vary, and no one interpretation existed of what constituted sign and how it could be used. Branson and Miller criticise ‘those historians who tend to see the history of deaf education as a simplistic division

³⁷ Macaulay, *Deaf and Dumb*, 286.

³⁸ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 173.

³⁹ Thorne, ‘Provision in London’, 669.

⁴⁰ Anthony J. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf, 1829-1979* (Doncaster: Doncaster M.B.C. Museums and Arts Services, c.1990), 44.

⁴¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to B.H. John Ackers, 6 February 1890.

between manualists and oralists'. Instead they argue that the use of signs could range from acceptance of deaf children's natural patterns of language, to methodological 'artificial languages' like those used by deaf educators in France and the USA.⁴² Likewise, Kyle and Woll stress the lack of historical work on the development of sign language.⁴³ Both have pointed to W.R. Scott's teachings as an oft-ignored example of attitudes towards signing in deaf education.⁴⁴ Scott, the Principal of the West of England Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, rejected articulation and placed himself in opposition to those schooled in the German method of pure oralism. In his 1844 book *The Deaf and Dumb: Their Education and Social Position*, he describes signs as an essential method of communication for deaf people: 'It is by gesture... that the uneducated Deaf-mute succeeds in his communication with the world', but 'it is far inferior to written or spoken language.'⁴⁵ Scott argued for a precise sign technique which must be used 'with judgement and circumspection', with signs linked to ideas and concepts, rather than 'arbitrary signs' which connect 'a word merely with a gesture.'⁴⁶ Scott's writings are a reminder of the varying approaches to the use of sign in the classroom: his signing may have been 'manualist' but they were far from permissive of all types of signed communication. Signs were to be specific and precise, and recognised as inferior to both spoken and written communication.

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb also showed this attitude towards signs, regulating and occasionally changing their use. In early years, the natural signs used by the pupils appear to have been allowed. When the school was visited in 1852 by Charles Baker, principal of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, he commented that its teachers should be more focused on learning a specific language. His main recommendation was a written English course, but he offered the same attitude towards signs seen in Scott's book:

⁴² Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 160.

⁴³ J.G. Kyle and B. Woll, *Sign Language: The Study of Deaf People and their Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 37.

⁴⁴ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 157; Kyle and Woll, *Sign Language*, 40.

⁴⁵ W.R. Scott, *The Deaf and Dumb: Their Position in Society, and the Principles of their Education, Considered* (London: Joseph Graham, 1844), 35-8.

⁴⁶ Scott, *Deaf and Dumb*, 42.

There is no separation of ideas into classes, such as produce the distinction of the parts of speech in perfectly formed language. One of the same sign indicates fearful, fear, and to fear, and that through all lessons, words and tenses.

For Baker, this did not help 'the poor natural language of the deaf and dumb'.⁴⁷ This was indeed typical of Baker, who allowed the use of signs but previously discouraged their 'unrestrained' use.⁴⁸

This restricted interpretation of sign language was carried on later in the Cambrian Institution as it developed its interpretation of a 'combined' system. The 'combined' system has been mentioned previously as a method of education; however, its use in the Institution fully reveals its complexity and varying interpretation. Benjamin Payne elaborated his thoughts on signs in an 1896 letter, in which he argued that that they could never replace speech. He expressed regret that there was not yet a nationally understood code of signs, and criticised the 'arbitrary' and incomplete codes that had been devised in France and the USA. 'In order, then, to serve all the purposes of life, the sign language would have be extended, codified, cultivated, &c. – and would lose in impressiveness and expressiveness.'⁴⁹ Sign, according to Payne, was an important part of deaf people's lives but could not, in its current state, be sufficient for education: finger-spelling, writing and (if possible) speech were needed to complete the child's education.

Signs, then, were allowed but discouraged. They were placed at the bottom of a linguistic hierarchy, with speech and writing both seen as preferable. The 1913 Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution explained this teaching method: the pupil was to 'speak, spell or write every communication before attempting to sign it.'⁵⁰ This

⁴⁷WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, Minute book, 15 January 1852.

⁴⁸ Anthony J. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf, 1829-1979* (Doncaster: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, 1990), 6.

⁴⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Stanley Wedgwood, 15 December 1896 .

⁵⁰ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Sixth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1913* (Swansea, 1913), 14.

suggested the ‘combined method’ in place at the Cambrian Institution was one built on a fundamental distrust of signs as a primary communication method. Like Scott and Baker, the Cambrian Institution viewed signs as a last resort for pupils deemed unable to learn speech, partly out of linguistic preference for the structure of written and spoken English. Teachers in oral classes pointed to consonants and vowels in succession to form words and sentences, which corresponded to the Institution’s desire to instil the process of structured language in its pupils. The ‘combined method’, therefore, was one which valued the importance of sign language as a method of communication between deaf people, but avoided it where possible, presenting speech, written language and the finger-spelling alphabet as preferable.

This desire to avoid sign language could occasionally be seen in the Cambrian Institution’s dealings with pupils’ home lives. ‘We do not teach our pupils to sign,’ Payne wrote to the father of a boy taking the oral class, ‘It is not the purpose for which they come to us.’⁵¹ A contest of speech against sign was visible, one which could spill into the children’s homes. Responding to her letter concerning the pupil, he wrote to a Miss Maclaran, ‘Will you kindly use your influence with her friends in getting them to communicate with her not by signs [original underlining] but orally, or by finger-spelling, or writing?’⁵² The request to avoid sign language at home was stressed frequently to parents and guardians, even whilst manual methods were continuing to be used in the school. Thus while it was permissive towards the use of signs compared to oralist institutions, the Cambrian Institution nevertheless constructed a linguistic contest of speech and writing versus sign.

Child and adult responses to oralism

Much has been written about the effects of oralism in the classroom and on wider educational policy. There has however been little attempt to uncover the children’s

⁵¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal’s Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B. H. Payne to Mr John Davies, 5 April 1878.

⁵² WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal’s Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B. H. Payne to Miss Maclaran, 10 January 1879.

own experiences of oralist methods. Whilst the Cambrian Institution was hardly an oral institution, its letter books reveal occasional resistance to oralism from the pupils, and reactions to the Institution's attempts to bring oralism into the home. Payne's letters to children's parents and friends asking them to use speech at home often revealed the pupils' reluctance to participate in their oral education. Concerns about the use of sign language by both children and their parents or friends were sometimes made explicitly clear: 'I found him confirmed in the habit of signing unnecessarily, at all times', wrote Payne to a parent. 'He is certainly making progress now, however, and I hope that no one who can speak or spell and write will ever use signs to him unnecessarily again.'⁵³ Though it is only implied, the letters reveal that, in the efforts to remove sign language from deaf children's lives, neither the pupils nor their parents were always compliant to the extent the Institution wished.

Despite this, the Cambrian Institution remained highly critical of pure oralism and the total banning of signs, and it appeared that its pupils agreed. It was noted that the former pupils of pure oral schools appreciated the comparative linguistic freedom on offer at the Cambrian Institution. One pupil 'took association with those who finger-spell, and her language has been improved by it, and her happiness enhanced.'⁵⁴ Added to this, correspondence from past pupils suggested that they had developed a rejection of oralism whilst at the school. A letter printed in the 1911 Annual Report criticised those in Swansea 'who suggested that the proposed system should be adopted in the school'. They 'must have neither a hair's breadth of knowledge nor experience among us the deaf and dumb who are far different from idiots or imbeciles'.⁵⁵ One should, of course, be wary of the limitations of this: it may have been inserted as a mouthpiece for the school's own opinions rather than the pupil's. Nevertheless, it suggests that an anti-oralist spirit was visible in the Cambrian Institution, its pupils unwilling to have their language fully taken away.

⁵³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B. H. Payne to John Davies, 26 April 1879.

⁵⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 13 March 1896

⁵⁵ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Fourth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1911* (Swansea, 1911), 16.

The work of Benjamin Payne's son, the Rev. Arnold Payne, also showed fervent opposition to oralism. Arnold Payne – who was hearing – grew up in the Cambrian Institution, later moving to become Chaplain to the Deaf Mission in Liverpool.⁵⁶ A speech he read at the Congress of the British Deaf and Dumb Association in 1903 used his experience of talking to deaf children who were educated on the pure oral system to wholeheartedly dismiss it as an educational system. He also argued against the devaluation of sign language: 'failure to express his thoughts in English in the case of a deaf-mute does not necessarily imply lack of mental development any more than failure to express his thoughts in a foreign language implies lack of mental development in a hearing person.'⁵⁷ He found that many oral pupils were unable to answer written questions on topics such as where they went to school.

Whilst there were indeed pupils who succeeded in their oral teaching, many had picked up finger-spelling instead. Arnold Payne's paper is noteworthy for directly taking into account the thoughts and feelings of the oral pupils rather than concentrating solely on their educational attainment or what was prescribed for them. One former oral pupil who now communicated through finger-spelling 'says he prefers it to lip-reading and articulation as a means of conversing. His father and mother, however, speak to him.' He then returned to his experiences at the weekly meetings of adult deaf people in Swansea, where he found that subjects such as politics, athletics and local affairs were discussed in sign by people educated by the manual or combined method.⁵⁸ A number of speakers at the meeting agreed with him, such as a Mr Agnew of Glasgow, who pointed out that ex-oral pupils in his town 'mixed freely with those taught by the sign manual method, and greatly enjoyed the sign language'.⁵⁹ Payne's paper was evidence of a growing dissatisfaction with the oralist movement because of its suppression of natural sign language and the limitations it placed on deaf people, who it was argued were perfectly capable of intellectual achievement without signs being taken away.

⁵⁶ Swansea Central Library, S 04 DFA, The Rev. A.H. Payne [son of B.H.], 'The Mental Development of the Orally and Manually Taught Deaf', A Paper read at the Congress of the British Deaf and Dumb Association in London, July 1903; Kate Oxley, *A Man with a Mission: by his Wife from his Papers and Diaries* (Stoke-on-Trent: Hill & Ainsworth, 1953), 127.

⁵⁷ Payne, 'Mental Development', 3.

⁵⁸ Payne, 'Mental Development', 12.

⁵⁹ Payne, 'Mental Development', 17.

Payne's findings fitted in with a strengthening anti-oralist movement emerging among deaf communities in Britain.⁶⁰ The first national conference of Adult Deaf and Dumb Missions and Associations was held in 1890 and spawned an organization, the British Deaf and Dumb Association. At the conference, founder Francis Maginn outlined its intention to defend 'the efficacy of the combined system' and 'defy the conclusions of the Milan conference and of similar packed conventions.'⁶¹ As Pemberton has detailed, deaf missionaries formed a group responding passionately against the programme of oralism recommended by the 1889 Royal Commission. The Royal Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb used St Saviour's Church - the first church devoted to services for deaf people - as a meeting place for a lobby group to express their disapproval.⁶² A petition – supported by Benjamin Payne – was given to King Edward VII to recognize signing in deaf education, signed by 1,000 deaf people.⁶³ Though oralism continued to spread across all outlets of deaf education, there was a clear resistance developing from adults as well as the deaf children taught under the method.

The responses of deaf adults are essential to a historical understanding of the effects of oralism. Oral teaching had a profound effect for deaf people, not just in classrooms, but in homes and communities. Their voices were of course rarely documented in institutional records or mainstream media, but the deaf newspapers being printed at the time provide evidence of reaction and debate. Only recently, though, have historians begun to utilize this important source. As Martin Atherton explains in his study of the deaf print media, newspapers offer vital insights into the lives and mindsets of deaf communities.⁶⁴ Some were written *for* deaf people by missionaries or

⁶⁰ Arnold Payne's paper clearly had a lasting impact. Four years later in 1907, the British Deaf and Dumb Association referred to the paper in the context of the ongoing battle for sign language: 'That the results [of oralism] have been disastrous was amply shown in the able paper read by the Rev. A. Payne at the 1903 congress.' London Metropolitan Archives LMA/4468/A/02/03/001, British Deaf and Dumb Association, *Annual Report* 1907, 8.

⁶¹ Brian Grant, *The Deaf Advance: A History of the British Deaf Association* (Edinburgh: Pentland Press, 1990), 11.

⁶² Neil Ashley Pemberton, 'Holiness, Civilisation and the Victorian Deaf: A Social History of Signing and Speech in late Victorian England, 1865-1895' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2004), 164-5.

⁶³ Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 128.

⁶⁴ Martin Atherton, 'Reading Between the Lines: The Value of Deaf Newspapers as Research Resources', *Deaf Worlds*, 19:3 (2003), 82. This is so far the only dedicated study of deaf newspapers in

churches, and consequently titles such as *Our Monthly Church Mission for the Deaf* and *Ephphatha* carried a religious and philanthropic outlook. Other newspapers contained articles written by deaf people, or were based around links to local deaf communities and schools. The first recorded deaf newspaper, the *Edinburgh Quarterly Messenger* was compiled by pupils of the Edinburgh Institution for the Deaf and Dumb from 1843-1845 and edited by its headmaster.⁶⁵

The newspapers revealed a varied and often passionate response to the spread of oralism. Both sides of the debate often found their way into print. The *British Deaf Mute* in July 1894, for example, carried a profile of the Association for the Oral Instruction for the Deaf and Dumb and an interview with William Van Praagh, director of the Training College for Teachers and the Normal School of the Association for the Oral Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. The interviewer asked Van Praagh to defend the technique despite 'the great majority of the deaf being so bitter against pure oralism'. Van Praagh replied, asserting that 'they have never been taught the benefits conferred by it; their teachers being ignorant themselves of the true principles of oral teaching.'⁶⁶ Yet an article in the following issue called 'Mediocrity' suggests that the interview caused a debate amongst its deaf readers. The author firstly defended the newspaper's decision to print the interview, reminding its readers that, 'We have no desire to criticize unduly the opinions advanced by those who have favoured us with interviews'. Though the article went on to highlight some positive sides of oralism, it then strongly criticized the oral schools' encouragement of its pupils to 'ignore their deaf brethren'.⁶⁷ Elsewhere, the 'Combined System' was held up as a successful model. *The British Deaf Monthly* in 1897 reprinted a pamphlet from the Glasgow deaf institution which criticised the results of oralism as ineffective and of little use for pupils after school life. A list of oralist educators - including Alexander Graham Bell and the heads of the two oralist training schools in London -

Britain, but they are also explored in Jackson, *Pictorial History*, 231; Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 52.

⁶⁵ Atherton, 'Reading Between the Lines', 83; Jackson, *Pictorial History*, 231. This appears to have been utilised at the Cambrian Institution, who printed their 1854 Annual Report in-house with help from the pupils. Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Seventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1854* (Swansea: Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1854).

⁶⁶ *The British Deaf-Mute*, 3:33 (1894), 113-4.

⁶⁷ *The British Deaf-Mute*, 3:34 (1894), 137.

were presented as 'names we seek in vain'.⁶⁸ Thus the newspapers revealed oralism's damaging effects on deaf communities, and provided a medium to take a stand.

Furthermore, some of these articles in deaf newspapers could protest against oralism in powerful and often humorous terms. A piece in *Our Monthly Church Messenger to the Deaf* in the 1890s, entitled 'I don't mix with the Deaf and Dumb', dealt with interactions between manually- and orally-educated deaf people. The author recalls the visit of orally educated deaf people to a Mission in detail and with biting sarcasm:

Then there was Miss Ivy, educated on the *Pure oral* System. Her folks tell us that we poor Deaf people, with our debates, services and social gatherings, classes, clubs, rambles, and keen interest in current topics, are 'buried alive' ... It does seem so funny to be told that to spell on our fingers or sign is 'so ugly', especially when we see Miss Ivy and her folks pointing about like excited setters, with an expression on their faces as if they were chewing fearfully hot potatoes.⁶⁹

The author is repeatedly told by the orally-educated deaf people he meets that he is somehow beneath them in 'social status'. Yet his response is to mock them, and contrast their elitism to the friendship and discussion he enjoys in his community. The article yielded a response in the following issue, in which a reader lamented 'how very ridiculous some of us are'. He argued, 'If only a little good fellowship could be intermingled, if only we could realize that hearts at least can be the same time - *If!* IF! IF!'⁷⁰ Though this may be an unusual or extreme example, it illustrates the fact that deaf people did not all passively accept the threat to their communities posed by oralism. Indeed, as Jonathan Rée points out, some communities may even have been

⁶⁸ *The British Deaf Monthly*, 6:65 (1897), 109.

⁶⁹ *Our Monthly Church Messenger to the Deaf*, 2 (no date), 120. It is unclear how realistic the orally-educated, elitist deaf people portrayed here would have been, but it has been noted by Rée that signs began to be a symbol of embarrassment to 'more respectable members of the deaf community'. Jonathan Rée, *I See a Voice: A Philosophical History of Language, Deafness and the Senses* (London: Flamingo, 1999), 236.

⁷⁰ *Our Monthly Church Messenger to the Deaf*, 2, 148.

unified by it: ‘the oralist opponents of sign language were helping to bring about exactly the kind of separate deaf society they had always wanted to prevent.’⁷¹

Other articles about oralism’s effects on deaf people surfaced in deaf newspapers. The *British Deaf Mute* in 1895 reprinted an American story of an orally-educated football team fumbling around the pitch and failing to communicate, whose ‘ignorance of the rules of the game... we can only attribute to nothing but the difficulty of explaining them orally to the players.’ The purpose of its inclusion, they wrote, was ‘to amuse our manualist friends and give our pure oralist friends food for thought.’⁷² The magazine also made clear its favour of signs by calling for a sign language dictionary. This would make learning the language easier and avoid the need to ‘painfully pick it up at church, in the lecture hall, or in a haphazard manner from our deaf friends.’⁷³ This article sparked yet another debate. A reader – who lost his hearing at twelve years old – disagreed and asked instead for the time and money to be spent ‘remedying the ignorance of the deaf’. Sign language, he wrote, was ‘the greatest living obstacle existing to the welfare of the deaf’, and ignoring it would force upwards a deaf person’s standards of communication.⁷⁴ Again, newspapers revealed a fierce and ongoing debate emerging amongst deaf people themselves. These newspapers indicate that oralism experienced criticism in the deaf community, or that it was drawing a deliberate wedge between manually- and orally-educated deaf people. Most importantly, they demonstrate that adult and children’s experiences could inform and effect each other: the anecdotes and debates in newspapers could relate to the authors’ childhoods, or developments in schools which concerned them. Whilst the newspapers did not represent the entirety of deaf discourse, they nevertheless confirm that oralism could affect all areas of deaf life.

By taking into account the opinions of those who were affected by oralism and campaigned against it, historical discussions of oralism become instantly more multifaceted than when it is viewed as a solely as a narrative of educational progress or of

⁷¹ Rée, *I See a Voice*, 231.

⁷² *The British Deaf Mute*, 4:40 (1895), 57.

⁷³ *The British Deaf Mute*, 3:35 (1894), 150.

⁷⁴ *The British Deaf Mute*, 3:36 (1894), 175.

institutional oppression. In England at least, a doctrine of pure oralism was being prescribed for the majority of deaf children, but there was capacity for resistance and response. Firstly, this could come from institutions, who could reject the total banning of manual communication, as exemplified by Benjamin Payne and his son in the Cambrian Institution. Secondly, it could come from pupils who, despite leaving little trace as authors, can be seen in records to respond to attempts to restrict their natural or preferred language. Finally, adult experiences can also help us understand the question of oralism, and articles in deaf newspapers suggest that deaf people could be critical and dismissive of oral education. The picture is further complicated by the wide variety of methods being used in deaf education. Institutions described as ‘pure oral’ may have resigned themselves to the fact that their pupils would undoubtedly use signs in some form. Those labelled ‘manual’ or ‘combined’ may have constructed a similar linguistic hierarchy which devalued sign language over speech or writing, something which was occasionally hinted at in the Cambrian Institution. The oralism question is perhaps best understood as a linguistic contest and a debate in which many could take part, not just the educators. The Cambrian Institution, with its varying ‘combined system’ pitched somewhere between manualism and oralism, exemplifies the complexity of the oralism debate, and the capacity of its pupils and Principals to respond to oralist ideas.

Eugenics, disability and education

The devaluation of sign language and the distrust of deaf communities was a central tenet of the rise of oralism in nineteenth-century deaf education. Its goal to integrate deaf people into hearing society often went hand-in-hand with a desire to halt the formation of deaf communities. As discussed in Chapter 2, oralism ran parallel to the eugenics movement, intending to assign its subjects with a pre-defined social position. However, this connection is made more complex when placed in an individual institutional context, to which this chapter will now turn its attention. Some oral educators carried outwardly eugenic motivations. The *British Deaf-Mute*’s aforementioned interview with William van Praagh, the director of the Training College for Teachers of the Normal School of the Association for the Oral Instruction

of the Deaf and Dumb, certainly suggests this. Asked why 'orally-taught deaf, after leaving school, seldom, if ever interest themselves in the welfare of their less fortunate brothers and sisters', he responded:

Your remarks are perfectly correct. The deaf, taught to speak, feels his superiority, and the more advanced he is in speech and lip-reading the more he feels inclined to ignore his affliction and mix with the hearing. The pure oralist ought to encourage this feeling.⁷⁵

Thus oralism's ability to divide and destroy deaf communities, far from being a side effect, appears to have been actively encouraged by some. Many oralists were hostile towards the very idea of a deaf community, and here van Praagh's implication was for deaf people to choose friends and partners outside of their 'affliction', preventing congregations of the deaf.

This stance made oralism potentially compatible with the emerging eugenics movement, which used a scientific framework to discuss issues of race. Francis Galton, who has subsequently been appointed the *de facto* leader of the movement, described it in 1904 as 'the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage.'⁷⁶ It is this broad definition which will be used here – the portrayal of the white, British race as an entity in danger of being weakened by the propagation of the 'unfit' of society. This sprawling group could encompass those deemed deficient in mental or physical ability, and stemmed largely from a generalised and prejudicial view of working class people. The remainder of this chapter will examine to what extent deafness was included in this discourse, examining the records of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and asking how deaf institutions fit into broad contemporary debates about eugenics.

⁷⁵ *The British Deaf-Mute*, 3:33 (July 1894), 114.

⁷⁶ Francis Galton, 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 10:1 (July 1904).

Eugenics is, of course, a problematic term in itself. It refers to a diverse set of political and scientific ideologies which varied in their extremity and influence. The work of the Eugenics Education Society and the *Eugenics Review* journal serve as historical records of the movement, but its members did not always agree, and its conclusions were mixed.⁷⁷ As we saw in Chapter 2, historians have begun to refute the idea that this change in attitudes was solely the result of a unified eugenics movement, instead attributing them to a wider set of social concerns and anxieties.⁷⁸ Despite this, eugenic ideas undoubtedly had some place in Victorian discourses of education and disability. Roy Lowe argues that eugenic theory is important to a historical understanding of education and has had a lasting impact. In particular, Lowe suggests, the issue of sex and domestic training became a key area for eugenic principles to infiltrate education, for example Caleb Williams Saleeby's proposal to teach girls the importance of motherhood to better the British stock, as opposed to 'lesser functions which some women now assume'.⁷⁹ Many involved in the eugenics movement saw education as an important tactic for disseminating its ideas. An article by the eugenicist John Russell in 1912, entitled 'The Eugenic Appeal in Moral Education', explained that sex education was vital to teach children to 'mate eugenically, and sometimes a duty not to mate at all'.⁸⁰ Though British education arguably did not always apply these values explicitly, it is important to note that they were part of educational discourse.

The general intrusion of eugenic concepts into deaf education deserves close and objective scrutiny. The most visible, and now notorious, example of eugenic interpretation of deafness is the case of Alexander Graham Bell. His warnings against the supposed spread of deafness chimed with those eugenicists voicing their fears about the decline of the race and the reproduction of the 'unfit'.⁸¹ Bell's 1883 article 'Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race', adapted from a talk

⁷⁷ The disagreement between biometricians and Mendelians, who had alternating explanations of how hereditary traits were supposedly passed on, is a good example of this. See N. Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 119.

⁷⁸ See Matthew Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy and Social Policy in Britain, c.1870-1959* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 20.

⁷⁹ Roy Lowe, 'The Educational Impact of the Eugenics Movement', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 27:8 (1998), 656.

⁸⁰ John Russell, 'The Eugenic Appeal in Moral Education', *The Eugenics Review*, 4:2 (1912), 136-140.

⁸¹ Rée, *I See a Voice*, p. 223; Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture*, 118; Harlan Lane, *When The Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (New York: Random House, 1984), 353-56.

given at the National Academy of Sciences in New Haven, Connecticut, set out his outwardly eugenic views. Bell outlined his opinion that deafness could be inherited through generations, and argued for a number of measures which he thought would remove deafness from humanity. His main suggestion was legislation to forbid congenitally deaf people from marrying, which would ‘go a long way towards checking the evil’.⁸² Bell’s suggestions also aimed to change deaf education to achieve these eugenic outcomes, through education in small day classes, avoiding the employment of teachers who were themselves deaf and, of course, removing sign language entirely from the classroom.⁸³ Bell’s work was centred upon America; however it reached Britain and was regarded favourably by members of the eugenics movement, including Francis Galton.⁸⁴ As we saw in Chapter 2, his ideas permeated educational discourse in the UK through the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c., of the United Kingdom, which wrote favourably of his research in their final Report.⁸⁵

Thus the concepts and ideas of eugenics are important to an understanding of Victorian disability and special education. However, the attitude of the eugenics movement specifically towards deafness has rarely been discussed in detail. Barrie Newton’s article for the Galton Institute in 2007 provides a good overview of the very complex scientific and eugenic discussion surrounding deafness. He notes the impact of Bell’s research in the United Kingdom, but argues that instead of becoming the consensus, it sparked a long-running debate. Bell took the very basic position that deafness was passed systematically through generations, which was subsequently challenged by the rediscovery of Mendelism by eugenicists at the turn of the twentieth century, a methodological divide which itself caused rifts between members of the movement.⁸⁶ Indeed, as Pemberton points out, oralists themselves were divided over

⁸² Alexander Graham Bell, ‘Memoir Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race: A Paper Presented to the National Academy of Sciences at New Haven, November 13, 1883’ (1883) <http://www.archive.org/details/cihm_08831> Accessed 10 August 2012, 45.

⁸³ Bell, ‘Memoir’, 48.

⁸⁴ Brian Newton, ‘The Plight of the Deaf in Britain, USA and Germany from 1880s to 1930s: a comparison of the Social, Educational and Political Links with the Eugenics Movements’, *The Galton Institute Newsletter*, 62 (2007), 3.

⁸⁵ Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c., of the United Kingdom [RCBDDO] (1899), 349.

⁸⁶ See Stepan, *Idea of Race in Science*, 119.

the question of whether deafness was passed on hereditarily through generations, and deaf missionaries heavily criticised the idea.⁸⁷ Newton argues that a lecture by Dr James Kerr Love of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary (whose ideas on education will be discussed later in this chapter) was influential in convincing medical professionals, eugenicists and educators that the acquiring of deafness was far more complicated than simply a hereditary gene passed down from parent to child. He treated hereditary inheritance of deafness as a problem, but it was only one of several ways of acquiring deafness, and the marriage of deaf parents would not necessarily produce a deaf child. Diseases such as syphilis and meningitis were also cited as possible causes.⁸⁸ Newton rightly cites this example as a reminder that eugenic interpretations of deafness varied greatly and could be swayed by arguments such as Kerr Love's.

Eugenics and the Cambrian Institution

The records of the Cambrian Institution illustrate the difficulty of applying eugenic ideas to deaf education, as they express a number of different perspectives and opinions. Occasionally, the publicity material of the Cambrian Institution espoused some of the key methods of social control and normalization associated with Alexander Graham Bell and elements of the eugenics movement. The section of the Annual Reports titled 'Hints to Parents and Friends of Deafmutes' made this bluntly clear. Under 'Guidance after leaving school' was written: 'Warn him in time against forming any attachment to a born-deaf person of the opposite sex, and do not be persuaded that a union with "one like himself" is the best for him.'⁸⁹ This sentiment suggested that the future partnerships of deaf pupils needed to be regulated, and not just the more general social grouping and interaction of deaf children. Other aspects of publicity material discussed further the motivations behind this anti-intermarriage position. The Report for 1884 discouraged intermarriage 'even setting aside the question whether such unions do not tend to the perpetuation of the infirmity.'⁹⁰ Whilst this remains ambiguous as to whether the objective was to avoid this

⁸⁷ Pemberton, 'Holiness', 148, 168.

⁸⁸ Newton, 'Plight of the Deaf', 4-6.

⁸⁹ Annual Report 1888, 18. This information was repeated in every Annual Report hereafter.

⁹⁰ Annual Report 1888, 5

‘perpetuation’, it was undoubtedly responding to contemporary perceptions of deafness as an ‘infirmity’ passed on through generations.

Principal Benjamin Payne shed further light on the school’s position at the 1885 Headmasters’ Conference, where the issue of intermarriage was discussed. ‘I have always set my face dead against intermarriages ... In my own district I have created a strong sentiment against intermarriage.’ Payne recognised that deaf institutions could be the foundation for ‘friendly acquaintance’, but nevertheless discouraged marriage.⁹¹ Again, the need is seen to address fears of its pupils forming intimate relationships. Marriage acted as an important tool of much contemporary eugenic theory. Whilst recognising that not all involved in the movement directly attempted to manipulate who could get married to whom, Freeden notes the centrality of marriage to ‘the hope of eugenists of all creeds to subordinate human behaviour to social considerations’.⁹² The argument that marriage between deaf people must be prevented was sometimes discussed in explicitly racial terms. In 1890, the *Deaf and Dumb Times* reprinted a cutting from the *Portsmouth Evening News* warning against,

...the appalling increase [of deaf intermarriage]... the offspring of such unions being almost invariably similarly affected. Benevolence did humanity an ill turn when it encouraged deaf mutes to marry and so laid the foundations of a second afflicted part of the race.⁹³

Rather than passively accepting the newspaper’s report, the writers in the deaf newspaper simply shrugged it off, adding that ‘it is ridiculous to see how excited

⁹¹ *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 1-3 July, 1885* (Margate: W. H. Allen, 1886), 90. The remark came during Payne’s own paper, ‘Religious Privileges for the Deaf and Dumb’, in which he argued that religion should be available for all deaf children, and that manualism was the best system for to disseminate religious knowledge immediately. Intermarriage was discussed in this context, with Payne making the case for special services for deaf children: ‘I do not believe that special services must necessarily lead to [intermarriages].’

⁹² Michael Freeden, ‘Eugenics and Progressive Thought’, *Historical Journal*, 22:3 (1979), 656. The desire for state intervention did make an appearance in some works of eugenic thought. Galton had outlined his utopian society in which eugenically ‘superior’ youths were introduced to partners and married. Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 66.

⁹³ *Portsmouth Evening News*, unknown date, cited in *The Deaf and Dumb Times*, 10:1 (March 1890), 101.

some of the provincial newspapers get over odd news, such as marriages of deaf and dumb couples, &c.’⁹⁴ The debate continued amongst staff of deaf institutions, some of which actually refuted the link between marriage and hereditary deafness. Responding to Alexander Graham Bell’s warnings about intermarriage, the Midland Deaf and Dumb Institution in Derby wrote to the *Deaf and Dumb Times*: ‘Whatever may be the result of inter-marriage of deaf-mutes in America, I can say that as regards Derbyshire in 1888, there was no one deaf-mute child where the parents were genuine deaf-mutes.’⁹⁵

In the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, this preoccupation with the hereditary nature of deafness was visible in some aspects of its publicity material. In the 1890s, the Annual Reports were including full details of each pupil’s cause and origin of deafness, and additional notes such as whether the child had deaf family members or, in some cases, whether their parents were related.⁹⁶ The Reports tried to make clear the ambition to locate and calculate cases of deafness across Wales using census data, which the school obtained and processed.⁹⁷ From 1904 these were accompanied by detailed mathematical calculations to approximately estimate how many deaf children were in each region of Wales.⁹⁸ One reason for the appearance of this data was to locate children who would benefit from an education at the Institution. With the 1893 Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act making education of deaf children compulsory, Payne expressed frustration that ‘the school authority seems to be lax’ in making sure children were educated.⁹⁹ Yet the statistics could also be used to portray deafness as something in need of curing and

⁹⁴ *The Deaf and Dumb Times*, 10:1 (March 1890), 101.

⁹⁵ *The Deaf and Dumb Times*, 1:2 (1889), 5.

⁹⁶ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fiftieth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1897* (Swansea, 1897), 17. This information was repeated every year onwards.

⁹⁷ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Seventh Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1904* (Swansea, 1904); WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal’s Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to The Secretary, Census Office, Millbank, London, 25 March 1904.

⁹⁸ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Fifty-Seventh Annual Report 1904*.

⁹⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal’s Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to The Secretary, Census Office, Millbank, London, 25 March 1904. It is worth noting that Swansea School Board were attempting to report on deaf children for education: a minute in February 1893 instructed the Attendance Officer to ‘report as to the number of [deaf, dumb, blind and weak intellect] children in their districts, and whether they are receiving instruction.’ Swansea Central Library S731.1, Swansea School Board Minute Book, 22 February 1893.

decreasing. The goal of this method of categorisation was, according to the 1914 'Statistical Notes' section, to 'ascertain the relative increase or decrease of one or the other section of the class', understand the causes of deafness, 'and so far indicate the appropriate measures of prevention'.¹⁰⁰

When used in this way, statistics could be a crucial tool for identifying bodies labelled as against the norm. Lennard Davis has argued that the development of statistics contributed greatly to the modern social construction of disability. By identifying the average body or the average level of intelligence, it became easier to label disabled people as deviant from the norm.¹⁰¹ Newly-established statistical norms could inform a social construction of normality which excluded those who fell outside it.¹⁰² Key figures within the eugenics movement developed new ways to manipulate data to draw racial conclusions. Daniel Kevles explains the 'infant science of statistics' was central to Francis Galton's conclusions that social and mental qualities were inherited through generations. The 'bell curve' model, in which populations are understood according to an agreed mean, provided a framework to analyse deviants from a defined norm.¹⁰³ As Richard Soloway explains, the 'often contradictory conclusion about the state of the race' which eugenicists came out with are far more revealing than the often flawed data itself.¹⁰⁴

Perhaps the most cited example of this is the figures by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration which appeared to show military recruitment figures dropping due to weak physical condition, an alarming sign after the failure of

¹⁰⁰ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Seventh Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1914* (Swansea, 1914), 25.

¹⁰¹ Lennard J. Davis, 'Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century' in Lennard J. Davis. (ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), 14.

¹⁰² Waltraud Ernst, 'The Normal and the Abnormal: Reflections on Norms and Normativity' in Waltraud Ernst, *History of Normal and the Abnormal: Social and Cultural Histories of Norms and Normativity* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

¹⁰³ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995), 12.

¹⁰⁴ Soloway, Richard, 'Counting the Degenerates: The Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17:1 (1982), 138.

the Boer War, as introduced in Chapter 2.¹⁰⁵ Yet this oft-repeated narrative also reminds us of the limits of this interpretation. Vanessa Heggie argues that, far from being a new and unified invention, the idea of a degenerating British population fed into ‘dozens of contemporary fears and gut-instinct concerns about urbanization and the emancipation of the working-class and of women’.¹⁰⁶ For Heggie, the idea of ‘degeneration’ was too vague to have any genuine impact on public policy. The image of the eugenics movement as an influential and singularly focused group, this suggests, is overestimated. One should therefore be careful when labelling specific aspects of policy or education as explicitly eugenic.

To this extent, the records of the Cambrian Institution’s publicity material raise further issues about the role of eugenics in deaf education. Occasionally, the Institution overtly tried to intervene in what it saw as the potential for the hereditary inheritance of deafness. This resulted in an occasionally hostile attitude towards children coming from deaf families. In a letter between the Principal and Honorary Secretary, a boy from ‘a very deaf and dumb family’ was discussed. It was explained that, ‘Defect and disease are inherited and found in other branches of the family. In these cases illiteracy and positive inability to learn are observed.’ A close eye was clearly being kept on the boy, with the staff worrying about inheritance both of deafness and his ‘inability to learn’.¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere, the notion that the child might have other deaf members of the family could raise eyebrows amongst the staff and Committee.¹⁰⁸ For example, a clerk from the Merthyr School Board was warned by Honorary Secretary Joseph Hall that ‘Deafness often proceeds from the consanguinity

¹⁰⁵ Soloway, ‘Counting the Degenerates’, 137.

¹⁰⁶ Vanessa Heggie, Lies, Damn Lies, and Manchester’s Recruiting Statistics: Degeneration as an “Urban Legend” in Victorian and Edwardian Britain’, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 63:2 (2007), 215.

¹⁰⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 18 January 1900.

¹⁰⁸ A 20-year old girl was rejected in 1864, both because of her age and the fact that ‘another member of the family is deaf and dumb. In 1905 a parent was asked whether there was another deaf child in the family ‘for our statistical notes’. WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, Minute book 14 May 1864; WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal’s Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs James, Sep 13 1905.

of parents or grandparents... if their children are not so afflicted the next generation will be.’¹⁰⁹

Yet it is important to note that the appearance of eugenic themes in the school’s records might not have corresponded wholly with its everyday practice. More specifically, the public face of the Institution - which flagged warnings of intermarriage and social interaction - may well have differed from the day to day life of the school. The Institution may well have been under pressure to conform to the emerging fears of intermarriage and deaf communities, which were addressed through publicity material such as Annual Reports. Yet the discouragement of intermarriage and social interaction, which the Reports appeared to recommend, was only occasionally enforced in the school’s running. Certainly, the children were warned not to interact with those of the opposite sex; a parent was advised in an 1899 letter to avoid intercourse between a young boy and girl which had to be restricted only to conversations about ‘the business of their lessons.’¹¹⁰ Exchanges between the Principal and Honorary Secretary also detailed the ‘anxiety’ caused by developing male and female relations in the Institution.¹¹¹ Yet these warnings were not frequent, and though they showed a desire to maintain a barrier between genders, this may not have overtly been influenced by the fear of potential intermarriage. Moreover, social relationships could develop between sexes, in defiance of these supposed boundaries. Chapter 7 will demonstrate that, whilst heavily regulated, the pupils of the Institution did develop social lives and a community of deaf people was developing in Swansea, often with the school at the centre.

Few practical steps were taken to enforce the avoidance of intermarriage in the Cambrian Institution. In 1890, Payne told the National Conference of Adult Deaf and Dumb Missions and Associations that ‘my opinion on intermarriage has undergone a

¹⁰⁹ Glamorgan Archives, ESBMT/123, Merthyr Tydfil School Board and Education Committee, Letter from Joseph Hall to E. Stephens, 12 March 1895.

¹¹⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to unknown recipient, 7 October 1899.

¹¹¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 August 1908.

change', and this time argued in favour of it.¹¹² A deaf couple, who met at the school, married in 1904, with Rev. Arnold Payne conducting the ceremony and Principal Payne translating the service into sign.¹¹³ The *Western Mail* reported the 'unusual scene' to its readers and interviewed the couple when they returned from their honeymoon, the groom even mentioning the Cambrian Institution's allowance of sign language: 'We can 'talk' on our fingers quite as quickly as people can talk who have speech. I shall never have to complain of my wife's tongue, as I suppose some husbands have.'¹¹⁴ The public face of the Cambrian Institution, which felt the need to prove itself hostile to intermarriage and the hereditary spread of deafness, could sometimes differ from everyday experience.

Another important debate which the Cambrian Institution entered was the linking of deafness with forms of mental disability. The impact of the eugenics movement's statistical interpretation of disability, argues Davis, allowed 'the loose association between what we now call disability and criminal activity, mental incompetence, sexual license and so on.'¹¹⁵ The impact of eugenic ways of thought gave prominence to finding these qualities in children, and allowed these categories to become merged together. Borsay notes the debates and campaigns which forced educators to try and distinguish children deemed 'feeble minded' into categories, separating the sub-group of 'idiots' from 'backward children'.¹¹⁶ As the Cambrian Institution began to increase its number of pupils, the Committee felt the need to screen them for 'mental capacity'. Those who were deemed below the requirement could have their fees increased or be rejected outright.¹¹⁷ Several instances occurred of children sent to the Institution who were deemed not be deaf at all but 'obviously of very defective intelligence.'¹¹⁸ In 1876 a new school rule was put in place which deemed that, 'No child deficient in intellect or subject to fits or labouring under any infectious or contagious disorder

¹¹² *The Deaf and Dumb Times*, 10:1 (March 1890), 101.

¹¹³ *Western Mail*, 6 April 1904.

¹¹⁴ *Western Mail*, 18 April 1904.

¹¹⁵ Davis, 'Constructing Normalcy', 18.

¹¹⁶ Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 102.

¹¹⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 22 April 1864; 1 September 1864.

¹¹⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 4 August 1869.

shall be admitted into the institution.’¹¹⁹ Pupils were increasingly checked for the potential of supposed feeble-mindedness.

Yet the Institution could also criticise the linking of mental, sensory and physical disability. The Technical Instruction Officer of Newport wrote to the Institution in 1907 to suggest that all ‘defectives’, which could encompass both deafness and those deemed ‘feeble-minded’, should be sent to the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, a proposal the Institution dismissed.¹²⁰ The staff also rejected outright any idea of a hereditary link between deafness and mental deficiency. An 1852 report on the school by Charles Baker, headmaster of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, criticised its management in a number of ways – in particular, domestic issues and the organisational impact of the Institution’s recent move to Swansea – but agreed with principal Charles Rhind that ‘the natural intelligence of the pupils’ would eventually lead to educational success.¹²¹ Building on this, Principal Benjamin Payne later wrote a letter to his Honorary Secretary completely dismissing the contemporary categorisation of the ‘defective’:

I do not recognise the existence of a specific sub-class of mentally or physically defective children among the Deaf, excepting the blind Deaf ... I have taught some 300 deaf children and have never found idiocy, imbecility or feeble-mindedness conjoined with total deafness.¹²²

Payne felt the need to address contemporary fears of deaf people as ‘feeble-minded’ but his comments show resistance to what were clearly pressures to understand deaf people in this way. He even blamed the rise of oralism for the cases of deaf people deemed ‘feeble-minded’. The oral technique for him failed to reach ‘the very back of dull children’s understanding’ like sign language could. ‘Then’, he wrote, ‘comes the cry of feeble-mindedness... and the demand for special schools for the “poor Rejects”.’

¹¹⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 12 September 1877.

¹²⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal’s Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 20 November 1907.

¹²¹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 15 January 1852.

¹²² WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal’s Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 27 April 1905.

His final statement confirmed his opposition to the group classification of the general ‘defective’:

The worst thing that could be done for these unfortunates is to herd them together, apart from their brighter brethren, association with whom means so much to them in the absence of sympathetic teaching.¹²³

Payne’s comments showed an awareness of the need to respond to eugenic attempts to categorise deaf people as ‘defective’. Whilst the Cambrian Institution occasionally depicted its pupils in need of regulation for their disability, private doubts and internal debate were happening behind the scenes.

The deaf schoolchild as medical patient

The newly-formed categorisation of disabled children as ‘defective’ should perhaps be seen less as a shift to specifically eugenic ways of thinking, and more as a product of the increased medical profiling of pupils of special education institutions. As explained in Chapter 2, the 1907 Education (Administrative Provisions) Act expanded the medical profession’s role in special education by adding a Medical Branch to the Board of Education. Medical diagnosis of schoolchildren began to be publicly available, and the School Medical Service produced regular reports. The Cambrian Institution remained a voluntary body, but it was immediately affected by these developments. As we have seen, the School Medical Service was an embodiment of the increased involvement of the state in medical provision for schoolchildren. However, it also signalled the beginning of a new attitude reframing the disabled child as a medical patient, specifically a ‘defective’.

¹²³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal’s Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 27 April 1905.

These developments worked to construct a newly medicalised interpretation of disability, which was most explicitly seen in attitudes towards children with mental disabilities. Patricia Potts argues that the expansion of education ‘gave doctors the ability to become involved with children on a national scale’. By inspecting and classifying children, as well as advising on issues such as curriculum and exercise, the medical profession were able to set out the parameters for mental disability and determine who should be included in this category.¹²⁴ This could sometimes directly overlap with eugenic ideas. Potts points to the involvement of eugenic figures such as A.F. Tredgold, the medical expert to the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, which was published as the Radnor Commission in 1908, and Dr C. P. Lapage, who wrote a textbook in 1911 aimed at teachers and School Medical Officers warning against the transmission of ‘feeblemindedness’ ‘from generation to generation’.¹²⁵ Blind, deaf and physically disabled children were also included in this medical reclassification. A.F. Dimmock has described the inclusion in the 1907 Act as ‘bias against the Deaf’ by subjecting children to medical control.¹²⁶ Certainly, the evidence of the School Medical Inspector in Swansea suggests a shift towards understanding deaf children as ‘defects’ in need of a medical cure.

In Swansea, the introduction of medical knowledge into the education system was processed quickly and the first Report from School Medical Inspector, David J. Morgan, appeared in 1908. Amongst the reports were sections on ‘Treatment of deaf, blind, defective and epileptic children’, which included details of Local Education Authorities paying for children to be sent to the Swansea blind and deaf institutions, and detailed the difficulty they had experienced in getting families of deaf children to pay their school fees.¹²⁷ In the Swansea Medical Inspector reports, disabled children were discussed as a singular entity in need of regulation and careful surveillance. The 1912 report recommended schools keep ‘defective registers’, and a ‘table of defects’

¹²⁴ Patricia Potts, ‘Medicine, Morals and Mental Deficiency: The Contribution of Doctors to the Development of Special Education in England’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 9:3 (1983), 181-2.

¹²⁵ Potts, ‘Medicine’, 182-3. This is also explored in John Welshman, ‘Eugenics and Public Health in Britain, 1900-40: Scenes from Provincial Life’, *Urban History*, 24:1 (1997), 59.

¹²⁶ A.F. Dimmock, *Cruel Legacy: An Introduction to the Record of Deaf People in History* (Edinburgh: Scottish Workshop Publications, 1993), 34.

¹²⁷ WGAS, HE 2/1, Annual Report for the Medical Inspection of School Children 1908.

was included which catalogued problems including defective vision, defective hearing, speech defects, epilepsy and deformity.¹²⁸

The Cambrian Institution was affected by developments in the School Medical Service, with the Inspector reporting on local children being sent there, and making remarks on the quality of all special education institutions in the area.¹²⁹ The Institution utilised a basic medical structure, using the services of a number of physicians and surgeons who had links to other voluntary institutions in the area.¹³⁰ A Medical Officer was employed by the Institution to examine each child and screen potential future candidates for diseases.¹³¹ Undoubtedly, there was a great need for improved medical care in the Cambrian Institution. When changes were made to the system of medical inspection in 1911, the Medical Officer noticed previously unrecorded cases of problems with teeth, eyesight, tonsils, chest and ear discharges.¹³² Yet, through its Annual Reports, the Cambrian Institution appeared to mimic many contemporary medical assumptions about deaf children. The reports regularly linked deafness to disease and illness. The Honorary Medical Officer, G. Arbour Stephens, wrote in his section in 1903 that deaf children in general were more prone to sickness than hearing children, and ‘the amount of sickness would probably be much greater’ if the Cambrian Institution had not shown so much care.¹³³ The Principal’s Report in 1911 further stated that illnesses such as tonsillitis, adenoids, cardiac weakness and

¹²⁸ WGAS, HE 2/1, Annual Report for the Medical Inspection of School Children 1912, 15.

¹²⁹ WGAS, HE 2/1, Annual Report for the Medical Inspection of School Children 1908, 26.

¹³⁰ Dr Howell, listed as Physician in the 1852 Annual Report, was a physician at Swansea Infirmary. Dr James G. Hall, who served the Institution for several decades starting in the 1870s, practised at Swansea Hospital. Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fourth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1851* (Swansea: W. Morris, 1851); Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1871* (Swansea, 1871); *Scammel’s Bristol and South Wales Directory* (Bristol: W Scammel & Co., 1852); *Post Office Directory of Monmouthshire and the Principle Towns and Places in South Wales* (London: Kelly and Co., 1871).

¹³¹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 11 June 1878.

¹³² Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1910* (Swansea, 1910), 9.

¹³³ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Sixth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1903* (Swansea, 1903), 10.

valvular irregularities 'seem to be characteristic of the deaf as a class.'¹³⁴ Deafness seemed to be portrayed in public as dangerous and linked to sickness.

Some attempts were made elsewhere to construct a medical model of education specific to deaf children. James Kerr Love addressed this in his 1911 book *The Deaf Child*. The book illustrates how the categorisation of children according to their degree of deafness could make way for what he envisioned as a new medical definition of deafness. Kerr Love divided the history of deaf education into three periods. First was the early work by tutors such as Juan Pablo Bonet in the seventeenth century. Second was the deaf institutions of the eighteenth century beginning with the Abbé de l'Épée's Paris School. For Kerr Love, the next period was about to begin:

I believe we are now at the beginning of a third, which I may call the clinical period, during which medical men and teachers will co-operate ... The reason for the neglect of the deaf child by the medical man is that the former has never been regarded by him as a patient. A patient is a diseased person who is being studied and treated by a doctor. Our chief business then is to get the deaf child raised to the rank of a patient.¹³⁵

Kerr Love's explicit aim was to reframe deafness as a debilitating illness in need of systematic curing, bringing together the professions of medicine and teaching. To do this, his book set out a detailed classification and segregation system based on the origin and severity of the child's deafness: those who were 'semi-deaf' or very hard of hearing, 'should not associate with the deaf-mutes at all.'¹³⁶

Kerr Love's plan envisaged a system of day schools (seen as favourable to institutions because they would minimise social contact with other deaf children) in which pupils able to be taught speech could be kept completely separate from those who were not.

¹³⁴ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1911*, 14.

¹³⁵ James Kerr Love, *The Deaf Child: A Manual for Teachers and School Doctors* (Bristol: John Wright, 1911), 1.

¹³⁶ Kerr Love, *Deaf Child*, 11.

This was of course continuing the objectives of many ‘pure oralists’, but in an explicitly medicalised context; children who were only semi-deaf would be more likely to succeed at learning speech, thus should be taught separately and barred from social contact with other groups of deaf children. Critically, the aural surgeon had to be given a greater role in education in order to ‘study the deaf child long and carefully before he is able to understand this strange creature, without hearing, without speech – half-animal, half-god, who by education may be made a man’.¹³⁷ Thus the concepts of oralism and medical understanding were used to redefine deafness in both racial and medical terms: ‘The massing of deaf children tends to make them a race apart’, therefore if the ‘clinical period’ was to be successful, as many deaf children as possible had to learn speech, integrate into wider society and disassociate themselves from other deaf people.¹³⁸

Kerr Love’s ‘clinical period’ represents one of the most detailed descriptions of the medicalisation of deaf children. The book was praised by Macleod Yearsley in the *Eugenics Review*, who wrote that its championing of oralism and ideas about separating the ‘mentally deficient deaf’ from those able to succeed orally were ‘of eugenic importance’.¹³⁹ Yet in other ways this concept of medicalisation was an independent development. As Newton points out, Kerr Love called the eugenics movement ‘closely allied to quackery’.¹⁴⁰ Most importantly, his work showed a shift in attitudes towards a new image of the deaf child as medical patient. Thus Kerr Love’s work is a reminder that attitudinal shifts towards a medical perspective on deaf children were based on a number of different ideas and perspectives, and did not necessarily go hand-in-hand with overt eugenics, despite the occasional overlap.

The Cambrian Institution showed an awareness that these attitudes could be more subtly linked to the increased role of the doctor and medical officer in deaf education. The Committee recognised the increasing calls for a medicalised reading of deafness.

¹³⁷ Kerr Love, *Deaf Child*, 17.

¹³⁸ Kerr Love, *Deaf Child*, 15.

¹³⁹ Macleod Yearsley, Review of James Kerr Love, *The Deaf Child: A Manual for Teachers and School Doctors* (Bristol: John Wright, 1911), *The Eugenics Review*, 3:4 (1912), 359-360.

¹⁴⁰ Newton, ‘Plight of the Deaf’, 4.

A circular issued in 1900 suggested that the Institution was aware of the need for good medical care but worried about the implications for its pupils. It argued that an aurist, oculist, dentist and general practitioner should inspect each pupil at the beginning of every term, with regular medical inspection. Yet that was where it should stop: 'Too much stress appears to be laid just now, upon examination of the ears, mouth and throat', and general health, diet and exercise should be considered more important than the condition of one specific organ.'¹⁴¹ It appeared that the Cambrian Institution did not want to comply with Kerr Love's 'clinical period' of deaf education. This inter-professional rivalry between the medical and educational practices had begun earlier. As Mary Wilson Carpenter outlines, the nineteenth century saw the rise of medical practitioners deemed 'aurists' focusing on the curing of deafness. Figures emerged such as William Wright, a trained but unlicensed ear surgeon who experimented using techniques such as pouring caustic liquid into the ear.¹⁴² Yet, argues Carpenter, the many failures which resulted caused a degree of hostility and labels of quackery. Whilst in the Paris the physician Jean Marc Itard conducted similar experiments on the French pupils (before his methods too were deemed to have failed), in Britain the professional spheres of medicine and education for deaf children remained largely separate throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁴³ This tension between the education and 'cure' of deafness can be seen in the Cambrian Institution as early as 1879; replying to a parent asking if her child can be seen to recover her hearing, Payne responded that he did not know of any examples. 'We are teachers,' he wrote, 'not doctors.'¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

The interconnected rise of the oralism and eugenics movements were two crucial developments in deaf education, exhibiting the same desire to regulate the social

¹⁴¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Driscoll, Easter Eve 1900.

¹⁴² Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society*, 114. Carpenter notes that one of his most high-profile patients was the Duke of Wellington

¹⁴³ See Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society*, 114-6.

¹⁴⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Haley, 23 June 1879.

definition and position of their subjects. The Milan Congress of 1880 and the Royal Commission of 1889 both advised British schools to remove sign language from their classes, a move which many had already started to put in place. At the same time, the eugenics movement was facilitating the shift towards categorising disabled children – regardless of their impairment – as ‘defective’. Both concepts are important to a historical understanding how disability and deafness were interpreted, and have dominated much historical understanding of deaf education. Their presence in school records is a reminder that their harmful ideologies could permeate special education. Yet this chapter has argued that both were complex and multi-faceted discourses. Deaf educators varied in their interpretation of how far ‘pure oralism’ should be pushed, whilst the eugenics movement was frequently caught up in internal debates, and by no means presented a unified response to deaf education. Undoubtedly, however, there was a gradual medicalisation of the deaf child in educational discourse, which could be seen as an effect of the increasing involvement of the medical profession.

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb reacted to the interconnected discourses of oralism and eugenics, but its sources present conflicting stories. The staff of the institution never embraced oralism but experimented with its methodology and constructed a linguistic hierarchy which ensured its pupils avoided sign language where possible. Moreover, the deaf people affected by oralism did not all passively accept it. Many pupils of the Cambrian Institution may have had their language suppressed, but this did not stop them bringing in signs and communicating visually with their parents. Adult voices can also help us understand the question of oralism, and articles in deaf newspapers suggest that many deaf people were critical and dismissive of oral education.

The Cambrian Institution displayed a similarly inconsistent attitude to eugenics. Occasionally some eugenic concerns about the hereditariness of supposed ‘defects’ were drawn out in the Annual Reports. Yet whilst publicity material suggested acceptance of these views, overtly oralist or eugenic attitudes were rarely shown in the everyday running of the institution. Whilst its subscribers were warned of the

dangers of deaf intermarriage, the Institution's everyday operation failed to stop pupils socialising and, seemingly after a change of heart from the Principal, getting married. This illustrates the need to differentiate between the public face of the Institution and the day-to-day lives of the children. The attitudes projected to the public created a particular image of the deaf child to its subscribers, but it might well have been at odds with what was believed by the staff. Similarly, the Institution did not fully cooperate with attempts to impose the 'clinical period' of deaf education, in which deaf children were segregated and categorised, though this increasing medicalisation was far more effective in pervading the Institution than eugenic principles. Reading the Cambrian Institution's conflicting and detailed sources in the context of broad scientific and social developments reminds the historian that, whilst their ideologies were discussed and in many cases implemented, the place of oralism and eugenics in special education was not universally enforced and passively accepted. The staff and pupils had a capacity to respond and resist. Furthermore, despite being hugely important and contested issues both in the Institution and in national discourses of deaf education, these concerns were only two aspects of school life for the pupils themselves. The final two chapters of this thesis will continue using the records of the Cambrian Institution to answer questions of everyday school and home life.

Chapter 6

School Life

In the previous chapters, we have explored the impact of changing perceptions of philanthropy, oralism and eugenics, focusing primarily on the administrative machinery of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and the pressing need to engage with developments in contemporary special education. The next two chapters will attempt to shift the focus to what can be discerned about the lives that the children themselves lived. While Chapter 7 will argue for the home, the holidays and leisure time as sites of expression and individuality (as well as moral regulation), this chapter will attempt to map out the everyday life of the Institution itself. Most importantly, it will attempt to position the children themselves as historical actors within this environment. The everyday school life of pupils was shaped by three key factors: the environmental conditions of the school, the staff and teachers, and the curriculum. This chapter will examine these elements of school life by asking how they affected the children's own historical experiences.

Historians of disability, deafness and special education are beginning to recognise the importance of lived experience and the lives of individual children within institutions. This can be compared to the somewhat pessimistic attitudes of early historians of special education towards the children themselves. A study in 1953 described the first examples of the 'Asylum system' of early British deaf institutions a 'dumping ground' for 'revolting little scraps of humanity'.¹ Longmore and Umansky write that a consequence of the recent historiographical shift to the activism of disabled people has led to studies which treat special education institutions as potential sites of culture, debate and community.² These questions can only be asked once children are positioned as historical agents living through and potentially responding to their

¹ Kenneth W. Hodgson, *The Deaf and Their Problems: A Study in Special Education* (London: Watts & Co., 1953), 150.

² Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, 'Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream' in Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (eds.), *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 17.

education. As Felicity Armstrong argues, the absence of the ‘voices and perspective of disabled people’ can create a ‘historical silence in the majority of historical work on special education.’³

The restoration of the agency and experience of the child is hardly an issue limited to historians working on special education. Harry Hendrick criticises much early history about children and childhood by suggesting that historians are too quick to ignore the lives of children. For Hendrick, children must be reconfigured away from a generalised idea of ‘childhood’ and become ‘*people* who, in many respects, cannot but be active in history, if only in the sense of how they deal with their daily situations.’⁴ Lydia Murdoch locates this focus on agency in the context of charities for poor children. She argues that many existing histories of welfare and institutions – including those of Michel Foucault which emphasise social hierarchy and discipline – tend to ‘minimize the agency of the poor by presenting them as helpless victims who had no power to shape or resist onerous welfare policies.’⁵ Whilst the construction of power hierarchies is an equally crucial concern, arguments such as this remind the historian that the historical perspective of the child itself should firmly be central.

However, as explored in the first chapter of this thesis, delineating children’s experiences, of any kind, is a deeply problematic exercise. This chapter will recognise that the children studied here were by no means entirely free agents. The areas explored in this chapter were all factors set by the staff and committee of the Institution which many children had little opportunity to change. However, they are crucial for an understanding of everyday life, and the records occasionally hint at both

³ Felicity Armstrong, ‘The Historical Development of Special Education: Humanitarian Rationality or ‘Wild Profusion of Entangled Events’?’, *History of Education*, 31:5 (2002), 437-56, 438. This methodological issue has also been translated to modern-day scholarly understandings of disabled children, as seen in Davis and Watson’s argument that disabled children should be treated as social actors in order to illustrate ‘the fluid nature of disabled children’s lives within schools’ and their responses and criticisms. J.M. Davis and N. Watson, ‘Where Are the Children’s Experiences? Analysing Social and Cultural Exclusion in ‘Special’ and ‘Mainstream’ Schools’, *Disability & Society*, 16:5 (2001), 672.

⁴ Harry Hendrick, ‘The Child as a Social Actor in Historical Sources: Problems of Identification and Interpretation’ in Pia Christensen and Allison James (eds.), *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices* (London: Falmer, 2000), 38.

⁵ Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 6.

children's and parents' experiences and responses with the school environment set for them. Issues with sources also need to be kept in mind - the records used here were written exclusively by figures within the Institution and therefore it is misleading to suggest that the children's voices will become wholly visible. The 'experience' presented here makes no claims to be an authentic account of the lived experience of deaf children, or to be a coherent picture of their responses to education.

One of the most notable effects of writing about the pupils' everyday lives is that the deaf and disabled pupils in special education institutions become actors in wider debates and discourses. In Chapter 5, they were at the centre at a contest for language and the definition of deafness and disability through the oralism question. Yet, in other respects, it could be argued that the pupils of the Cambrian Institution were also playing a role in wider developments in Victorian and Edwardian education. Indeed, the Cambrian Institution's system of separating children from their parents and educating them using strictly enforced timetables was similar to the public schools attended by non-disabled children. Many of the issues the historian faces in delineating the experience of special education are not entirely specific to the historical study of deaf education but a question of distance from the historical actor. As Longmore and Umansky warn historians, it is problematic to prescribe an 'identity' to the lives of people who might not have identified with these aspects of the modern conceptions of disability and deafness.⁶ By focusing on disabled children, the historian can look for how conceptions of disability emerge rather than define the children by their deafness. The children were involved in a number of debates and issues, and some parts of their education might not have been dissimilar from that of children in mainstream schools.

Conditions

The original surroundings of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, in its incarnation as a rapidly-organised voluntary school in Aberystwyth, were small and

⁶ Longmore and Umansky, 'Disability History', 17.

limited. In 1847, the house which Charles Rhind set up as the Institution accommodated only two day scholars at first, with two further boarder pupils admitted shortly after.⁷ The house was holding thirteen pupils by 1849.⁸ Another private house was found when the Institution moved to Swansea in 1850, but the rapidly-expanding number of pupils once again forced a quick move. The demand for vacancies in the new school was high and the Committee was forced to reject pupils.⁹ As we saw in Chapter 4, the rapid expansion of the building in its early days was presented as the duty of Wales' philanthropists and an asset to the town, but it became clear that the small residential buildings the Institution had been using simply were not enough to accommodate all those applying.¹⁰ The site where most of the pupils discussed in this chapter lived and studied was erected in 1857, though reports from that time still show difficulty in housing prospective pupils: The 1858 Report describes the situation as a 'matter of regret' that only seventeen boarder pupils were in the Institution, the maximum possible that the budget and building would allow.¹¹

The site best known as the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was, in the words of a later honorary treasurer, an 'imposing old building' which had an impressive view of the town.¹² The building was nestled amongst greenery and trees (Golightly notes that Benjamin Payne's planting during his tenure left an 'oasis of green trees' by the 1930s).¹³ An architect writing in *The Cambrian* newspaper in 1874 described the Institution as a 'Gothic building of no particular merit as a composition' (he also pointed out the small size of the workhouse but praised the

⁷ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1892* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1892), 22.

⁸ *The Second Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Aberystwyth, for the year ending 30th June 1849* (Aberystwyth, 1849), 8.

⁹ West Glamorgan Archive Service [WGAS], E/Cam 1/2, Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Minute Book 1847-55, 3 November 1853.

¹⁰ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fourth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1851* (Swansea: W. Morris, 1851), 8.

¹¹ Neil J. Alderman, *Joseph and Mary: A Case Study in Deaf Family History* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2011), 75; Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Eleventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1858* (Swansea, 1858), 7.

¹² Cambrian Retrospective book cited in Victor Golightly, "'Speak on a finger and Thumb": Dylan Thomas, Language and the Deaf", *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 10 (2005), 83.

¹³ *South Wales Evening Post*, 19 May 1936 cited in Golightly, "'Speak on a Finger and Thumb'", 83.

structure of the Grammar School).¹⁴ However, its stature and position (if not architectural flair) would have impressed many, and the school became something of a landmark in Swansea. The new site received continuous extensions and building work as its numbers expanded. An extended west wing was added in 1866, and a two-story flanking of the east wing in 1874, with additional work in 1883 and 1889.¹⁵ Most elaborate was the Victoria Wing in 1899, which added a schoolroom, day-room, workshop and accommodation for both pupils and teachers.

Undoubtedly, this made school and classroom life easier, but problems with funding and bad weather suggest the Victoria wing was something of a stressful construction for both staff and pupils.¹⁶ The financial troubles which the extension caused were serious problems for the operations of the school: the regular summer excursion was cancelled in 1898, and in 1899 the Principal 'hesitated to mention' a school trip to parents and the Committee due to the 'extraordinary expenditure' spent so far on the wing.¹⁷ As a voluntary-run school, the Cambrian Institution had an ever-uncertain income, and these clampdowns on expenditure caused difficulty for some pupils in terms of school resources. In 1863, a report on household expenditure tried to save money for the struggling Institution by asking the Matron to 'exercise of the strictest economy' her spending on the household.¹⁸ The Institution's fluctuating income was published every year in the Annual Reports alongside the number of pupils. Such financial uncertainty clearly affected how the pupils lived, and delayed responses to potential problems. Thus the building could enter a poor state - a new wing was recommended in 1875 when the old building was described by a sub-committee as partly 'in a very dangerous condition', the exterior in 'a sad state'.¹⁹

¹⁴ *The Cambrian*, 29 October 1874.

¹⁵ J. Hay, 'Postcard Corner: Royal Cambrian School for the Deaf & Dumb, Pen y Bryn, Swansea', *Deaf History Journal*, 8:3 (2005), 40-41; The National Archives, Kew, ED 32/227, Proposed Central Institution for Blind and Deaf Children in South Wales, 'Royal Cambrian Brief History of the Institution'.

¹⁶ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-First Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1898* (Swansea, 1898), 6.

¹⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from Payne to Joseph Hall, 7 September 1899

¹⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, Minute book, 7 January 1863.

¹⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, Minute book, 3 March 1875.

As this suggests, the building itself experienced a number of problems. This was recognised early, in a report in 1852 by Charles Baker of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Doncaster. Baker criticised the ‘disorganisation’ caused by the Principal’s domestic issues and involvement in auxiliary collections, which was in his eyes worsened by the recent move to Swansea. The Principal, Charles Rhind, promptly pledged to devote all his attention to the school from then on.²⁰ Later records suggest a more disciplined and focused management style; however, a number of problems were still recorded. In 1889, before the Victoria Wing added more accommodation, the single boys’ dormitory was housing thirty pupils, causing overcrowding problems.²¹ Other common issues are illuminated by letters and Minute Books, such as drainage problems and a water shortage which lasted a whole month, forcing the male pupils to collect supplies from a nearby road.²²

Occasional bouts of illness were almost unavoidable in any Victorian institution, and the Cambrian Institution sometimes experienced outbreaks of ringworm and typhoid fever. An outbreak of typhoid fever in particular caused the death of one pupil in 1874.²³ The environmental problems experienced by the Cambrian Institution may well have contributed to this. Despite its issues with sickness, however, the Institution was sometimes treated by staff as a shield from the potential risk of disease outside. For example, the Matron warned a pupil against leaving for a weekly visit with friends because of the high risk of scarlet fever and measles in the town.²⁴ It is indeed true that Swansea was susceptible to epidemics, particularly in the early days of the Institution. Cholera outbreaks were recorded in Swansea in 1849, 1865 and 1866.²⁵ This highly cautious attitude on the part of the Institution was likely the result of staff linking deafness to ill health, as discussed in Chapter 5. In 1903, the Honorary

²⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 15 January 1852.

²¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 5 April 1889.

²² WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 18 October 1865; WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 23 Jan 1891.

²³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 1 April 1874. Great care was taken in this case to identify the possible cause of the outbreak, with the committee concluding that the child may have been ill before his return to school.

²⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from Florence Payne to W.J. Monckton, 21 January 1889.

²⁵ J.R. Alban, ‘Municipal Administration and Politics from the 1830s to 1974’ in Glanmor Williams (ed.), *Swansea, An Illustrated History* (Swansea: C. Davies, 1990), 296.

Medical Officer publicly praised the Institution's efforts to stave off disease, noting that, 'The general standard of health of deaf children is not as high as that among hearing ones', and sickness would be higher without the care shown to them.²⁶ The poor backgrounds of some pupils and 'ignorance on the part of the parents' (a common complaint, as we shall see in Chapter 7) were also cited as potential causes of any illness, despite efforts to combat it.²⁷

If a pupil died in the Institution, it was treated sensitively but as a sad reality which was to be occasionally expected. Historians writing about child death in the Victorian and Edwardian periods have cited both the high death rate and infant mortality rate as creating an environment in which the death of a child was an unfortunate inevitability, particularly in urban, working-class environments.²⁸ An account by principal Alexander Molison reflected these attitudes from both staff and pupils when a girl died at the Institution in 1862. Judging by her absence from the 1861 census, she had only been at school a short time. Before the Honorary Surgeon attempted 'without avail' to save her, the girl 'had, that same evening, of her own accord, taken leave of all the pupils – being, no doubt, fully sensible that her life was drawing to a close'. Despite being aware of mortality, her case suggests the emotional impact of the death of a pupil was felt around the school when this happened. 'The strong feeling of affection, between her and the other girls, was very marked'.²⁹ Historians have tended to read the ever-present reality of child death in nineteenth century society as hardening emotional affection, but in the Cambrian Institution such cases were seen as a sense of loss to the community of the school.³⁰

²⁶ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Sixth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1903* (Swansea, 1903), 10.

²⁷ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Fourth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1911* (Swansea, 1911), 9.

²⁸ Pat Jalland, 'Victorian Death and its Decline, 1850-1918' in Peter C. Jupp and Claire Gittings (eds.), *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 237; James Walvin, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 29.

²⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, Principal's Report, 7 May 1862.

³⁰ See Thompson's assertion that the high infant mortality rate 'served to blunt and deaden all maternal love and affection'. F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana, 1988), 123.

This sombre but emotional picture suggests that the Cambrian Institution in some ways avoided the melodrama exhibited by some other contemporary special education institutions. Borsay brings to light the publication in 1848 of a sentimental account of the death of a pupil by the principal of the Brighton and Sussex Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, an example of the ‘market appeal’ of the moral and Christian death.³¹ Jalland links this concept of the ‘good death’ to the romanticism of death in middle- and upper-class social circles, and the popularity of the ‘death-bed scene’ in Victorian literature and art. Entry to heaven and the achievement of an earned ‘good death’ was used by evangelical reformers and educators to try to encourage good character and morality, as seen in contemporary evangelical literature.³² Attitudes at the Cambrian Institution might well have mirrored this, but its publicity material seems to avoid the use of death for marketing purposes.

In contrast, the Llandaff school - formed by Principal Alexander Melville after his exit from the Cambrian Institution - published two pamphlets which told the story of pupils who had died whilst at the school. Both are portrayed as being from humble backgrounds and subject to a temper, but stirred by religious passion. One is described as regularly passing on his religious lessons to his friends through sign after school.³³ Both accounts end with a description of their deaths from illness, which are portrayed as tragic but hopeful, and escaping the affliction of their deafness: ‘his happy spirit took its flight to that land where there are none Deaf and Dumb’.³⁴ Deafness was thus made central to the ‘good death’, as the good character of the children meant that this affliction would not continue into their afterlife. These moralistic tales ultimately served to highlight the centrality of religion to the outlook and curriculum of the school: ‘This simple narrative is... an illustration of the good effected at an institution... basing all knowledge upon the gospel of Jesus Christ.’³⁵ Melville had, as we saw in Chapter 4, left the Cambrian Institution acrimoniously for what he perceived as the constraints laid on him for teaching religious education, and

³¹ Borsay, ‘Deaf Children’, 72.

³² Jalland, ‘Victorian Death’, 233-8; Walvin, *A Child’s World*, 32.

³³ *Children of Silence: or, The Story of a Deaf and Dumb Child* (London: William Macintosh, 1874); William Ward, *The Life Story of a Young Deaf Mute* (London: S.W. Partridge & co., 1874). The stories were collected in a collection called *Llandaff Deaf Mute Trophies* (London, 1874).

³⁴ *Children of Silence*, 28.

³⁵ *Life Story of a Young Deaf Mute*, 36.

at his own school he made religion an even more central tenet of its public image than he had at the Cambrian Institution. Perhaps this explains the Cambrian Institution's avoidance of using the 'good death' in its own publicity. Regardless of what they projected to the public, both schools had to occasionally deal with the reality of death.

Staff: Principals and Matrons

The cast of Principals, teachers and a gradually increasing number of other staff in the Institution set much of the living environment for the pupils. It is their opinions and voices which can most clearly be gained from the records of the Institution. The figure of Principal appears to have taken on a particular importance in institutions for deaf children, as he was chosen to represent the public image of the school. Advertisements looking for Principals appeared in newspapers and were sent to existing Institutions, and their requirements hint at the social and moral climate which senior figures of the school wanted to create. Applicants were to take full charge of business in the school and 'superintendence of the children out of school'.³⁶ One notable change over time was the prescription of the Principal's marital status by the Committee. This could be framed both in terms of practicality and morality. In 1855, a 'married man without family' was stated as preferred in the circular, with his wife undertaking the superintendence of the household, whereas an advert in 1862 (when a matron was already employed) asked for 'a single man'.³⁷ When the unmarried Principal Benjamin Payne took the position in 1876, his fiancé Florence took Matron duties and the Committee insisted that 'their contemplated marriage will take place at the earliest opportunity'.³⁸ The Committee saw their marriage as a matter of moral importance, but it also appears to have been a cause of celebration and a community event for many in the school. Both pupils and adult deaf people of Swansea attended a tea service for the couple after their engagement, joking that the 'arch plotter' of the surprise party was probably the assistant teacher, Mr Barland.³⁹

³⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 12 August 1862.

³⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 5 April 1855; E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book, 12 August 1862.

³⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 12 October 1875; 2 December 1875.

³⁹ *The Cambrian*, 28 April 1876.

The various principals employed by the Institution affected its atmosphere and public image. The school's first Principal, Charles Rhind (who ran the school from 1847-52), epitomised the valuation of professional experience and authority which was clearly of importance to the school's image. He had been a teacher at the London Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, the first free school for deaf children in the UK, for eleven years, and had been Principal of the Ulster Institution for the Deaf and Dumb.⁴⁰ For a first principal, Rhind undoubtedly brought a respectability to the school which came with his experience. Later, Rhind would become a figure of respect for deaf missionary and educational activity, as well as an advocate of sign language. He became headmaster of the Edinburgh Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and then turned his attention to missionary work as chaplain of the Royal Association in aid of the Deaf and Dumb in London.

A story concerning Rhind appeared in an 1873 issue of the religious publication *A Magazine Intended Chiefly for the Deaf and Dumb*, edited by the Reverend J.F. Kitto (who was deaf). He was identified as a 'rescuer' of a poor deaf girl, an archetypal Victorian philanthropist for deaf children. He had found an uneducated deaf girl who had been taken by police to the Rotherhithe workhouse and reunited her with her sister and father, saving her from 'what in all probability would have been to her a prison for life' through 'the perfect knowledge which Mr Rhind possessed of the natural sign language and the guidance of an all-wise Providence'.⁴¹ Yet the public image of Rhind – epitomised by this dramatic story – might not have wholly corresponded with his actions as a Principal. As we have seen, much of his time was spent raising money for auxiliaries across Wales which resulted in criticism in Charles Baker's report that he did not spend enough time in the Institution itself. After his departure, Rhind's ties to the Institution remained, and he later continued this role as fundraiser in another tour of Wales in 1869, seventeen years after his departure.⁴²

⁴⁰ Patrick Beaver, *A Tower of Strength: Two Hundred Years of the Royal School for Deaf Children Margate* (Sussex, 1992), 13.

⁴¹ *A Magazine Intended Chiefly for the Deaf and Dumb*, 1:10 (1873), 158-9. This is mentioned in Neil Pemberton, 'Deafness and Holiness: Home Missions, Deaf Congregations, and Natural Language: 1860-1890', *Victorian Review*, 35:2 (2009), 69. Kitto is identified by Mary Carpenter as an important example in providing an autobiographical account of his own deafness in this period. See Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society*, 121-4.

⁴² WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 4 August 1869.

When Principals left the Institution, their departures received detailed attention in the Committee's Minute Book and were occasionally reported in the local press. Sometimes these offer a window into the atmosphere that these Principals created for pupils. Some left in somewhat acrimonious circumstances. As seen in Chapter 4, Alexander Melville's exit triggered a bitter discussion of religious teaching and the gender politics of the Institution's management, and resulted in a new school at Llandaff. His predecessor Edward Buxton (1852-9)'s exit appears to have been an issue more of practicality and competence than politics, and reflected the disorganisation which seemed to characterise this era of the Institution. Noting the increased household expenditure and amounts of money received without formal acknowledgement, the Committee decided that 'there has been gross neglect, mismanagement and extravagance in the house'.⁴³ These insights into principals are notable for the environment they created for the pupils and the legacies they may have left. Principal Alexander Molison (1862-75) and his wife, the Matron of the Institution, were separately dismissed by the committee for matters of finance and management.⁴⁴ Molison changed his career entirely and less than a year later emerged as an accountant.⁴⁵

The Matron and sub-matron had equally demanding positions, their jobs often tied to fixed gender roles and behaviour. The Matron's duties were laid out in 1852; she was to make beds, sweep the schoolroom, supervise the pupils at bedtime, conduct 'family worship' and teach the female pupils needlework and household duties. The Committee hoped that the Matron would project a picture of domesticity, Christianity and femininity; and the ideal candidate would be 'patient, kind and considerate towards the pupils'.⁴⁶ In this instance, the job was offered to a woman with the experience of having and looking after a six year old child.⁴⁷ When the Honorary Secretary visited the Bath and Bristol deaf institutions in 1868, he admired the matron of the Bath institution, 'a kind Christian woman devoted to her work, having the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Children at heart.' As soon as he returned, the

⁴³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 1 March 1855; E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 4 August 1855.

⁴⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 28 January 1868; 13 July 1875.

⁴⁵ *The Cambrian*, 7 January 1876.

⁴⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 12 March 1852.

⁴⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 2 April 1852.

current Matron (and wife of the Principal) was immediately dismissed, the reasoning being largely financial but undoubtedly also because she did not fit this template.⁴⁸ Her replacement was dismissed seven years later in 1875 to make way for the new Matron, Principal Benjamin Payne's wife.⁴⁹ The figure of the Matron demonstrates the heavy regulation of the gendered innocence and morality of the deaf girl, who was deemed to be susceptible to copying any misbehaviour by female staff members. When they did, it was immediately noted; a Committee member alarmed the committee when he found out that the sub-matron 'is in the habit of indulging in a drink' which she had brought into the Institution surreptitiously.⁵⁰

Staff: teachers and servants

Equally important personnel were the teachers and teaching assistants, whose roles tell us much about the authority figures in the pupils' lives, and of the employment of deaf people in the school itself. The census results show an ever-growing staff of teachers and assistants, beginning with one assistant teacher in 1851 and growing to nine teaching staff in 1911, with ages ranging from 18 to 49. A hierarchy emerged among the different roles at the Institution, particularly amongst female employees; assistant matrons were described in a letter as 'generally aspirant teachers'.⁵¹ One staff member, listed as assistant matron when she was 20 in 1891, graduated to assistant teacher and is listed in this position in the 1901 and 1911 census returns.⁵² Others trained in the Institution before moving elsewhere: by 1913 thirty teachers had been trained in the Institution, nine of whom went further into the teaching profession and seven of whom became missionaries.⁵³

⁴⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 28 January 1868.

⁴⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 12 October 1875.

⁵⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 8 May 1861.

⁵¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to George Taylor, 25 June 1891.

⁵² Based on a database of staff members constructed using census returns from 1851 to 1911.

⁵³ The National Archives, Kew, ED 32/227, Proposed Central Institution for Blind and Deaf Children in South Wales, 'Royal Cambrian Brief History of the Institution'.

Assistant teachers are visible in the school records as authority figures, communicators and social actors alongside the pupils. A reference letter for a former assistant teacher outlines the multi-tasking and demanding nature of their job. By the age of 24, Arthur Hansell had taught pupils ‘religious and secular instruction’, ‘social and industrial training’, language both orally and manually and woodwork and drawing classes. Perhaps most importantly, the reference shows that assistant teachers could become figures of empathy and friendship to the pupils themselves, and have a place amongst the adult deaf community in Swansea. Hansell was praised for being involved with the adult deaf and, most significantly, for using ‘the language of signs with a facility and power which are at present rarely found among the “hearing teacher of the Deaf”’.⁵⁴ Another deaf teacher, James Barland, held the role of Assistant Teacher for 16 years before becoming Master at the Dundee deaf institution and an adult deaf missionary.⁵⁵ Their experiences suggest that, regardless of whether they were teaching articulation, the ability to communicate through signs was appreciated and valued. Moreover, their clearly respected presence is an indication of the community and culture which could be cultivated amongst all at the school. Indeed at the 1897 National Association of Teachers of the Deaf conference in York, it was recognised in a paper entitled ‘Out of School Duties’ that ‘no one was as fitted as the teacher to look after the children out of school hours’.⁵⁶

The employment of teachers who were themselves deaf proved to be a contentious issue both in the Cambrian Institution and nationwide. Historians have mapped out a chronological rise and fall of deaf teacher employment consistent with the narrative of oralism. Branson and Miller see deaf teachers, like those employed at the Cambrian Institution, as an important component of early deaf education and a recognition of the intellectual capabilities of many deaf children.⁵⁷ Yet there was a marked decline in the employment of deaf teachers in deaf schools as the ‘pure oral’ method increased. Branson and Miller cite the London Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor in Old Kent Road, London as an example of this shift: the school gradually

⁵⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Reference for Mr Arthur Hansell, 31 December 1898.

⁵⁵ *The Cambrian*, 30 April 1880; WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 3 May 1880. Barland was listed in the 1871 census as the only deaf member of staff.

⁵⁶ *The British Deaf Monthly*, 6:65, 99.

⁵⁷ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 139

decreased its deaf staff throughout the 1840s and 1850s, ending with only one deaf teacher in 1873.⁵⁸ This was undoubtedly one effect of the educational climate epitomised by the Milan Congress and the Royal Commission. Regardless of whether the children's interests had been sacrificed, the employment of deaf teachers certainly was, and many lost their jobs due to their potential use of sign.⁵⁹

This debate played out within the walls of the Cambrian Institution. Deaf teachers like Hansell and Barland did well in their roles, and deafness did not appear to be a boundary to consideration for employment. When Barland was replaced in 1880, the Committee judged each prospective candidate more by their character than by whether they were deaf; the 'presumably imperfect knowledge of language' of a 'mute' who had applied was listed alongside such disadvantages as being 'rather too young' or 'reticent'.⁶⁰ Still, a more pessimistic attitude developed towards the possibility of deaf teachers teaching deaf pupils. 'The first sixteen years of my teaching life I was pretty confident [about hiring deaf teachers],' wrote Principal Payne (who took up his post in 1876) to a prospective deaf teacher in 1895, but he found that the practice 'has fallen upon evil days'. Payne was a sympathetic figure to the candidate, but told him he was increasingly wary of making one of his deaf pupils a teacher.⁶¹ Clearly impressed by the candidate, his negative tone is indicative of growing problems in deaf employment as teachers, even though the Cambrian Institution recognised their value as communicators to the pupils. The decline is explained partly by the rise of oral methods: teachers needed to use words not signs, and Payne was scathing towards oral teachers he had trained from 'three or four of the "leading" institutions' who 'used gestures or "signs" when they ought to have used words'.⁶² What emerges from the letter is a complex situation in which the Cambrian

⁵⁸ Branson and Miller, *Damned for their Difference*, 142

⁵⁹ Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society*, 119.

⁶⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 3 May 1880.

⁶¹ Payne did, however, show preference to hiring his pupils over other applicants. A letter from 1895 reiterates that only one deaf teacher is needed in the school, and Payne is 'a sufficient representation of the class', however 'were we at all inclined to engage them we should prefer old pupils of our own'. WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to unknown recipient, 1 May 1895.

⁶² WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to George Franklain, 15 May 1895.

Institution needed to respond to the discourse of oralism through employment of teachers who avoided signs, yet recognised the failings of many oral teachers.

Being an institution which resisted the switch to pure oralism, other factors influenced this bleak mood. Running alongside this outlook was a recognition of the long hours and low pay which came with the role. 'Male teachers will not remain here,' spelled out a grim letter in 1891, 'the salaries we offer not being sufficient to induce them to do so and the chances of promotion in our small branch of the scholastic profession being remote and few.'⁶³ Life as an assistant teacher was hardly an attractive lifestyle: by 1895, many of the departed teachers were leaving for higher paid jobs with 'more Society, amusement, etc.'⁶⁴ Again, the 1897 National Association of Teachers of the Deaf conference in York discussed the fact that, 'No doubt the position of a teacher in an institution was not the pleasantest lot in life, hence the eagerness which the teachers took the first available opportunity of going under the School Boards', suggesting that teachers began to move to the newly-formed day schools rather than the institutions.⁶⁵

Added to this was an institutional dissatisfaction with the legislation governing hiring, particularly after the introduction of 1893 Act, which introduced Inspectors and recommendations towards teacher employment. The 1907 Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution devoted a page to criticism of governmental legislation, a stance which the Cambrian Institution maintained throughout the legislative changes in deaf education at the turn of the century, as seen in Chapter 3. It chastised the government for valuing hearing teachers over deaf ones, excluding 'experienced and efficient teachers who have been the familiar friends of the Deaf all their lives' by denying them qualifications.⁶⁶ This appearance in its publicity material suggests an altogether conflicted set of circumstances restricting deaf teachers from employment and pupils

⁶³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 2 November 1891.

⁶⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 June 1895.

⁶⁵ *The British Deaf Monthly*, 6:65 (1897), 99.

⁶⁶ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixtieth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1907* (Swansea, 1907), 9.

from having their ‘familiar friends’ as staff members: the increasing national influence of oral methods combined with the Institution’s own hostility to legislation and its own recognition of the off-puttingly arduous lifestyle of the teacher all contributed to this difficult scenario.

The majority of teachers appear to have been taken from elsewhere and trained at the Cambrian Institution: of the twenty-three teaching staff listed in the census from 1851 to 1911, only two originate from Wales.⁶⁷ The situation was similar to that which Anthony Boyce identifies at the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, in which young teachers were given board, lodging and a small wage in exchange for their teaching duties.⁶⁸ Some pupils may well have desired a career as teacher: a former pupil of the Cambrian Institution who applied for a teaching position at the Institution in 1885 asked a Factory Act Inspector to attend an interview with the Principal on her behalf, where she was told her services were still not needed.⁶⁹ In a number of cases, parents wanted their children – who had not yet finished their course of education – to take up teaching. Their requests were often rebutted, the reasons given ranging from lack of experience to a consideration of the monotony of the life involved.⁷⁰ Some parents who wished for their children to go into teaching received angry or mocking responses. One parent received a dire warning of her child’s future. Though her son was ‘intelligent and well-behaved’, ‘the idea of trying to make him a teacher is about the most absurd one that could come into your head.’ Principal Payne wrote,

If Edward remains a pupil for 15 years more he might learn the English language sufficiently well to teach it by finger-spelling but not by speech. Then if he was a teacher in an institution he might earn less than a joiner,

⁶⁷ Based on a study of census returns from 1851 to 1911.

⁶⁸ Anthony J. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf, 1829-1979* (Doncaster: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, 1990). Many, however, were teenaged and held the title of ‘pupil teacher’. The role of the ‘pupil teacher’ is explored in Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 149.

⁶⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 9 November 1885.

⁷⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal’s Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Miss Maclaran, 10 January 1879.

and be discontented because he would be condemned to a life-long celibacy and never have a home of his own.⁷¹

The response was indicative of barriers in methodology and communication, as Edward would seemingly need to teach both orally and manually. Added to this, the boy could not become a teacher whilst still an inexperienced pupil. This example suggests that parents tried to make unrealistic opportunities to remove their children from school and assign them a teaching post. Here the parental motivations may well have been economic – the parent pleaded that she was unable to afford the child's education. Most importantly it illustrates the immense problems facing the deaf teacher and the increasingly negative attitudes shown to their employment.

For domestic servants of the Institution, life was equally strenuous, enough so for the Institution to acknowledge this: by 1895 servants were beginning to 'complain of the heaviness of the work.'⁷² Many servants were drawn from the ranks of ex-pupils. This is particularly visible in later years: in 1901, all seven servants were deaf people from Wales, mostly pupils who had stayed in the Institution or been given servant work alongside their studies.⁷³ The housemaids were two sisters who had previously been pupils. Motivations for staying in the Institution could vary, as could the amount of agency the pupils had in choosing to stay. One of the sisters' routes after school at age 20 was described by the Matron, Florence Payne: it was 'unlikely that her parents would send her back' and if she could not find a dressmaking position she could be hired as a servant for £1 a year until an apprenticeship was found.⁷⁴ Her position was temporary, and the Institution acted as a stopgap before she could find work. Others were possibly designated their role by the Institution itself: another ex-pupil is

⁷¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B. H. Payne to Miss Phillips, 15 July 1891.

⁷² WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 June 1895.

⁷³ Based on a database of staff members constructed using census returns from 1851 to 1911. The examples given here are cross-referenced where possible with appearances in the Minute Book, in letters and the census.

⁷⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from Florence Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 May 1895.

described as ‘dull’ but ‘a very useful worker’, and was listed as the Institution’s laundress for the next nineteen years.⁷⁵

Like the teachers, deaf servants could be valued for their deafness. A deaf workmistress employed in 1860 was recommended because she would be able to ‘thoroughly understand the children.’⁷⁶ Even the minor staff of the Institution clearly had a part to play in interacting with the pupils, and here the servant could bring the pupils together through sign. Indeed, the boundaries between pupil and servant were easily blurred; whether because of late entry or needing to stay in the Institution, pupils who had reached adulthood could stay as servants. This provided social opportunities for the pupils and even instances of collusion and misbehaviour; a girl who had studied at the Institution then employed as a servant was dismissed four years later for being ‘very insubordinate’ and using ‘indecent signs to the children’.⁷⁷

Curriculum

Our attention will now turn to the curriculum which shaped pupils’ experiences, and how the historian can discern their reaction to the schedules assigned to them. The Cambrian Institution left records of its timetables and syllabuses which help piece together how the children’s time was spent in education. We have seen how the children became actors in the oralism debate through their classes in sign and speech, but this was only one part of their educational experience. A consistent theme was the importance of writing, which was consistently seen as the key method of disseminating information and building literacy. This was recognised early in the Institution’s life. In 1852, the twenty pupils of the Institution were divided into two classes with subdivisions, featuring pupils of all ages: the Lower Class encompassed pupils who had been in the Institution from eight months to three-and-a-half years; the

⁷⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 8 February 1893. Her family may have dictated this; they may have denied access to them or did not desire her return. The girl came from a family of a general labourer, his wife and a son, and was sent home there in the holidays.

⁷⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal’s Reports 1860-76, 3 October 1860.

⁷⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal’s Reports 1860-76, 2 December 1868.

Advanced Class was eight months to four-and-a-half years. Whilst this system was very much a result of an Institution living within its means, it was observed to cause confusion and difficulty. Charles Baker of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb remarked during his visit that the system was too muddled and dwelled on 'more in the minds of their respective Teachers than with actual reference to the acquirements and capabilities of the Pupils.' Baker's solution was an intensive course of language with writing placed at the forefront. In his programme, early lessons were to start with common names, pictures and objects, moving onto sentence compositions and an hour each evening explaining the meaning of verbs.⁷⁸

This written course of English was linked strongly to the image of the deaf child as lost and uncivilized without language. The learning experience of the deaf child, wrote Baker in 1852, is 'like the foreigner acquiring a new language', though harder as 'the foreigner possesses a language of his own... without such a standard the deaf and dumb are under immense disadvantage.'⁷⁹ In this case, the image of the deaf child as 'foreigner', freed by a programme of language, was carried from the classroom into the public sphere through the Annual Reports. The 1892 Annual Report stated that language, particularly written English, was the key to 'the opening of one door after another of the prison of his mind', the only way to prevent the deaf child from being 'a foreigner everywhere, even in his native land and among his own kindred.'⁸⁰ Statements such as this remind us that a programme of written learning was being developed over time, albeit one which needed to be justified by melodramatic conceptions of the deaf 'foreigner'. Yet writing was recognised by many as a priority in deaf education. *The Deaf and Dumb Herald* printed an editorial on 'The Literary Position of the Deaf and Dumb' in 1877 which argued that, 'To us it seems the only way to counteract the cause [of illiteracy] is to encourage reading printed matter to a greater extent, so as to enable [deaf children] to be familiar with the general language'.⁸¹

⁷⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 15 January 1852.

⁷⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 15 January 1852.

⁸⁰ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Forty-Fifth Annual Report 1892*, 6.

⁸¹ *The Deaf and Dumb Herald*, 11:1 (1877), 161. The argument encompassed a discussion on both lip-reading and sign language, striking a position somewhere between the two. It was worried that lip-

What the pupils of the Cambrian Institution actually learned and wrote about would have varied, from child to child and over time. A list of school subjects appeared in the 1888 Annual Report which encompassed Language, Writing, Articulation and Lip-reading but also Arithmetic, Geography and General Information. Sacred History, Religion and Gymnastics were also included, which will be discussed later in the chapter. By 1906, a full syllabus had been drawn up which encompassed a much wider set of topics. There were now six classes according to ability. Class 1 was schooled in the 'elementary sounds' of articulation and lip-reading, and written language began with companions' and teachers' names and basic nouns. By class six, lip-reading was attempted to be taught 'in all lessons', writing was based on news, stories and compositions, and facts in geography, nature study and English history were taught.⁸²

This curriculum expansion ran parallel to other schools of the time, regardless of whether they were for deaf pupils. As Anne Digby explains, many early elementary schools were based heavily around the 3 Rs, the teaching methodology being the whole-class, simultaneous 'object lesson' in which teachers and their assistants observed the object in question.⁸³ Subjects such as grammar, geography and history became ingrained in the school curriculum only when the Education Department began to offer grants for examination-specific subjects (in 1867, for example, for grammar, geography and history), and many schools introduced these subjects only gradually after this.⁸⁴ Thus the Cambrian Institution, itself coming under increasing inspection as a result of the 1893 Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, indicates that special education followed an educational path set by elementary schools across the spectrum, at largely the same time. The special education institution, as a site of education, should therefore be situated more firmly within wider educational developments.

reading 'cannot do much', but signs would stall the process of learning written English - it might instead be best to 'do away with the use of signs altogether' and use the manual alphabet.

⁸² WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9. This is included as an insert in the letter book.

⁸³ Anne Digby and Peter Sarby, *Children, School and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), 36. See also Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram, 1996), 115.

⁸⁴ Digby and Sarby, *Children, School and Society*, 34.

It is important to ask how pupils reacted to the programme of learning developed at the Institution. Though the list of classes expanded, the sources vary as to the pupils' own experiences. Transcripts of pupils' progress reveal a long process in the case of those deemed to be 'slow' at their work. In 1898, a parent was sent a copy of their son's language progression over the previous six years. The pupil had started in February 1892 with writing his own name, and was learning adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions by 1898. Yet it was remarked the boy's progress had been 'very slow', and 'he does not get on very well with boys who are superior to him, as he is considered stupid'.⁸⁵ This reveals the diversity in how pupils reacted to their education and hints at the atmosphere it may have created amongst the children themselves. Those in less advanced classes were taught by memory, and the traces of reactions they have left behind are a reminder that this prescribed and regulated course of language may have had little impact on certain pupils.

The struggles of the 'less gifted' pupils was not just acknowledged but elaborated upon in the Annual Reports. One pupil, who had repeated sentences from an advertisement in a piece of written work, was described as such: 'Needless to say, the poor boy understood nothing whatever of the advanced language he had borrowed, though that makes his diligence all the more commendable'.⁸⁶ Public opinion may well have been drawn to this appealing image of the hard-working deaf boy, but the story in the report reminds us that the course of copying and writing taught at the Cambrian Institution may have been completely unsuccessful in some cases. A number of factors contributed to pupils' struggles. These included large classes, financial restraints and, as constantly mentioned by the Principal and Committee, pupils being sent for instruction late in their lives. Parents who stated their expectations for their children's achievements were often told that the pupils'

⁸⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 12 August 1898.

⁸⁶ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Sixth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1913* (Swansea, 1913), 14.

capacities for language and memory were now limited and they should have sent their children there when they were younger.⁸⁷

Yet despite the often gruelling and monotonous learning process, pupils could utilise their basic education, and deafness was not entirely regarded as a barrier to learning and success. Few records exist of the pupils' actual work, but examples of progress in sentences and compositions can be seen amongst the Letter Books. Many of the children did not have any other access to education before entering the Institution, often into their teenage years.⁸⁸ One boy wrote to the Principal from his home having seemingly been taken out of school by his father after five years in the Institution, a decision described as 'a delusion' as the boy could not yet read.⁸⁹ The Principal corrected his sentences and spelling whilst he was at home, along with giving advice not to break the Sabbath and avoid drinking.⁹⁰ The boy's letter showed a willingness to learn and perhaps even an emotional connection to the school, but mostly it is an indication that education and literacy were being taken seriously by the Institution's staff. It also, of course, demonstrates how far the rest of the school's environment – including religion and regulation of the pupil's spare time – was pursued even after his official time of learning, as advice on everyday religious and moral living was passed on through the letter.

Publicity material suggests the Cambrian Institution did not hide the tedium of the curriculum but acknowledged it as inevitable. The intellectual work at the Institution was 'educational, not creative', lamented the 1898 Report. The focus was on imparting the means of acquiring knowledge, which meant that 'little remains for imparting to him any store of knowledge itself.'⁹¹ The appearance of this comment in

⁸⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Thomas Davies, 11 April 1878; Letter from B.H. Payne to Margaret Jones, 20 September 1892.

⁸⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 20 April 1895.

⁸⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 21 July 1892.

⁹⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Alfred Sexton, 20 September 1892.

⁹¹ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-First Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1898* (Swansea, 1898), 9.

a public report suggests an acceptance of pessimism regarding teaching knowledge to the deaf child. The fact that language was at all being taught seems to have been deemed impressive enough. Many pupils wrote out sentences given to them in handwriting, and records regularly show uniform sets of written sentences. This became more regulated and identical as the time wore on - Her Majesty's Inspector praised the 'superiority of the handwriting' in an 1897 Report.⁹² The content of the sentences given to them are interesting and often refer to the pupils' own deafness and the need to create awareness of it. As well as names of friends, family, schoolmasters, animals and body parts, basic sentences included phrases such as 'I was not born deaf' and 'Yes maam I am deaf'.⁹³ These were clearly designed to be practical, perhaps an example of the staff framing pupils' learning experience through disability. However, it also suggests the potential cultivation of a deaf identity amongst the pupils by integrating a discussion of their deafness into the work.

One fascinating if deeply problematic source in determining what the children learned is the compositions in the Annual Reports. From 1892, passages purporting to be examples of pupils' class work appeared. Some of these will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 as many were 'correspondence' which dealt with pupils' family lives. These were claimed to be authentic: 'The subjects were not proposed to the writers; no assistance was given them; their attention was not called to their errors; nor has any alteration or correction been made in the papers.'⁹⁴ Obviously, even the most optimistic historian needs to be sceptical about these claims: the letters are almost always in excellent written English with a few quirks. Yet their subjects demonstrate the kind of subjects which were at least aspired to be taught and, crucially, the moral and social values central to deaf education. Many compositions had strong messages of patriotism and even local identity: one boy wrote about 'England and her Institutions': 'The House of Commons is formed of men, even some of the working class'. Another delivers a long, factual account of the history and geography of Swansea which included a paragraph on the Cambrian Institution itself

⁹² Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fiftieth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1897* (Swansea, 1897), 7.

⁹³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 20 April 1895.

⁹⁴ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Forty-Fifth Annual Report 1892*, 14.

and its new Royal title: 'Hurrah! For Swansea!'⁹⁵ Added to these local and patriotic themes were examples of the good character which its pupils were hoped to develop. A 14-year-old girl's mention of the Queen, for example, acted as a public opportunity for the 'moral and religious training' offered by the Cambrian to shine through. She wrote that the Queen is 'our sovereign and the Empress of India. The Queen is an old lady, and is a true Christian woman.'⁹⁶ The selection process for these letters was clearly one which valued anything which could demonstrate knowledge, morals and religion.

For the historian, the published letters are of course extremely problematic – they were hugely influenced by the teachers and committees of the school, and possibly doctored. D.G. Pritchard highlights this, arguing that the work reprinted in Annual Reports was 'obviously false' and only existed to please subscribers, who expected to see achievement having paid for the school.⁹⁷ Even at the time, they faced damning criticism from fellow headmasters. At an 1881 Conference of Headmasters of the Deaf, J. Scott Hutton of the Ulster Institution in Belfast spoke out against the 'insipid performances (chiefly a re-hash of remembered crudities, partly descriptive, partly didactic, partly speculative, purely imitative, and wholly worthless) which sometimes figure in "reports" and elsewhere as "specimens of original composition".'⁹⁸ Thus the manipulative qualities of the letters clearly did not go unnoticed at the time either. Yet, despite hardly presenting an authentic voice from children, they nevertheless illuminate the educational and moral environment laid out for them and some of the themes and values which institutions were attempting to instil. Their falseness, too, is important in itself: the compositions were designed specifically to appeal to the philanthropic audience and hint at what kind of deaf child the school was expected to

⁹⁵ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Eighth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1895* (Swansea, 1895), 22; Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-First Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1898* (Swansea, 1898), 20.

⁹⁶ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Ninth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1896* (Swansea: Watkins General Printing Works, 1896).

⁹⁷ D.G. Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped, 1760-1960* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1963), 43.

⁹⁸ J. Scott Hutton, 'The Teaching of Language' in *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 22-24 June, 1881* (London: W. H. Allen, 1882)

produce: hard-working, religious and morally worthy. Our attention will now turn to how the Institution attempted to develop these qualities through education, and how the pupils reacted.

Industrial and physical training

A large amount of historical work on the education of deaf children has understandably focused on language and the battle over signs and speech. However, they were also caught up in other debates about how to educate the deaf child. At the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, the role of industrial, religious and moral training was discussed amongst the staff and Committee, and training in these areas took up much of the children's time. The 1892 Annual Report outlined this distinction, highlighting that language was 'not the same as education' for the deaf pupil:

His whole nature in its physical, social, moral, intellectual and spiritual aspects requires development. In his case the sentiments themselves – even the common one of natural affliction – demand special cultivation as well as the intellect.⁹⁹

This statement of intent, connecting deaf education both to emotion and ability, highlights the need to examine the other types of training which the Cambrian Institution offered, and the types of qualities with which it deemed necessary for its pupils to leave the Institution.

The qualities of 'usefulness', industriousness and independence through work were considered important aspects of education, but their actual teaching in the Cambrian Institution was complex. In publicity and at AGMs, the rhetoric of the Institution shared with many special education institutions the desire for deaf children to achieve

⁹⁹ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Forty-Fifth Annual Report 1892*, 7.

as close to economic independence as possible and stop being a ‘burden’ to society. The 1889 Annual General Meeting opened with a dramatic speech: ‘Without [education] their lives are a blank, and they are a burden on their friends or on the community.’¹⁰⁰ Private communication to potential donors also advertised that the Institution placed the child ‘intellectually and morally, in a position to earn their own livelihood’.¹⁰¹ This narrative of the disabled ‘burden’ who is rendered able to find work and contribute to society is one familiar to all historians of Victorian and Edwardian disability: the doctrine of ‘economic rationality’ is argued by Anne Borsay to be a common feature, not just of special education, but of attitudes towards disability as a whole: disabled inmates of workhouses and recipients of medicine were all regularly treated by professionals with an eye on their ability to work.¹⁰²

Yet despite playing to this rhetoric, in reality the pupils’ experiences of industrial training at the Cambrian Institution did not simply involve being equipped for a designated trade and then sent off into a new life. The reasons for this were partly financial: the Institution regularly struggled to maintain its basic operations, particularly before the advent of state funding, so specialist industrial training would have been difficult to justify. The school decried its inability to afford an apprenticeship fund to aid pupils after their school life. This was a feature of a number of other deaf institutions. For example, in the 1890s, the Yorkshire institution acquired a fund of £3,400 to support apprenticeships for its ex-pupils.¹⁰³ However, the lack of specific industrial training was not just economic but pedagogical. Thus, when a member of the Luton Board of Guardians wrote to the Principal in 1877 to ask if his pupil was learning a specific trade, he received a reply which stressed that, like nearly all other institutional deaf schools, the Cambrian Institution ‘is professed only educational, and not specially industrial’. Mechanical training, he argued, was ‘more

¹⁰⁰ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Second Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1889* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1889), 6.

¹⁰¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal’s Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from Joseph Hall to the executors of the late H.D. Griffiths, 12 May 1877.

¹⁰² Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 197. See also David M. Turner, ‘“Fraudulent” Disability in Historical Perspective’, *History and Policy* (2012) <<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-130.html>> Accessed 19 August 2010.

¹⁰³ Boyce, *History of the Yorkshire Residential School*, 62

properly the business of after-life', and would encroach on time set aside for 'moral and intellectual training' and their 'indispensable literary education'. Moreover, adding industrial training to the children's schedules would cause 'serious detriment to the health of our pupils'.¹⁰⁴ Other deaf institutions had been undergoing the same debate: pupils at the Old Kent Road school in London had originally been taught trades directly, but this position was dropped for assumedly a similar set of reasons.¹⁰⁵ The position was not explained by pessimism for deaf employment: 'trades could be taught as easily to deaf mutes as to hearing children', the Cambrian Institution's Committee decided in 1886, but the pupils' time at the Institution did not allow the space to do so.¹⁰⁶ Thus while the public face of the Cambrian Institution played up to the demand to equip deaf pupils for a world of work, the act of spending time preparing the child for a pre-defined vocational role was seen as impractical and undesirable; training in language took priority.

This attitude was somewhat at odds with the new rules set out in the 1893 Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act. The 1889 Royal Commission had recommended 'technical instruction in industrial handicrafts' for deaf children as part of the curriculum, facilitated by the Education Department.¹⁰⁷ Industrial education was made compulsory, with institutions granted funds if they could provide industrial training, in a classroom and grounded in theory, for four hours a week. Immediately, the Institution worried about having 'the teaching of trades... put upon us': the current classes of drawing, wood and modelling (for boys) and needlework and cooking (for girls) were deemed enough.¹⁰⁸ This struggle continued, the Institution unable to receive the necessary grants for instruction because it was unwilling to provide 'four hours a week... upon theory expressed in language above the

¹⁰⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Erskine Austin, 13 February 1877.

¹⁰⁵ M.G. McLoughlin, *A History of the Education of the Deaf in England* (Liverpool: G.M. McLoughlin, 1987), 7.

¹⁰⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 1 November 1886.

¹⁰⁷ Report of the Royal commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c., of the United Kingdom (1889), 620.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 31 January 1893. This letter was discussing the proposed 1893 bill immediately after its release.

comprehensive of the average deaf and dumb pupil...'¹⁰⁹ Eventually, the school received several grants from the Education Department. By 1897 this comprised a 12-month grant for Industrial Training for girls over 14 and a six-month grant for Manual Instruction for girls under 14 and all boys.¹¹⁰ Yet even in public, the Institution was attacking the designated four hours a week necessary for the Education Department's grant.¹¹¹

This is, of course, not to deny that the school saw it as a necessity to instil an industrious spirit in its pupils. Often household chores were used to justify the lack of direct industrial training: subscribers were reminded that the 'cheerful faces of the pupils while at work show the pleasure they take in this employment of their leisure hours.'¹¹² The chores here replaced vocational training as the main vehicle for teaching pupils industriousness and how to be 'useful'. This work also corresponded to gender roles: as well as a shared duty to clean and dress their bed; male pupils were asked to do outdoor work and working the force-pump, whilst girls mended under-clothing and waited on officers.¹¹³ The ideal of the independent deaf child, aware of his or her heavily gendered social and work duties, could be created in ways other than formalised industrial training. This increased over time, and as the school's focus on industriousness and productivity increased, more of the children's own time would have been dedicated to these educational issues. Thus more classes in domestic work, kindergarten [pre-school], woodwork and drawing were added, and at times the pupils

¹⁰⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 9 April 1895.

¹¹⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 16 February 1897.

¹¹¹ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1897*, 11

¹¹² Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twelfth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1859* (Swansea, 1859).

¹¹³ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Thirty-First Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1888* (Swansea: The Cambrian Steam Printing Works, 1888), 16. The pupils' chores, particularly when domestic work was necessary, could occasionally be as tiring and inconvenient as the industrial training which they tried to avoid. In 1896 Principal Payne complained to the Honorary Secretary that the boys working the boilers and furnaces were coming back from their tasks dirty and it was interfering with their lessons: 'Their friends would be surprised to find all the work they have to do.' WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 24 February 1896.

were taken outside of the Institution for their now-compulsory training: the local Manual School was used for classes from 1896.¹¹⁴

This debate highlights the complexity of the Victorian association of disability and work. Deaf pupils were very much part of the philanthropic and educational desire for self-help and economic independence, but the specificities of what this involved was subject to debate. The discussion took on different parameters in blind schools, many of which were more focused on teaching specific trades, and deciding whether to teach *only* industrial training, as opposed to reading and writing.¹¹⁵ The Swansea Institution for the Blind, for example, was strongly dedicated to industrial training, its publicity material portraying education as a prerequisite to the need for being trained in a specific field of work.¹¹⁶ The shifting debate and changes in legislation came, of course, amidst a more general climate of the separation of work and school and a reduction in child labour. In mainstream schools, the 1870 Education Act had begun to replace children's early obligations to work with educational provision, and the age restrictions for 'half time' divisions between work and school were being gradually raised, rising to the age of twelve by 1900. The need for improved industrial training to combat the 'Boy Labour Problem' – of lack of industriousness and vagrancy – was widely discussed.¹¹⁷ In the Cambrian Institution, the deaf child took on a complex role defined by economic rationality and resistance to teaching pre-defined trades.

The teaching of physical training, meanwhile, gained a more gradual presence on the curriculum. These attitudes can be seen to correlate with a shifting educational discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries towards physical education, exercise and fresh air. Educational reformers advocated open-air schooling, in which pupils were taught outdoors. The system was designed to escape the city and provide an educational system close to nature. Parallels were drawn between the crowded and smoky cities from which many of the children came, and the ideal

¹¹⁴ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1897*, 7.

¹¹⁵ Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society*, 130.

¹¹⁶ Swansea & South Wales Institution for the Blind, *The Nineteenth Annual Report, for the year ending 31st December 1884* (Swansea, 1884), 3.

¹¹⁷ See Eric Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working-Class Children in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 220-29.

environment of the open air. Schools sprang up quickly: in London, the Bostall Wood school at Plumstead opened in 1907 with pupils educated amidst 20 acres of wooded grounds.¹¹⁸ Potts argues that these schools, designed in part for children with physical and mental disabilities, were a signal of the increasing influence of doctors and medicalisation in special schooling, the open air providing a means to cure children's 'defects'.¹¹⁹

Similar attitudes were developing at the Cambrian Institution. Partly this was a consequence of increased pupil numbers and access to funds: the environment of the school became equipped for physical training with the introduction of a separate gymnasium in 1905.¹²⁰ Physical exercise had appeared on the curriculum before. In Annual Reports from the 1880s onwards, other arrangements were outlined, including programmes of exercise and attendance at other facilities such as the gymnasium of the Young Men's Christian Association of Swansea.¹²¹ It is, of course, wholly possible that exercise was practised in the early days of the Institution too: before the gymnasium routine, 'drill' had appeared on the school timetable, and contemporary photographs show pupils taking part in whole-class drill exercises.¹²² As Anne Digby and Peter Sarby point out, military-style drill was a common feature particularly of boys' schooling from the 1870s.¹²³ Yet in the Cambrian Institution, it was not until the early twentieth century and the new gymnasium that the school was publically signalling its focus on physical education and wellbeing.

¹¹⁸ Frances Wilmot and Pauline Saul, *A Breath of Fresh Air: Birmingham's Open-Air Schools 1911-1970* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1998), 6; Carolyn Steedman, 'Bodies, Figures and Physiology: Margaret McMillan and the Late 19th Century Remaking of Working-Class Childhood' in Roger Cooter (ed.), *In the Name of the Child: Health and Welfare, 1880-1940* (London: Routledge, 1992), 23.

¹¹⁹ Patricia Potts, 'Medicine, Morals and Mental Deficiency: The Contribution of Doctors to the Development of Special Education in England', *Oxford Review of Education*, 9:3 (1983), 181-196.

¹²⁰ National Archives Kew, ED 224/18, 'Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb: Historical Retrospect', 1.

¹²¹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1884*, 5; WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Thomas Bowen, 8 May 1896.

¹²² Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1893* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1893), 21; Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Second Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1909* (Swansea, 1909).

¹²³ Digby and Sarby, *Children, School and Society*, 35. See also Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 124.

One year after the new gymnasium was built, exercise time was raised and physical education was described by the Principal as essential 'not only to the mental but also to the moral development of the pupils.'¹²⁴ Much like work, exercise was presented as essential to development in character. This correspondence between the physical and psychological is noted by Roger Cooter as a defining, but understudied, feature of early-20th century programmes for children's welfare, as ideals of gender and morality became ingrained in initiatives such as the open air schools and the School Medical Service.¹²⁵ The moral incentive of physical education was pointed out by contemporary reformers; James Kerr described open-air schooling as 'a most efficient engine for turning out good citizens.'¹²⁶ Thus the Cambrian Institution was part of a national discourse, linking conceptions of good character and social wellbeing with physical education and health.

At the Cambrian Institution, emphasis in this area was sometimes placed on the child's deafness, as breathing exercises and marching were seen as the most important aspect of physical education. 'Many of the Deaf are mouth-breathers...', wrote Principal Payne to Honorary Secretary Joseph Hall in 1905. 'They also shuffle instead of lifting the foot, not being aware of the sound so caused as it reaches hearing people.'¹²⁷ A programme was formed which stressed the moral and social importance of physical education, whilst applying it to specific attitudes towards deafness and disability. Whether the realities of the programme corresponded to what appeared in the material is uncertain, but for the pupils, this shift may well have been appreciated: it meant an increase in variety of education, and was accompanied by changes to their dietary plans which added variety and extra meals - mealtimes had increased from three to four times a day between 1885 and 1913.¹²⁸ The physical programme on offer might be seen partly as a natural consequence of more resources and organisation, and partly a result of the gradual medicalisation of deaf children.

¹²⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to unknown recipient, 5 September 1905.

¹²⁵ Roger Cooter, 'Introduction' in Cooter (ed.), *In the Name of the Child*, 8.

¹²⁶ Potts, 'Medicine, Morals and Mental Deficiency', 187.

¹²⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 5 September 1905.

¹²⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 'Sketch of the Organisation of the Cambrian Institution of the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, 22nd August 1885; Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1913*.

Religious training

As we have seen, religious feeling was thread throughout the operations of the Cambrian Institution. The good Christian spirit of the philanthropist was expected to be matched by the pupil having religious knowledge and awareness by the end of his or her time at the Institution. For the pupils, religion pervaded their everyday lives and lessons. Neil Alderman's oral evidence recalls that Principal Benjamin Payne's sign name was based on the bible he kept in his breast pocket.¹²⁹ Pupils read the Bible and scripture lessons were a feature of the curriculum. These lessons from children's Scripture readings in the mornings were repeated on Saturdays, and again at the religious events on Sundays.¹³⁰ A Sunday service was held (which, as we shall see in Chapter 7, was also visited by deaf adults), and Sunday school was held afterwards.¹³¹ Sunday schools of the period were the product of evangelical fervour for religious education and, in the nineteenth century before compulsory education, acted as a crucial outlet for those who might not have had any other access to education.¹³² Tholfson argues for their importance not just as centres of religious education but of teaching values such as honesty, morality and obedience.¹³³ The Cambrian Institution shared this attitude, framing its other lessons around the central necessity for religious education.

Religious education was presented publicly, of course, as essential to all pupils' wellbeing. At an 1856 meeting of subscribers, Committee member Mr Moggridge announced that, if deaf children were not educated, the mind would either be 'thrown back on itself', with no communion with the outside world, or become 'incorrigibly wicked.'¹³⁴ The Principals probably did not subscribe to this hyperbole, but a sense of urgency was still visible. At the 1885 conference for head masters, Benjamin Payne presented a paper which argued for the centrality of religion to deaf education: 'If [the

¹²⁹ Neil J. Alderman, *Joseph and Mary: A Case Study in Deaf Family History* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2011), 18.

¹³⁰ Letter from B.H. Payne to Reverend J. Cynddylan Jones, 14 March 1891.

¹³¹ Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr John Greenslade, 30 March 1899.

¹³² See Digby and Sarby, *Children, School and Society*, 17.

¹³³ Trygve R. Tholfson, 'Moral Education in the Victorian Sunday School', *History of Education Quarterly*, 20:1 (1980), 80.

¹³⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, *The Cambrian*, 19 December 1856.

teacher] does not give it, what is the chance of its being efficiently given to the Deaf and Dumb at all?’¹³⁵ Yet his paper also presented arguments which revealed a deeper level of meaning than simply rescuing the ‘savage’. His paper linked Christianity not just to the general need for education but to the linguistic specifications of his school: namely, the use of signs. ‘Have [critics of manualism] traced the part of gesture in sacred history?... Gesture was employed in prayer and praise as long as the Jews were a nation.’¹³⁶

These differing perspectives are a reminder of the varying role of religion in the deaf curriculum. Its potential function as a form of social discipline should not be ignored. Indeed, the presence of religious instruction in wider Victorian education has been portrayed by some historians as a way to teach, as F.M.L. Thompson wrote, ‘preservation of the social order, the protection of property, and the prevention of disturbance or insurrection’.¹³⁷ For deaf children, not only were these values instilled in religious training, but the uneducated and unreligious pupil could be reduced to sub-human without religion. Yet Payne’s comments highlight the use of religion to defend sign language and deaf communities. This dual function is a point explored by Neil Pemberton, who argues for the use of Christianity as both a trope for melodramatic sympathy towards deaf subjects of charity and as a tool for deaf people themselves to argue for the importance of sign language. Deaf missionaries, he found, could present sign language as a holy and ‘natural’ language which allowed its users to escape the ‘curse of Babel’ and be close to nature.¹³⁸ Similarly, Douglas Baynton has explored how the manualism used in the first American schools - such as Reverend Thomas H. Gallaudet’s American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in Hartford, Connecticut, founded in 1817 - was based on a reading of evangelical Protestantism as capable of instilling individual morality, with ‘early teachers of the deaf [learning] sign language much as other missionaries of the time learned

¹³⁵ B.H. Payne, ‘Religious Privileges for the Deaf and Dumb’ in *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 1-3 July, 1885* (Margate, 1886), 87.

¹³⁶ B.H. Payne, ‘Religious Privileges’, 90.

¹³⁷ Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 144. Gunn’s argument of religion as a form of class division are also applicable here. See Gunn, ‘Ministry, Middle Class and the “Civilizing Mission”’, 22-36.

¹³⁸ Pemberton, ‘Deafness and Holiness’, 71.

American Indian or African languages'.¹³⁹ Whether the pupils and allies of the Cambrian Institution subscribed to this particular religious interpretation of deafness is uncertain, but it is important to note how aspects of Christianity could bring pupils together as well as subject them to images of deafness as suffering or ignorance.

The strength and type of religion practised, with regards to both denomination and fervour, could also differ amongst deaf institutions. Specific institutions for Jewish and Catholic deaf children existed and, as we saw in Chapter 4, one of the reasons for the departure of Principal Alexander Melville from the Cambrian Institution was his dissatisfaction with the supposed non-denominationalism of the Institution's teaching. Though it was primarily a political division amongst the Committee, the argument did encompass debate about educating the pupils. Melville thought the Unitarian aspect of the committee, as explained the Bishop of Llandaff who waded into the discussion, '[prevented] him from duly instructing the children in the principles of the Christian faith'.¹⁴⁰ The school which Melville formed at Llandaff differed, its records offering a picture of bombastic religiosity in contrast to the Cambrian Institution's somewhat more reserved attitude. A sermon at the Institution praised, for example, that there was now a second school 'where secular, and above all, *religious knowledge*, will be impressed on their otherwise blank minds.'¹⁴¹ Thus whilst its actual practice in everyday life may have varied, every Victorian voluntary deaf school was founded upon the Christian principles of charity and religious knowledge.

Morality, gender and discipline

An important part of the religious training offered at the Institution was the great significance its curriculum placed on the development of morality and good character. The Cambrian Institution was indistinct from many contemporary schools in its

¹³⁹ Douglas C. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 15-16.

¹⁴⁰ *The Cambrian*, 27 March 1863.

¹⁴¹ Llandaff School for the Deaf and Dumb *Report of the School for the Deaf and Dumb Established at Llandaff, 1962* (Llandaff, 1865).

association of religious instruction with ‘moral training’.¹⁴² Yet the latter should be explored further: the model deaf pupil which the school was constructing was somewhat at odds with the images of pity, innocence and affliction which were used to encourage the public to donate. By 1914, a different type of ‘character’ was being advertised at the heart of education:

Some regard education as the development of wage-earning capacity; some, as instruction in the duties of citizenship; some, as the teaching of a particular means of communication. Not a few educated persons are ready to do lip-homage to the description of education as “the formation of character”, but the very few are prepared to give practical effect to that accepted definition.¹⁴³

‘Character’, therefore, was by now the most important aspect of deaf education, and could be constructed as a secular quality as well as overtly religious. The goal was for the Cambrian Institution to produce a morally aware deaf child. The religious and industrial training detailed above were essential components of this teaching, but the entire personality and behaviour of the deaf child was seen as in need of shaping. The need to educate the lower ranks of society in moral principles was, of course, an important component in the discourses of charity and poverty largely dictated by the values of the middle classes, and given urgency with the widening of democracy.¹⁴⁴ The application of this to deaf children was complicated by the fact that they were presented as largely incapable of emotion, as blank slates for a specific moral code.

The practicalities were laid out in the 1892 Annual Report. This type of education would, it was hoped, lead to recognition of citizenship and patriotism, which could be

¹⁴² Gordon and Lawton trace the interrelation of ‘moral training’ and religious education in the Victorian schoolroom, noting that the ‘moral education campaign’ spearheaded by figures such as F.J. Gould and the Moral Instruction League attempted to separate religious from moral education, though this movement did not see a significant amount of success. Peter Gordon and Denis Lawton, *Curriculum Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Hodder and Stoughton), 78-100.

¹⁴³ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Seventh Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1914* (Swansea, 1914), 14.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, M.J.D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1786-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

expressed by emotional reaction: 'tokens of their sympathy and concern' could include, for example, a Royal bereavement. The piece also suggested that figures within the school were seen as essential to this emotional and moral development: 'It is observable how largely the humanizing influences of the lady teachers control the currents of the pupils' thoughts and lives.'¹⁴⁵ School, therefore, was presented not just as a centre of linguistic, industrial or religious training, but as a place to 'humanize' the child and teach a sense of emotion. This is part of a wider scenario recognised by Carolyn Steedman, who points out the link between the development of child psychology or physiology and wider social developments; reformers such as Margaret McMillan explored children's emotional and bodily development as a whole using new social interpretations of childhood.¹⁴⁶ As the examples from the Cambrian Institution suggest, this concept of emotion was informed heavily by social factors: the concept of citizen and nation, or the gendered qualities introduced by the female teachers.

As this suggests, the separation of boys and girls in the Institution corresponded to a moral code based heavily on domestic roles and gender exclusivity. Conservative values and male/female separation was, of course, a common feature of Victorian schooling.¹⁴⁷ The separation of boys and girls at the Cambrian Institution may have been motivated by complex attitudes towards the potential intermarriage of deaf children, as we saw in Chapter 5. Indeed, the architecture of the Institution was specifically designed to keep boys and girls as distant as possible. The Committee in 1859 recommended a division in the accommodation entrances because it was 'highly improper that male and female pupils should have one common place of entry thereto'.¹⁴⁸ An order was placed in 1899 to put obscured glass into the boys' dining room back windows 'to prevent boys looking into girls' department and talking to the

¹⁴⁵ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1892* (Swansea, 1892), 7.

¹⁴⁶ Steedman, 'Bodies, Figures and Physiology', 19-44.

¹⁴⁷ See Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 149. As Davin points out, gender separation in school did receive some criticism such as that of Robert Louis Stevenson in 1881: 'the little raft between the sexes is extraordinarily widened by simply teaching one set of catchwords to the boys and another to the girls'. Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 119.

¹⁴⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 5 July 1859. This, too, was common in most schools. See Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 19.

girls'.¹⁴⁹ The fact that this was happening at all suggests that male and female pupils were talking to each other and forming friendships. Furthermore, the actual impact of this separation should not be overstated. Some opportunities existed for male and female pupils to mix: the playground and outdoor exercise areas were accessible to both boys and girls.¹⁵⁰ However, it is still important to place this carefully-regulated attitude towards male and female relationships within the everyday environment of the Cambrian Institution.

The pupils had a number of lessons and tuition based on manners and conduct. This likely became more a part of the curriculum over time. By 1894, a specific course in 'manners' and 'training' appeared on the course list in the Annual Reports.¹⁵¹ The most notable way in which morality was actively enforced, however, was through the actual management of pupils, each of whom were screened for moral character and hygiene. The rules stated that children could be removed for 'contagious or infectious disease, or of gross misconduct, or of unfitness', and in many cases this was actively enforced.¹⁵² It was a regular occurrence for a pupil to be removed for 'extremely filthy' personal habits which were felt to threaten the moral upbringing of the other children.¹⁵³ This may well have been a response to wider educational developments to this extent - Davin points out that hygiene and cleanliness were seen to be a 'humanizing influence', and after the 1870 Act, social commentators expressed the hope that hygiene and cleanliness were to be instilled in children for the good of the race.¹⁵⁴ It is notable that, in the Cambrian Institution, this complaint often went hand-in-hand with accusations that they were 'intellectually deficient'. A boy who fell under this category, for example, was recommended to be sent to an 'Asylum for

¹⁴⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 6 August 1899.

¹⁵⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 28 May 1896.

¹⁵¹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1894* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1894), 26.

¹⁵² Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Thirtieth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1877* (Swansea: Herbert Jones, 1877).

¹⁵³ WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal's Reports 1860-76, 4 February 1863; WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 3 September 1873; 10 October 1873; 7 September 1870.

¹⁵⁴ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 141.

Idiots' at once.¹⁵⁵ Though the Institution was indeed open to all deaf applicants, some cases of personal habits were deemed damaging to the specific moral environment being created. A hierarchy of disability was implied, with mental disability occupying a lower position than the 'affliction' of deafness.

The moral environment which the children experienced was one of discipline and regiment, again linked to the interpretation of the uneducated deaf child as unaware of the need of discipline and obedience. We shall see in Chapter 7 how interpretations of discipline and punishment at home were tightly controlled and endlessly worried over, but some of the forms of discipline at school will be identified here. An 1896 article in the religious deaf magazine *Ephphatha* may have painted the Cambrian Institution as 'a refreshing spirit of *bon camaraderie* apparent' between the staff and pupils, but this balance centred on strict obedience: '[Payne's] word is law in the school, and none can command more cheerful obedience.'¹⁵⁶ This very much corresponds to McLoughlin's historical image of the deaf institution Principal as a 'stern and mighty figure' amongst the children.¹⁵⁷

The focus on discipline at the Cambrian Institution was rooted in the contemporary desire for obedient, well-disciplined children. This was affected by the Institution's status as a voluntary-run school, with subscribers expecting results: if a pupil or ex-pupil was seen to be immoral or undisciplined, the staff worried it would reflect badly on the training they received. When an article appeared in the *South West Daily News* which implied that a 24-year-old pupil had stayed in the school receiving money from the Board of Guardians, Principal Payne wrote to the school's Honorary Secretary expressing concern that 'the public might draw the inference that he was still in the position of a pupil here; that discipline was so lax that he was allowed to go about and do as he pleased'¹⁵⁸ The anxieties say much about how public discourses of the deaf

¹⁵⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 3 September 1873.

¹⁵⁶ *Ephphatha: A Monthly Magazine, Published in the Interests of the Deaf*, 1 (1896) 78.

¹⁵⁷ McLoughlin, *History of the Education of the Deaf*, 8.

¹⁵⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 March 1903. This appears to have been a matter of confusion and miscommunication over finances: the pupil, who had left as a lodger in Christmas 1899, was being paid for maintenance by the Board of Guardians, of which the Principal claimed to be unaware.

pupil dictated their moral education: this exchange suggests that, if pupils were not seen to learn the principles of discipline, obedience and work, the school feared being viewed as a failure.

The Cambrian Institution balanced the public narrative of the innocent, afflicted deaf child with a doctrine of self-help and strict discipline. One area where these two attitudes became conflicted was the use of corporal punishment. Children at the school almost certainly received disciplining actions and punishment, but the act of striking a child was genuinely reviled. An assistant teacher was disciplined in 1851 by the committee for inflicting corporal punishment 'contrary to [the Principal's] orders'. He was questioned and replaced two months later, possibly as a result.¹⁵⁹ In 1872, the 'slight punishment' of a girl resulted in the need for communication with her father.¹⁶⁰ This avoidance of corporal punishment could well be explained as parallel to the more general Victorian pattern of a reduction in violent discipline programmes both in home and at school.¹⁶¹ Anna Davin points out that a number of teachers in Victorian and Edwardian London opposed corporal punishment, particularly for girls and infants.¹⁶² Yet the Cambrian Institution went further than this and took into account public discourses of deafness. Discussing a misbehaving boy in 1895, Principal Payne wrote, 'Public opinion would not sanction the severe corporal punishment of a deaf and dumb lad, so my hands are in a measure tied no matter what the boy might do.'¹⁶³ The boy was dismissed instead. The fact that pupils avoided corporal punishment was partly, therefore, a result of a struggle between the need for a programme of morality and discipline and recognition of public attitudes towards disability. This appears to have been the case at other institution as well - Boyce's study shows the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb moving from using corporal punishment for lying,

¹⁵⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/1, Minute Book 1847-55, 7 March 1851; 21 March 1851; May 1851. No specific date exists for the final reference.

¹⁶⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, Minute book, 14 February 1872.

¹⁶¹ Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 197; Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 134.

¹⁶² Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 124.

¹⁶³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Lewis, 29 May 1895.

disobedience and theft in the 1830s towards a lack of corporal punishment by the 1880s.¹⁶⁴

Some of the pupils may well have subscribed to the Cambrian Institution's system of discipline, but it should not be assumed that all would have passively accepted it. Acts of resistance and response can be seen in the internal school records. It is important to point out from the outset that the misbehaviour which appears in the records might not be an accurate reflection of how frequently and severely pupils misbehaved, but this is an aspect of everyday life which is worth investigating and has largely been ignored by historians of special education. Everyday acts of misbehaviour present a challenge, as it is difficult to judge whether to interpret potentially minor acts of misbehaviour as a rejection of the school's principles. A number of historians working on children's experience have utilised this interpretation. Stephen Humphries, for example, presents a perspective on working-class educational life in which activities such as attacking teachers, school strikes and even 'larking about' are portrayed as an expression of class conflict.¹⁶⁵ Robert Adams has also examined the 'largely neglected' area of child protest, seeing it as an important constant in the history of education and a crucial site of children's agency.¹⁶⁶ In the case of deaf children, it is important to ask whether the acts of rebellion in the Cambrian were a direct rejection of the education and interpretation of disability prescribed to the child, or simply part of the experience of all schoolchildren, regardless of the type of their education. It is extremely difficult to attach the interpretation that misbehaviour represents a rejection of institutionalisation - as Davin points out, 'complaints of extreme insolence and insubordination are to be found in almost any logbook'.¹⁶⁷ The pupils' motivations are largely invisible in the sources, but resistance and dissatisfaction may well have been part of their motivation.

¹⁶⁴ Boyce, *History of the Yorkshire Residential School*, 6, 46.

¹⁶⁵ Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?: An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth, 1889-1939* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), esp 87, 112.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Adams, *Protests by Pupils: Empowerment, Schooling and the State* (London: Falmer, 1991).

¹⁶⁷ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 124.

Pupils of the Cambrian Institution could certainly misbehave. Acts of ‘indecent and insubordination’ were reported and sometimes dealt with using expulsion.¹⁶⁸ Other stories of rebellious children become visible in Minute Books and letters: mischief, fights and damage to property were all recorded. Sometimes details and potential causes were mentioned which might have been a result of the relationships with pupils and teachers or their everyday routine at school. An argument between pupils resulted in a girl pushing a pupil’s head through a large glass panel, which was explained by the Principal as a product of her being ‘awkward and [requiring] training’.¹⁶⁹ A pupil was expelled in 1908 for striking two staff members. The violent act was seen as potentially prone to copying by his peers, ‘the Deaf being influenced, as, from the very nature of their infirmity, they must be taught and trained, by what they see – be example only’.¹⁷⁰ A few months after he had left, the pupil’s father wanted him re-admitted after supposedly the boy had been ‘running loose in the streets’. ‘It is easy’, wrote the Principal, ‘to understand the father’s desire to throw the boy back upon us at the expense of the moral injury to this school.’¹⁷¹ The incident suggests that acts of violence and resistance could take place at the Institution for a variety of reasons. In this case, as we shall see in Chapter 7, poor home lives were blamed for many of the traits deemed immoral.

One act which may have sent a message of resistance and response was children running away. This might have been irregular but several instances were noted of pupils running away on the first day they entered the Cambrian Institution. Two boys who ran away together in 1889 were found, and the incident did not occur again because ‘they understand that they must do what their teachers tell them to do whether they like it or not.’¹⁷² Once again, resistance was discouraged as being against the moral code of the Institution, and the boys’ behaviour was blamed on poor home discipline. Other cases of running away provide the historian with a rare glimpse of

¹⁶⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, Minute book, 6 February 1861.

¹⁶⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal’s Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Gwilym Thomas, 19 September 1906.

¹⁷⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal’s Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 7 December 1908.

¹⁷¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal’s Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 6 May 1909.

¹⁷² WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to the Reverend Tom Reeves, 18 July 1889.

the reactions deaf children might have had to their school: not all accepted their new lives in the Institution. Upon arrival in 1899, a new boy who was admitted by a School Board Officer ‘without notice, and without a friend with whom we could exchange information’, ran away as the staff were listing his clothes, and was found later in the police station.¹⁷³ Cases such as this are important, as they provide clues to the reactions which more pupils may well have had. This example also demonstrates the Institution's sympathetic response to his disappearance, recognising the boy's reluctance to enter school. The sources hint at unease with their new lives in the Institution, though it is questionable how far this was a comment on the Cambrian Institution in particular, as their exits on the first day may well have been because of a fear of new surroundings and the removal from their parents. Nevertheless, reactions such as this are difficult to detect considering the sources available, which almost all come from the perspective of those in charge of the Institution. Resistance may not have been widespread but as Colin Heywood writes, those instances that do appear need to be recorded: children, he argues, were not simply ‘passive victims’ of education: ‘they had some capacity to select, manipulate, resist and above all escape with their friends.’¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has presented snapshots of everyday life at the Institution, with a view to representing the perspective of the staff and the pupils. Yet aside from occasional glimpses of active resistance such as running away and property damage, little exists of the pupils’ own reactions to schooling. It is only the unconventional reactions deemed recordable by the staff of the Institution which have been captured. Many pupils, of course, might have enjoyed or been indifferent to their schooling. Yet it is still possible, using the Reports, Minute Books, Letter Books and educational plans, to see a glimpse of what life was like for the children of the Cambrian Institution and how this developed over time. The material environment, the staff and the changing curriculum can all be recovered, and form a historical picture of the deaf child.

¹⁷³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 17 January 1899.

¹⁷⁴ Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 171.

All of these aspects were connected to wider discourses of deafness, disability, education and childhood. Many parts of school life were constructed around narratives of deafness, which could either correspond or deviate from those presented in public at demonstrations or in printed publicity material. Public demonstration, as we saw in Chapter 4, might have presented an image of deafness as tragic and in need of sympathy, and some aspects of the children's education was directly connected with this public image: corporal punishment was dispensed with partly due to concerns about public reaction to striking deaf children, and the programme of written learning was built around the notion of the uneducated deaf child as a 'foreigner' in need of total ethical and linguistic training. The interconnected development of religious and moral training was also informed by this concept, as these qualities were necessary to educate pupils seen as in particular need of Christian education and a standardised moral code. The Institution was based on religious interpretations of deafness from the outset, but religious teaching became more ingrained in the curriculum according to resources and Principals' teaching styles. Elsewhere, a doctrine of self-help and independence was being formed, undoubtedly influenced by images of the deaf child as a 'burden' to friends and family. These interpretations all used narratives of deafness at their heart, though it is important to note that identities of other children in mainstream schools would have been built around these images as well: both special education and the general education of pauper or 'ragged' children could be informed by concepts of ignorance, immorality and self-help.¹⁷⁵

Whilst these concepts were important, to present each aspect of life in the Institution as a direct act of Foucauldian surveillance or a deliberate manipulation of disability would be to ignore the complexity of life in the school. Parts of the school experience – for example, the extent to which institutions taught trades, the reserved and largely non-denominational attitude to religious training, and the gruelling but respected role of the teachers and staff – cannot be explained by a reading of institutional life either as a progressive achievement or as a deliberate act of social discipline. Neither should they be seen solely as a reaction to the pupils' deafness, as developments in

¹⁷⁵ See for example, Sanderson, *Education, Economic Change and Society*, 20; Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, 108.

conditions and curriculum could be interpreted in some respects as following a similar pattern to mainstream Victorian education, responding to widespread fears of illiteracy and immorality. In particular, the written curriculum - including the list of subjects taught - grew over time at largely a similar rate to mainstream schools. So too did the emphasis on physical education and health, which could be seen to respond to broader conceptions of children's health, wellbeing and nature.

It is therefore important to note that special education institutions developed their policy within this more national context as well. This could, of course, be interpreted both as part of a programme of normalisation for disabled children, and as the Victorian deaf institution's natural interlocking with more general, mainstream discourses on education and childhood. At the same time, it is crucial to discern how pupils reacted to these changes, despite their voices being obscured by the institutional sources. The focus of the next chapter will shift to an area of special education which helps the historian further understand the situation and potential agency of deaf children, through narratives largely ignored in special education history: the home and leisure lives of the pupils.

Chapter 7

Home Life and Leisure

As residential pupils in an institution with strict hours, only a small amount of most of the children's time at the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was spent on leisurely pursuits or being with family, friends or guardians at home. However, the records of the Institution do shed some light into this key area. The 'Hints to Parents and Friends of Deafmutes', which appeared in every Annual Report from 1888, offer a picture of how the Institution wanted its pupils to behave in those moments when they were not under the watchful eye of the Principal, Matron or teachers. When at home, parents and friends were advised to punish all disobedience and give instructions 'where he likes it or not', test the child on spelling and writing, and 'treat him with prejudice and justice as well as kindness'.¹ The instructions tell us little about what the children actually did outside the Institution, but instead reveal how leisure and home life was presented to the public – as an area that needed to be carefully monitored. Educational, moral and religious training could be lost if the child was not treated in exactly the way same at home.

Home and leisure lives are important lines of enquiry for disability history. The overlap between leisure studies and disability has recently been addressed by Cara Aitchison, who argues for the construction of a dialogue between the fields of leisure and disability studies. Leisure studies, she argues, is dominated by 'hegemonic definitions of leisure' and the idealised bodies suitable for it, a discourse which largely excludes disabled people.² Though her research is centred on contemporary rather than historical issues, the argument is still a valid one: disability and deafness are amongst the 'socially excluded identities' which the history of leisure is beginning to encompass. Recent work on various institutions has begun to situate patients and

¹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Thirty-First Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1888* (Swansea: The Cambrian Steam Printing Works, 1888).

² Cara Aitchison, 'Exclusive Discourses: Leisure Studies and Disability', *Leisure Studies*, 28:4 (2009), 375-386.

inmates in the context of their homes and outside lives, as part of a methodological focus on experience and agency. David Wright's study of the Earlswood Asylum is an example of this approach. His research uses a method of cross-referencing censuses and patient records, arguing that a study of mental disability in the nineteenth century 'cannot be understood independently of an analysis of familial and community patterns of care which existed outside the walls of asylum'.³ Though the subject matter of mental and sensory disability have significant contextual differences, his approach is an important one for the historian of special education institutions, in recognising the pupil's life outside the walls of the institution.

This chapter will therefore argue for the children's home lives and leisure time not just as another site of regulation and discipline, but as a potential area in which the pupils' agency is most visible. Home and leisure time was a chance to develop relationships, bonds and communities; and reports of holidays at home and absenteeism suggest that pupils could have active lives outside the Institution and varied relationships with family members, relatives, friends or other figures of authority in their homes and districts. This chapter will first look at the backgrounds from which children at the Cambrian Institution came, and ask what can be gathered about familial attitudes at home. It will then focus on designated leisure time, by examining the holidays and the organised school leisure periods, framed as valid sites of historical agency and discourse. The research is, of course, limited both by historical distance and source issues. Few records exist which offer an insight directly into the homes of the children, though the Principal's Letter Book shows some dealings with parents and guardians. The census will be used where possible as well as articles from local newspapers which portray a visible and emerging community of deaf people in Swansea and Wales, one which was often centred around the Institution itself. However, the limitations of these sources and the lack of full pupil records make any firm conclusions difficult, and rule out a full, quantitative collective

³ David Wright, *Mental Disability in Victorian England: The Earlswood Asylum 1847-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7. The history of nursing has also utilised this approach by focusing on individual patient records in specific institutions. See for example, Sue Hawkins, *Nursing and Women's Labour in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2010); Anne Borsay, *Medicine and Charity in Georgian Bath: A Social History of the General Infirmary, c.1739-1830* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

study of the pupils, their families or communities.⁴ Despite this, the findings here will begin to illuminate the neglected personal lives of pupils in special education institutions.

Relationships at home

By looking carefully at institutional sources, some insight can be gathered about the family lives and parental relationships of the children, complementing the demography and geography of the children that were introduced in Chapter 3. Of course, many did not come from a parental family background: the 1884 Annual Report stated that twenty-six out of the fifty-five pupils then in the Institution were orphans.⁵ These children often lived with relatives or in other homes and, when going home for the holidays, were handled by relieving officers, parochial officers or another relative.⁶ The Committee tried to ensure that these children had a place in the Institution despite their social position. One woman was assured ‘that the Committee do not consider [the child’s] illegitimacy a barrier to entering her into the Institution.’⁷ Nevertheless, these children were viewed as an area of caution for the staff. One entry in 1898 was described as ‘illegitimate; ten years old; and lives with her grand-mother, who is poor’, and a check was carried out to see if she had committed any offence.⁸ The pupil’s case, however, was indeed a picture of poverty and ill-preparation for

⁴ Lawrence Stone defines this approach as ‘Prosopography’, ‘the investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives’. See Lawrence Stone, ‘Prosopography’, *Daedalus*, 100:1 (1971), 46-79.

⁵ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1884* (Swansea, 1884), 5.

⁶ Data collected from a spreadsheet of letters for the holidays. The circumstances of the nineteenth century working class orphan, who could be given an ‘artificial family’ or ‘locus parentis’ by their schools, are explored in James Walvin, *A Child’s World: A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914* (Middlesex, 1982), 14. Murdoch, however, stresses that the image of the helpless orphan presented by many philanthropic organisations and institutions was at odds with the actual situation on the streets of London, and that most institutionalised children were not orphans. Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 2.

⁷ West Glamorgan Archive Service, E/Cam 1/2, Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Minute Book 1855-66, 14 November 1866.

⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal’s Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 25 October 1898. It is unclear whether the principal was referring an ‘offence’ caused by the ten-year-old girl or her grandmother.

school: she was admitted with 'her hair... in a bad state', and 'no outfit, not even a change'.⁹

For some pupils, the Institution's records provide some representation of the family relations which they experienced at home.¹⁰ A minority of children were sent from families where parents and siblings were deaf. As we saw in Chapter 5, the internal attitudes at the Cambrian Institution did not always match the eugenically-informed warnings against intermarriage projected to the public. However, eyebrows were raised if the child was sent by deaf parents. Concerns were made in 1909, for instance, that a pupil's mother 'is deaf and dumb and otherwise affected'. Her name did not appear on the pupil register 'and it appears she is unmarried. Has she been educated?'¹¹ Along with detailing the existence of deaf families, the attitudes shown here demonstrate the Institution's desire for information about the girls' parents. Her lack of presence on the school's records also show how the Institution presented itself as a central source of information for local deaf people. Having deaf siblings, too, affected the children's home lives. Three deaf brothers attended school together at one point in 1904, but all were taken earlier than the five years recommended. The brothers were said to 'converse a good deal with each other by signs', but 'they did not receive much literal help at home'.¹² The brothers could provide communication and company for each other by being able to communicate in signs before and after entering school, as well as during the holidays.

Asking questions about pupils' home lives can help illuminate wider social attitudes towards deaf children. Some historians of deaf schools have identified a sense of shame which parents felt towards deaf children, which could potentially make it hard

⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 1 November 1898.

¹⁰ This accordance with the historiographical arguments from David Wright and indeed Roy Porter which call to locate systems of care in the home as well as institutions. Wright, *Mental Disability*; Roy Porter, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below', *Theory and Society*, 14:2 (1985), 175-198.

¹¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 27 May 1909.

¹² WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 8 June 1904.

to find pupils at all.¹³ Occasionally, records suggest that the Institution dealt with children who were not deaf, but had been sent to the Institution as a way of removing them from the house. A 'mentally defective' child was sent away in 1905: 'the mother is apt to say it is deaf in order to get it into an Institution.'¹⁴ For some parents, therefore, it is likely that the Institution acted as a place to remove their children from the home. Yet many other factors undoubtedly existed informing the choice to send pupils to the school, including legislation compelling them to do so. Principal Payne informed a local government inspector that parents "'sent" [their children] here because they chose or because since 1893 they were compelled to send them to school.'¹⁵

As this suggests, whilst the 1893 Act ensured some parents sent their deaf children to school, for many others it was a conscious decision to send them there. It may have been the case that some parents sent their children to the Institution after experiencing family breakdown and domestic strife. This could result in pupils being, or feeling, left behind or ignored by those at home. A boy in 1876 had his train fare paid by a philanthropic patron to return to his uncle's house for the Christmas holidays. 'The poor lad', wrote the Principal, was 'under the impression that his father has altogether deserted him'.¹⁶ Another returned to the Institution, his 'down-heartedness' being 'a good deal due to the presence of his father' according to a letter sent to the boy's mother.¹⁷ Other examples suggest that tumultuous home relationships meant the Institution could act as a method for parents to remove their children from the home. This may well have been the case for one boy whose parental relationships were logged in 1906. According to the school, his mother 'wished he was dead' when he was five. This apparently meant the boy's 'disposition and temper [were] uncertain,

¹³ Anthony J. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf, 1829-1979* (Doncaster: Doncaster M.B.C. Museums and Arts Services, c.1990).

¹⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 27 April 1905. Original underlining.

¹⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to J.J. Bircha, 8 February 1893.

¹⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Gardoe, 18 December 1876.

¹⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs M. Davies, 1 February 1889.

owing to the home.¹⁸ It is undeniable that a number of pupils would have begun their education in the Cambrian Institution amidst a backdrop of poverty, neglect or family difficulties.

Yet whilst this would have been a reality for a number of the Institution's pupils, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the pupils' family lives. The picture the sources present was likely a realistic one, but it is still filtered through the official language and opinion of those in charge of the Institution rather than the pupils or parents themselves. Moreover, the question remains as to whether some children's difficult family lives were explained by a sense of shame or prejudice of their deafness. Disabled children and special education institutions have largely been excluded from the historiographical debate on the relationship between children and their parents. This discussion was built partly out of criticism of historians such as Edward Shorter and Lawrence Stone, who had argued for a linear narrative from an uncaring past of neglect and abuse, to present standards of parental care and affection.¹⁹ Harry Hendrick outlines the consensus among many social historians that this concept of emotional progression is deeply flawed. As well as being unfair to simply brand parents of the past as uninterested in caring for their children, historians have pointed to other factors which might have changed parent-child relationships. For example, Michael Anderson highlights family sizes and the economic constraints of working-class families which may have unavoidably affected attitudes towards children, whilst Linda Pollock refutes the idea that parents of the past did not show any affection towards their children.²⁰ Though many records of chaotic and abusive households exist, it would be unfair to characterise the majority of parents as uncaring. 'It is impossible,' writes Ludmilla Jordanova, 'to separate children from their

¹⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Josiah B. Jones, 17 September 1906.

¹⁹ Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London: Fontana, 1977); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977). These historians do not, of course, tar all Victorian families like this, but both use a problematic comparative approach. Shorter, for example, juxtaposes the generalised lifestyles of Victorian men and women to today's improved standards; whilst Stone argues that before 1750, the concept of the family was largely devoid of emotion or affection.

²⁰ Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 16-27. See also Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 44-66; Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 262-8.

social and cultural setting', and to do so would be to impose a different set of value systems.²¹ Many different social and personal factors would have informed how parents dealt with their children.

As such, a number of different relationships between parents and children in the Cambrian Institution are visible in the records. Some pupils were seen to show great attachment to their parents, who would accompany them to the start of a term at the Institution or send them letters from home. It was recorded that a boy almost cried when Principal Payne showed him a letter from his father and signed 'moustache' to him, a reminder of his father's facial hair; the Principal was pleased 'with his attachment to you'.²² This emotional relationship can also be seen in the cases of pupils 'fretting' when returning to school or being dropped off.²³ Of course, it is extremely problematic for historians to claim they can gauge children's emotional response from institutional records, but these pupils' relations certainly suggest that Institutions were not completely incompatible with parental love and relationships. Deaf children are here seen to likely have experienced the same spectrum of parental relationships as other children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Sometimes, the Institution's staff had their own perspective of the children's feelings towards their home lives. It was noted when pupils would not react to news from home such as this case, in which news was passed on of the death of a pupil's brother:

He does not seem to be much affected. His feelings have not been much awakened yet, and they are not very deep, partly because there is not so much intercourse between him and those at home as there would be if he

²¹ Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Children in History: Concepts of Nature and Society' in Geoffrey Scarre (ed.), *Children, Parents and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 15. For a similar perspective see also Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 116

²² WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr David Jones, 3 March 1880.

²³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr William Schmack, 16 February 1897; WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Morris, 24 November 1905.

could hear and speak. So I hope they will talk to him, and cultivate his affections.²⁴

The pupil had eight siblings, but he only gave the names of four brothers, 'and he says it is the biggest who is dead.' It was recommended that he learn the names of his other brothers.²⁵ Whether this was an accurate reflection of the pupil's relationship at home is difficult to tell; it may well hint at some of the effects of communication difficulties between hearing parents and their deaf children. However, it is noteworthy that the Institution directly linked the pupil's lack of emotion to his deafness.

When discussing the pupils' home lives, the Institution's staff often showed suspicion and sometimes outright contempt for the pupils' parents. They were blamed for misbehaviour or immoral habits shown by the pupils on their entry or return to school. Dirtiness, lack of clothing and unsatisfactory hygiene could all be attributed to poor parenting. As the school's medical resources and facilities expanded, the message became stronger. In the 1911 Annual Report, the poor health of some pupils was blamed on 'perversity', a poor hospital system, and 'ignorance on the part of the parents'.²⁶ Other attacks on parents' upbringing were conveyed through further Annual Reports. The lack of home training and continuation of education was often raised. The Annual Report of 1900 complained that pupils were 'over-indulged and given too much of their own way'. It is interesting to note the legislative framework used in this criticism. The Principal continued that, 'Notwithstanding the attention which the country has during the last thirty years given to education, the training of the young remains a subject which is not properly understood, and it is therefore not surprising if it is not duly carried into practice into the homes of the deaf.'²⁷ This attitude was not exclusive to the Cambrian Institution. The Royal Commission on the

²⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Lewis, 1 March 1892.

²⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Lewis, 1 March 1892.

²⁶ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Fourth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1911* (Swansea, 1911), 9.

²⁷ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Third Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1900* (Swansea, 1900), 10.

Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c. of the United Kingdom of 1889 complained that the majority of deaf children had been 'entirely neglected and allowed to run wild' at home before entering Institutions.²⁸

The opinion that deaf children were not being sufficiently trained at home was a general one which, it was argued, affected most deaf children. However, individual parents were singled out as a potential cause of children's immorality and bad habits. Fathers, in particular, were seen as potential bad influences. Concern was raised about their character, and in some cases letters were sent to religious leaders or other local figures to avoid the pupils being influenced by certain fathers of disrepute. The Honorary Secretary was asked in 1881 to inform a boy's local minister of 'the Committee's strong feeling of disapprobation' against his father's conduct, 'which is most selfish and unfeeling.'²⁹ Occasionally, the acquisition of money or assistance was caught up in these moral concerns about children's parents. The Merthyr Board of Guardians refused to pay towards a child in 1866 'in consequence of the bad behaviour and indifference of the father'.³⁰

The children's deafness was portrayed as making them especially vulnerable to moral corruption, but these attitudes could mirror more general contemporary fears of working-class laziness and immorality. These concerns gradually became part of the social and legislative landscape throughout the Cambrian Institution's existence. In England, the 'condition of England' debate amongst reformers campaigned against the abuse and neglect of children, blaming parents for crime amongst young people. The formation of the London – and later National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in 1884 gave such concerns an institutional outlet; the Children's Charter (Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act) 1889 was a legislative framework to deal with abusive parents.³¹ Though extreme incidents of drink and violence may well have been a reality in many homes, the picture of chaos which

²⁸ Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c., of the United Kingdom (1899), 333.

²⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 9 May 1881.

³⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 2 May 1866.

³¹ Heywood, *History of Childhood*, 106-9.

reformers held was based on rigid class boundaries. Working-class families were seen to violate the moral and social codes set out by reformers.³² Lydia Murdoch has made this argument in her study of philanthropic societies such as Barnado's homes: parents were often portrayed in the society's publicity as villainous, drunken or violent.³³

The distrust of parents at the Cambrian Institution, then, seems to reflect the contemporary demonization of the working-class parent, who in the Institution's publicity material is pitted at odds with both the innocence of childhood and the helplessness of disability. However, whilst class clearly played a part in these attacks, criticism of parents was not automatically attributed to social status. A report in 1868 made charges of indifference at a parent as a boy returned home from his vacation without a change of clothes. The boy was sent home to procure a school outfit, with the parents stating they were unable to pay. 'As I understand, the father is in receipt of good wages,' stated Principal Alexander Molison. 'I believe the case is one of carelessness and indifference rather than poverty.'³⁴

Though many parents were singled out as neglectful and uncaring, deaf children were also portrayed as particularly susceptible to 'spoiling'. This, of course, corresponded to ideals of character, modesty and frugality. In fact, the seemingly opposite qualities of indifference and overindulgence were both applied in general to the parents of deaf children. It was noted in 1905 that 'the tendency is to spoil rather than train deaf children, and that few practice obedience as we understand the duty.' Thus instead of neglecting their children, some parents were seen to show *too much* affection to them: 'We think it a pity that young children have to be taken from home at all, and believe that parental love covers a multitude of parental sins', but spoiling children seen to be in need of educational and moral training necessitated leaving their homes.³⁵ The school's attempts to introduce children to these values, however, came with an acknowledgement of parental love and attachment. A parent was warned in

³² For an example of this argument, see F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society* (London: Fontana, 1985), 128.

³³ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, 17.

³⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal's Reports 1860-76, 6 May 1868.

³⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Dr Elliott, October 1905.

1889 that 'although he is very dear to us we do not spoil him.' It was hoped the child 'will be treated at home just like the other children'.³⁶ With the 'other children' presumably referring to his six hearing brothers and sisters, this suggests this particular brand of 'spoiling' was seen as specific to deaf children.

Of course, reformers elsewhere were targeting accusations of spoiling at working-class parents. As Anna Davin points out, evidence given to the 1904 Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration had complained that working-class children were 'a great deal more spoiled than children of the better class' and 'given things to play with which they ought not to have'. However, this was often replaced in working-class homes by recognition of economic responsibility after infancy, something largely absent from the Cambrian Institution communication.³⁷ Pollock argues these attitudes could be massively generalised and subjective: there had always been variations in discipline and parenting of children.³⁸ It is, indeed, important to note these variations in attitudes with regards to the pupils of the Cambrian Institution. The communication between school and parent illustrates the complexity of relationships at home, something rarely discussed in the study of disabled children.

Writing, visiting and response

With parents and associates looked upon so skeptically, the question was raised of how much pupils should be allowed to see their friends and family. School rules from 1888 stated that pupils were allowed to write home to parents and friends 'once capable'.³⁹ From 1892, Annual Reports began to include letters written by the children to their parents at home amongst the 'pupils' compositions'. As explored in Chapter 6, these are deeply problematic as sources, and one must be cautious when viewing them as letters home to family. One boy, who had been at the institution for four years, who

³⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr H Noble, 3 October 1889. Information taken from 1891 census.

³⁷ Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram, 1996), 19.

³⁸ Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 199.

³⁹ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1888*.

was said to have written to his parents asking them whether his family were well and also observed that ‘there are hundreds of people dying by cholera in China’ and that Lord Tennyson died this year.⁴⁰ It is hard to believe the Report’s claims that these letters had been unaltered and written without any outside influence: the somewhat bizarre list of political events displayed seemed to be passing down the knowledge and opinions of the teachers. Nevertheless, the printed compositions do show pupils talking to parents and talking about their time at school.

Furthermore, records do exist of pupils contacting their parents, even if it is unlikely that their letters were as elaborate as those selected for publication. The school began to hold a weekly letter-writing session, where replies from parents were often explained by signs to younger children. In some cases this was seen as little more than practice of written English. The letters were marked for grammar and spelling and returned, with parents sometimes warned not to attach ‘too much importance’ to the actual content of what was written.⁴¹ Nevertheless, a small number of children’s letters from the later period have survived and shed some light into family backgrounds and home life. A girl’s letter to her father in 1906 asked, ‘When are you coming down to see me? I do want to see you all’. She explained that she was fond of the teachers and pupils, but continued, ‘Dear father do not forget to answer this time. I have a lot to say to you... do you know how long I have to stop here? I am longing for home.’⁴² This sentimental letter suggests that, with such short holiday times, writing letters to family or friends might have been a source of comfort and communication to pupils feeling homesick. It also suggests a degree of expectation from the parents, who wanted to hear how the pupils were doing at school and see examples of their work. As well as this, records exist of a pupil corresponding with the clerk to his local

⁴⁰ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1892* (Swansea, 1892), 14.

⁴¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal’s Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Thomas Menmery, 4 September 1899. The first sentences the boy learned and wrote were, again, related to creating awareness of his identity: ‘I am a boy’, ‘I am not a girl’, ‘I am deaf’, ‘I was not born deaf’ and, alongside these, ‘I have a sore leg’.

⁴² WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal’s Letter Book 1906-9, Girl’s letter home, undated.

School Board, suggesting relationships may also have been built between official figures other than those of the Institution.⁴³

Letter-writing was also a potential source of unwanted influence. A local minister was contacted when a boy was seen talking of writing home to his mother: 'I suppose such a correspondence would be undesirable.'⁴⁴ Such attitudes were also extended to the idea of pupils visiting their parents. Whilst the holidays were the only official time for visiting, a family death or emergency caused some parents to ask for their pupils to return home. This was dealt with in moral and emotional terms on a case-by-case basis. By this reasoning, a boy was allowed to visit his father in jail because the boy 'sympathises with his father' and hopes he will learn from his mistakes.⁴⁵ In one particularly painful case, it was decided to avoid a girl visiting her mother in prison despite the girl answering 'yes' to being asked (this was, it was thought, only to 'please the enquirer'). Having only recently started at school, it was thought 'her sentiments require cultivation as well as her intellect, and little was done with either at home.'⁴⁶ With the majority of deaf children seen as emotionally vulnerable, particularly those early in their education, the chance of upsetting or negatively influencing them was rarely taken.

Parents had limited opportunities to respond whilst their children were in the Institution, but some could have a role in shaping the discussion of their children's education and when they could see them. Many took an argumentative tone, and parents who wanted their children back sometimes saw the Institution as keeping an undue hold on them.⁴⁷ One parent who articulated this view received the blunt assertion that, 'You seem to think that I have some interest in keeping the boy here [as

⁴³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Hugh E.H. James, Esq., 8 April 1895.

⁴⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Reverend C.J. Proctor, 25 September 1878.

⁴⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to the governor, H.M.L. Prison, Swansea, 27 May 1889; Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Anne Lewis, 27 May 1889.

⁴⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Pardoe, 23 January 1879.

⁴⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, The responses of parents are not available, however by reading into the letters sent by the Principal and the tone of the letters, some of the content of their original letters may be ascertained.

a pupil]. I have none ... [the boy] is not the sort of boy a teacher would like to keep to show off how much he knows.’⁴⁸ The parent, in this case, seemed to be suggesting that the school was denying the pupils access to friends or family. Of course, these angry responses may have been atypical and often the Principal sent letters to the same dissatisfied individuals multiple times.⁴⁹ However, they demonstrate that parents could have a presence in the discourses of their children’s education.

Some parents wrote to try and remove their children from school, which was constantly resisted, often through a drawn-out series of letters trying to convince them to keep their pupil in the Institution.⁵⁰ Mostly this occurred long before the pupil had completed their recommended period of education. Deaf children, it was feared, would be unable to cope should they not complete their time in the Institution. In 1892, the Principal described one father as ‘under a delusion about [his son] and fancies he is equal to those who lost hearing and understand books.’⁵¹ Here, the early onset of the pupil’s deafness informed the Institution’s strong resistance to the parent’s request. This exchange, too, was far from unique to the Cambrian Institution. As early as 1844, W.R. Scott – the principal of the West of England Institution for the Deaf and Dumb – criticised ‘ill judging parents or niggardly guardians’ who take them early from deaf institutions.⁵² In the Cambrian Institution, the discussion of taking children home early mostly seemed to end at a series of letters, but parents could be true to their word. A number of parents or guardians came to collect pupils and simply did not send them back.⁵³

⁴⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Rees Davies, 4 February 1891.

⁴⁹ Some parents or relatives may have been unwilling to intervene or respond. F.M.L. Thompson suggests (referring to mainstream schools) that parents could see teachers and school as ‘parental substitutes’, therefore they would have had little input. Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 151.

⁵⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Miss Phillips, 15 July 1891. Parents who wanted to take their children often received the most cutting and dismissive responses. This parent was told the principal expected ‘a more sensible letter’ from her.

⁵¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal’s Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 21 July 1892.

⁵² W.R. Scott, *The Deaf and Dumb: their Position in Society, and the Principles of their Education, Considered* (London: Joseph Graham, 1844), 38. Scott’s position added the common worry that the pupil will ‘cling to signs’ rather than written language.

⁵³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, Minute book, 2 March 1885; Letter from B.H. Payne to J.W. Nicholas, 9 September 1906

The reasons for pupils being taken out were various, and they continue to reveal the attitudes of parents towards their deaf children. Trade and economic necessity were common reasons. The Principal replied angrily to a mother in 1892 who removed her boy to become a barber, trying to convince the parent not just to return him to school but to find a better trade for him: 'It is of poor encouragement to us', argued the Principal, that she had set this limit for him.⁵⁴ Yet the reality of economic concerns for many parents saw them trying to take their children out of school and contribute to the family economy.⁵⁵ Children were also called back for domestic reasons, particularly girls who provided domestic services at home. Though one pupil had reached the age of sixteen and completed the recommended seven years of school, the Principal worried that her mother who wanted her 'at home' should not be granted this request: 'she is delicate, and not strong enough yet to be confined all day, and perhaps work late...'⁵⁶ As Davin notes in her study of working-class London, a family emergency or trying circumstances might have necessitated sending a child home, particularly girls required to look after relatives.⁵⁷

Related to withdrawal for family circumstances was the issue of absenteeism and late returns from school. Though many early instances occurred of parents sending back their children late, it nevertheless presented an escalating problem, judging by the increasingly urgent tone given to its discussion in later Letter Books. Absenteeism was, of course, always visible, and this may be a case of the Institution's attitude turning to one of strictness in its later years. Again, the reasons for absenteeism hint at the kind of situations to which the children went home. A list of absentees appeared in 1895 which ranged from farmers who 'want assistance in the harvest', to a mother who was 'unreliable, and of a very low class', and a girl 'utterly spoiled by a foolish mother', and others who had simply been withdrawn by Boards of Guardians.⁵⁸ Often the pupils were caught up in familial or social issues - one mother attributed a girl's

⁵⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 24 January 1893; Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Thomas Davies, 14 February 1893.

⁵⁵ Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working-Class Children in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 233.

⁵⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 13 June 1905.

⁵⁷ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 98-9.

⁵⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 29 August 1895.

late return to a strike in Cardiff.⁵⁹ As this was being discussed, the continuing impact of state education was causing problems of absenteeism and truancy, as epitomised by the emerging figure of the school attendance officer who, in the early day schools, had to balance recognition of wavering attendance with acknowledgement of economic and social conditions which might have affected children attending school.⁶⁰

Pupils who returned late, it was feared, were not just harmed by missing out on education or falling under unwanted influence of parents, but also negatively affected by other pupils by making absenteeism appear acceptable and moral.⁶¹ This was another area in which the Institution's public image was considered at stake. When a child ran away after the Summer holidays in 1877, the Principal stressed the need to have the boy back on time. Pupils, he argued, needed to be reminded that they cannot get extra holiday by avoiding school, and also worried 'that if they [miss school] the public will not think it is because they are harshly treated.'⁶² This level of absenteeism certainly demonstrates the school's anxieties about deaf children and their parents, but it could potentially also be read as an area of autonomy for both parents and pupils. A case was recorded in the Minute Book of a boy returning home whilst unwell, only to disappear from the Institution, the mother contacting to say 'she could not persuade him to return to school'.⁶³ Thompson argues that - alongside other factors such as financial reasons and the desire to avoid a 'stigma' of charity - truancy proceedings may have indicated resistance from both parents and children.⁶⁴ By delaying or avoiding return from school, parents and children could potentially wield influence and power, despite spending the vast majority of their time in the Institution.

⁵⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Ms Maloney, 14 March 1891.

⁶⁰ Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, 237; Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 86.

⁶¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 1 September 1903.

⁶² WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Stephen Evans, 24 August 1877.

⁶³ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 1 November 1887.

⁶⁴ Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 135-6. Lydia Murdoch also explores this argument, arguing for the agency of parents in removing their children from philanthropic 'waifs and strays' societies'. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, 8.

The holidays

As these examples have shown, the short holiday time given to pupils of the Cambrian Institution played a significant role in the discourses surrounding deaf children, their lives and backgrounds. Pupils at the Institution were sent home for holidays every Christmas and Midsummer. Later, the decision was made for local pupils from the Swansea area to spend a few days in their homes at Easter as well, though the practical difficulties made this impossible to apply to children from homes further away. This was clearly a product of pressure from parents and children to go home – the school worried that, by missing the weekly Sunday school, the local pupils would not be taught ‘the meaning of the holy season at home’.⁶⁵ Though their time at home during the holidays only made up a small proportion of the children’s school experience, its significance should not be ignored. Discussion of holiday time takes up much of the sources in Minute Books and letters, suggesting that it was an important site of independence for the children. Holidays took place in a number of different locations; some pupils were sent home to their families, but other families and the Institution also acted as a substitute for those for whom this was not an option. All of these sites will be considered in this section.

Pupils went home to their parents if possible, but would be sent to other relatives such as sisters, aunts and uncles, if parents were not available or contactable.⁶⁶ Sometimes – if the aforementioned distrust of certain parents was strong enough – a relative was specifically selected on the advice of a local clergyman or member of the local auxiliary collection for the Institution, in order to avoid the pupil being unduly influenced at home. Other options existed for those pupils who had no other place to go, or had home lives which earned utter disapproval. ‘Boarding out’, which was used by Boards of Guardians across the country to house orphan or illegitimate children,

⁶⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal’s Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr John Greenslade, 30 March 1899.

⁶⁶ Parents or relatives would sometimes not respond: a girl was sent to another house when ‘we never hear from her sister now.’ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal’s Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr R.J. Michael Carpenter, 10 June 1879.

could be resorted to in this case.⁶⁷ Children were sent to nearby families who were willing to take them; for example, an unrelated farmer in Sketty received a boy from Bridgend when it was 'undesirable that he should go home' due to his parents constantly sending him back to school late.⁶⁸ If pupils were found to be staying in the workhouse with its undesirable 'associations', efforts were made to remove them, which could result in wranglings with local authorities to board them elsewhere.⁶⁹

The last resort was to keep pupils in the Institution. Indeed a few pupils spent their holidays with the staff. This could be a result of families living too far away (many English pupils were kept in the Institution), practical or moral reasons, or having nowhere else to go. Some pupils experienced a number of these factors at once. One girl was kept in the Institution over Christmas in 1876 after an arrangement to send her safely to her father could not be found.⁷⁰ The next Summer, the father now completely distrusted, options were discussed and it was decided to keep her in the Institution, as 'our influence over her is too great to allow of [her father's] doing her much moral harm over the holidays'.⁷¹ Here, the school decided against sending the girl home, but incidents also occurred of pupils themselves requesting to stay, suggesting some might have *wanted* to avoid their home situations.⁷² Pupils staying in the Institution itself caused logistical and eventually moral and discipline-related issues, as by 1908 it was noted that the boys, girls and servants have 'unrestricted

⁶⁷ 'Boarding out' is briefly explored in some studies of children and the poor law. See Alan Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1999), 57; Fraser, 81; F. Duke, 'Pauper Education' in Derek Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 83.

⁶⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to the Clerk to the Guardians, Bridgend and Cowbridge, 30 June 1890.

⁶⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 27 May 1909. As well as avoiding a return to the grim realities of the workhouse, the social relationships were the number one problem: 'It is not the discipline of the workhouse,' wrote the Principal when discussing this problem, 'but its associations which would be objected to'.

⁷⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Stephen Pritchard, 8 and 21 December 1876.

⁷¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to H.G. Lloyd, 16 June 1877.

⁷² WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Pardoe, 11 December 1878. In this scenario, the girl asked the Matron directly to stay in the Institution. The relations were completely reversed in this case, the Principal trying to avoid communicating with the girl's mother, 'whose feelings might be wounded'.

intercourse with each other' which might spill into term time.⁷³ To avoid any 'idleness', some were given apprenticeships or sent to a local school to continue their education or learn a trade.⁷⁴ Social relationships during the holidays, wherever they may be, were perceived as highly delicate.

The holidays represented for many deaf pupils a chance for liberty, leisure and – often in spite of attempts to bring their education into the home – respite from schoolwork.⁷⁵ Many pupils used their holidays to join friends and participate in social lives. Letters show children playing in the street and visiting friends whom they had few chances to see other than in the holidays. For a number of children – particularly from poor backgrounds – this made their leisure time a source of continued regulation and anxiety from the school. With the children away from the school gates, the attention was focused on the streets. A number of worried reports emerged of children meeting undesirable associates and exploring the streets alone at night. Those found on the streets did indeed receive reports from the school framed by the issue of control. When looking to 'board out' a child, it was attempted to avoid him 'running off to his holiday associates in the streets'.⁷⁶ Their activities on the street, it was feared, would affect their overall character and behaviour in the school.⁷⁷

The attitudes shown by the school were emblematic of the street's place in the imagination of the Victorian and Edwardian reformer as the primary location for

⁷³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 5 June 1909.

⁷⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 20 November 1889; Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr William Wilde, 8 February 1900.

⁷⁵ This was agreed in an 1891 letter to a parent, attempting encourage her to continue the lessons of a misbehaving pupil. Despite this, it was agreed that: 'In the holidays he has no lessons to learn, he has more liberty, no inspection, nothing to do, not even to dress his own bed. He is not to be blamed for enjoying his holidays, and I suppose all boys like home better than school and would like holidays all year round.' WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Lewis, 4 February 1891.

⁷⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 28 May 1909.

⁷⁷ Friends, philanthropists or local figures could also be contacted asking for their whereabouts. A child friend's was written to asking 'where they go and how they behave when out', when it was found out they were bringing in money. WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Gwilym Jenkins, 19 December 1903.

danger and morally problematic behaviour.⁷⁸ In the letters, children can be seen using the street as an outlet for recreation and the types of leisure which set off moral alarm bells. Most potent of these was the pub, where some older pupils were spotted. 'I am told that when at home he goes about among the public houses, and seldom returns home sober', reported Principal Alexander Molison on an 18-year-old pupil of five years in 1863.⁷⁹ The potential presence of alcohol was of particular alarm. Drunkenness and alcohol were both major facets of popular concern about working-class leisure hours. At the Cambrian Institution, this may well have been informed by particular debates relating to Wales; the Welsh Sunday Closing Act of 1881, for example, was a reaction to media reports of public drunkenness.⁸⁰

Even if their fears were exaggerated, the letters suggest that deaf children were taking part in street culture and causing worry amongst the staff. Language could play its role, as a pupil was caught using words 'signed to him by vulgar boys'. He brought the words into the Institution and 'taught them to the girls'. The incident was seen as a potentially seismic one for the pupil's wellbeing:

It would have been a cruel thing to hurt him bodily, but it was ten times worse to poison his mind, and through him the minds of all the poor innocent and afflicted children of this school, whose only protectors are, I may say, their teachers.⁸¹

This discussion used the now-familiar image of the innocent child becoming corrupted, made even more potent by the 'affliction' of his deafness. Here, by referring to them as their 'only protectors', the staff of the Institution assumed a quasi-parental role for the children, replacing the absent parent by regulating their moral

⁷⁸ See Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class and the Male Youth Problem, 1880-1920* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 130-133.

⁷⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 2, Principal's Reports 1860-76, 2 December 1863.

⁸⁰ Andy Croll and Martin Johnes, 'A Heart of Darkness? Leisure, Respectability and the Aesthetics of Vice in Victorian Wales' in Mike Huggins and J.A. Mangan, *Disreputable Pleasures: Less Virtuous Victorians at Play* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 155.

⁸¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/1, Principal's Letter Book 1876-80, Letters from B.H. Payne to Mr John Daies, 11 and 13 April 1878. Another incident of a 'vulgar and indecent' sign was recorded, taught by 'low companions'. WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Rev O. Jones Thomas, 13 September 1890.

environment. It played into concerns about the vulnerability of the children, as well as fears that the signs might create an unwanted bridge of the gender divide in the school using vulgar or sexual imagery. This moral gender divide was equally policed: when a 'suggestive post card' was sent to a pupil in 1906, it was politely sent back.⁸² However, these examples also suggest that the children of the Cambrian Institution participated in street life. Whether the 'vulgar boys' who used the gestures were also deaf is not made clear; these signs might well have represented the presence of a community of deaf children on the street, or simply obscene hand gestures from hearing boys.

It is difficult to pin-point from these snapshots whether the pupils used their holiday and leisure time on the street as an overt act of resistance against their school or whether the worries of the Principal constituted little more than exaggerated fears of working-class leisure. Both of these interpretations of street misbehaviour have appeared in recent historical research. Anna Davin's study of the London poor locates the street as the centre of social life for urban working-class children. It was the centre of games and socialising, and the examples from the Cambrian Institution show that deaf children were part of this.⁸³ As we explored in Chapter 6, there is a danger of portraying regular street life as an explicit rejection of their schooling. Steve Humphries' portrayal of the street lives of working-class children interprets the violence and mischief of children in the street as a conscious and political display of class resistance.⁸⁴ Yet it has been pointed out elsewhere that middle-class reformers often misrepresented these acts as far more violent and criminal than they actually were.⁸⁵ Regardless of their meaning, the Cambrian Institution demonstrates not just that deaf children's leisure lives can be visible in sources, but that they were framed by their schoolmasters as a matter of immense significance for their morality and character. The question of leisure is something which deserves to be explored further by historians of special education.

⁸² WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr W Wilde, 21 August 1906.

⁸³ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 15, 64-8.

⁸⁴ Steve Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth, 1889-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

⁸⁵ Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 131.

Organised school leisure

When back at school, the children were offered a carefully-planned set of activities which allowed them a designated and regulated space for leisure. This, it will be argued, was a key aspect of the children's education which both offered respite to the pupils and was inextricably linked to the school's public and philanthropic values. Pupils were allowed designated leisure space on weekends and Wednesday afternoons, which was used to see friends or go for walks. The creation of leisure space was a gradual development, and one which was subject to change and limitation. In early reports, leisure hours are shown to be mostly taken up with household chores and manual labour, tied to the children's general development in industrial training. As mentioned in Chapter 6, in the 1859 Annual Report they are seen cultivating the Institution's grounds, showing the apparent 'pleasure they take in this employment of their leisure hours'.⁸⁶ Even by 1896, though, it was regretted that 'the hours passed at lessons and housework leave both boys and girls but little leisure for out-door exercise.'⁸⁷

The need for fresh air and exercise was addressed partly by the physical education described in the previous chapter, and equally by a playground, erected around 1899-1900 after a call for funding for one to 'complete [the children's] happiness'.⁸⁸ The timing of these calls for outdoor play and exercise links them to such contemporary attitudes towards working-class education, disability and play. As Kevin Brehony describes, the 'Play Movement' developed in the late nineteenth century, placing children's play at the centre of philanthropic discourses for working-class children, who were portrayed by reformers such as Mrs Humphrey Ward as 'dirty', unhealthy

⁸⁶ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twelfth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1859* (Swansea: Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1859).

⁸⁷ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Ninth Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1896* (Swansea: Watkins General Printing Works, 1896), 9.

⁸⁸ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1888*, 6. The date is guessed by the building correspondence: WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 10 May 1899. It should be added that the playground seemed to quickly fall into disrepair. The architect complained in 1911 that it 'has been in a bad state for many years and quite unfit for use of a playground'.

and brittle, and in need of escape from over-crowded homes in the city.⁸⁹ The specific attention given to physically disabled children, however, has been largely ignored by historians. A social and philanthropic group called the Guild of the Brave Poor Things, formed in 1896 by Grace Kimmins, aimed to bring physically disabled people (both adults and children) together, with activities including children's games and holiday excursions offered at many branches.⁹⁰ In their publicity material, disabled children's 'dirty and over-crowded and wretched' homes and the melodramatically-described afflictions which made them 'Brave Poor Things' were contrasted with the fresh air and social company which Guild activities could offer.⁹¹ Guild members were quoted expressing this belief too; one Guild member at a garden party told that she had 'never seen the world before I joined the Guild'.⁹² When Kimmins opened the Chailey School (discussed in Chapter 2), the doctrines of fresh air, social company and play were put in a firmly educational context and applied to physically disabled children.⁹³ At the Cambrian Institution, similar interpretations of leisure, this time open to deaf children, were being developed.

Even if the pupils of the Cambrian Institution had limited opportunities for leisure, the occasional trips and treats offered at school indicate their place in national discourses about children and leisure. They were also a key area in which the school's public and philanthropic image was presented to the wider world. School excursions most often took place at local tourist sites around Swansea such as Mumbles or Crumlyn Bay. First and foremost, they were almost certainly much-needed and appreciated

⁸⁹ Kevin J. Brehony, 'A "Socially Civilising Influence"? Play and the Urban "Degenerate"', *Paedagogica Historica*, 39:1/2 (2003), 92. A similar movement which stressed unsatisfactory housing was spearheaded by the reformer Octavia Hill. See Pamela Horn, *The Victorian and Edwardian Schoolchild* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1989), 126.

⁹⁰ The Guild of the Brave Poor Things is explored in Brehony, 'Socially Civilising Influence?', 97; S. Koven, 'Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers, and the Great War in Britain', *The American Historical Review*, 99 (1994), 1167-1202; Elizabeth Baigent, 'Vachell, Ada Marian [known as Sister Ada] (1866-1923), Worker for Disabled People' <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59841>>.

⁹¹ Bristol Record Office [BRO], 39842/A/2a, Bristol Guild of the Handicapped, 'The Story of 1907', 17. The Guild's descriptions of disabled people echoed the melodramatic tropes of affliction used in the Cambrian Institution's. Their first Annual Report introduced the 'poor pitiful objects' the disabled members were before joining, including the deaf, who 'lifted their impassive faces - the outcome of that silent world in which they lived.' BRO, 39842/A/2a, Bristol Guild of the Handicapped, 'The Story of 1897'.

⁹² F.W. Unwin, *Ada Vachell of Bristol* (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1928), 43.

⁹³ G.T. Kimmins (ed.), *Heritage Craft Schools and Hospitals, Chailey 1903-1948: Being an Account of the Pioneer Work for Crippled Children* (London, 1948).

diversions from the heavily regimented everyday school routine, and also 'valuable teaching opportunities' to take the pupils outside the Institution.⁹⁴ Visits to shows, circuses, exhibitions and other places of educational entertainment were not uncommon; dioramas, magic lanterns and a marionette exhibition were all offered. Even though all discussion about them takes place by Institution officials and organisers through letters, Annual Reports and newspaper reports, it is clear they were important social events and created social bonds and sources of humour. Principal Payne emotionally discussed their impact with a man who had helped organise one such outing: 'The date, the pleasantries, and little mishaps of the day, a word spoken by one who is gone... all are fondly remembered and talked of even by the Deaf & Dumb.'⁹⁵

As well as the impact on pupils, the Cambrian Institution's excursions are highly notable as one of the areas in which the school - and, indeed, deaf children in Swansea - became visible to the public. School trips were reported regularly in local newspapers. On a visit to Llandilo in 1868, *The Cambrian* newspaper reported that,

The beautiful scenery of the surrounding country was dilated upon in a manner totally unknown to the throng who followed "the mutes" in their rambles; indeed there was quite a sensation in the little town as to "who should have a look at the people who talked with their hands."⁹⁶

Not only did these school outings make regular appearances in the local press, but they also gave the impression that these outings could be public affairs; this report suggested that the trip garnered an audience of interested onlookers. It is interesting to note the curious but positive reception given to the use of sign language, which was conveyed in several newspaper reports as a public spectacle. These events were often organised with the knowledge of both the press and the train or coach companies carrying the children, who offered cheap rates.

⁹⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Frederic S. Bishop, 21 June 1892.

⁹⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Morgan, 2 September 1896.

⁹⁶ *The Cambrian*, 5 June 1868.

Along with demonstrations, the leisure trips taken by the children of the Cambrian Institution acted as the children's closest connection to the philanthropic world outlined in Chapter 4. Many visits were organised specifically by philanthropic figures and were attributed to the relevant benefactor in the Institution's Annual Reports and in the local press. In 1855, pupils visited the home of copper industrialist Henry Bath, where they were given tea, a tour, a magic lantern display and an 'exhibition of Mr Bath's dissolving views'. All this was reported in the local newspaper, which noted that Bath's face 'ever beams with unmistakeable kindness'.⁹⁷ Several philanthropists and politicians - including the Mayor - were seen to offer funds and accommodation to the children.⁹⁸

The involvement of such specific, well-known figures created an individuality expressed as a material link between philanthropists and children. They fit into the class-centred framework outlined by Pamela Horn's general study of Victorian schoolchildren, which argues that the events, 'pleasant though they were, nonetheless also subtly bolstered the class structure of contemporary English society, for the elementary pupils who attended were expected to acknowledge with suitable meekness the benevolence of their social superiors'.⁹⁹ Much like the donations, specific presents and treats were attributed to individual figures in Annual Reports. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the section 'Hints to the Benevolent' (repeated every year after 1892) outlined how a philanthropist might want to make a personal connection to a pupil through trips or treats: 'A tea, or fruit, or a trip to the Mumbles is much appreciated', or a football or cricket set, books or pictures.¹⁰⁰ Other friends and relatives could, however, have their presents regulated or rejected: a relative was warned that 'we hardly like to accept [presents] from the friends of pupils' in 1889.¹⁰¹ When viewed in a family context, sending presents could be seen by the Institution as

⁹⁷ *The Cambrian*, 26 January 1855.

⁹⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 14 May 1873 - the mayor paid for a treat for the children; *The Cambrian*, 11 December 1868 - the Mayor and Mayoress provided a trip to the circus and treats. Sometimes these were organised in the holidays according to locality - in August 1896, deaf children from Merthyr were invited to a 'Children's Excursion' organised by a local gentleman and paid for by Boards of Guardians. WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr J Morgan, 26 August 1896.

⁹⁹ Horn, *Victorian and Edwardian Schoolchild*, 131.

¹⁰⁰ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1892*, 21.

¹⁰¹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Owen Davies, 25 January 1889.

an extension of the tendency to ‘spoil’ deaf children, but when donated by local figures of respect it became more formalised philanthropy.

Visits were reported dramatically in the local press, sometimes suggesting a duty to entertain the philanthropists in return. This can be seen mostly clearly in early newspaper pieces such as this from a trip to Tynycoedcae Farm in 1850, the year the Institution moved to Swansea:

Although, unhappily, almost shut out from all communication with the external world, [the deaf pupils] seemed keenly alive to the beauties of nature which abound in this vale, and enjoyed their trip with a zest which highly gratified Mr James and his friends, who enhanced the pleasures of the day not a little by their kind attention and spontaneous efforts to contribute to the recreation of the afflicted children.¹⁰²

Whilst there is no denying that the enjoyment was genuine, this almost literary description uses the fixed relationship of the recipient and the benevolent donor, bringing to mind Alan Kidd’s point about the reciprocity of charity; the children were placed in the role of ‘material and moral debtor of the donor’.¹⁰³ In return, those organising the trips received recognition and status, and perhaps regarded the spectacle of children enjoying themselves as such: one trip noted that the pupils ‘entertained their visitors with pantomime recitations, &c., which received much approbation’.¹⁰⁴ A language of gratefulness was developed, with letters signed on behalf of pupils thanking individual figures for their treats and trips. Here, the deaf children represented the deserving poor, and were presented in newspapers as afflicted and grateful. Treats and trips would sometimes be arranged for all charitable children in Swansea, with the Institution pupils enjoying themselves alongside workhouse children or those from the Blind Institution or Ragged School.¹⁰⁵ Reports in the press emphasised their afflictions, contrasting them to fleeting moments of joy.

¹⁰² *The Cambrian*, 19 July 1850. The reporting became slightly more diluted over the years, however the discourses of philanthropic hierarchy remained largely in place.

¹⁰³ Alan J. Kidd, ‘Philanthropy and the “Social History Paradigm”’, *Social History*, 21:2 (1996), 186.

¹⁰⁴ *The Cambrian*, 5 June 1868.

¹⁰⁵ *The Cambrian*, 11 December 1868 – children from both the workhouse and the Cambrian Institution were entertained by the Mayor.

A joint picnic with the Blind Institution ended, 'All returned safely home, pleased with this "red-letter day" in their somewhat monotonous life.'¹⁰⁶ This was a reflection of the important role these institutions played in Swansea's philanthropic scene, and here they were presented as unified. The distribution and representation of leisure is an important window for these historical relationships.

It is difficult to gauge much of the reaction from the children, owing to the lack of sources. One which might give a very limited insight is the supposed letters home printed in the Annual Reports, which as mentioned earlier were either heavily manipulated or completely fabricated. Nevertheless, they provide insights into what the children did in their leisure time, details of which are almost impossible to find elsewhere. A letter from a 15-year-old girl, sent home at Christmas 1900, sheds light on the institutional festivities: 'The Conjuror will come here to play tricks on the 19th. He will come here from Cardiff. He is deaf and dumb. He will play tricks for us and he will play again for the Adults on the 26th. We shall enjoy with Christmas Tree, Treat and to see the Conjuror very much.'¹⁰⁷ Again, it's unlikely that the girl chose to write this of her own accord, as every other letter printed in that year's Report mentions the Christmas Tree and Treat, but this letter provides a rare insight into some of the entertainment and leisure opportunities for both deaf adults and children in Swansea. The Institution here acted as a social base for the deaf community in the town as a whole. It is also notable that the Conjuror was himself deaf). Thus while the letters are unlikely to criticise the institution, they are still useful artefacts of life as a deaf child in Swansea.

The children's leisure time was used as a vehicle for values of hard work and good character, which were given a prominent role in education. This was a gradual development; it was only later in the Institution's life that leisure was explicitly being used to further the Institution's image of good character. In the 1908 Annual Report, it was conveyed that pupils were now *earning* their leisure time by becoming what were

¹⁰⁶ *The Cambrian*, 5 September 1879.

¹⁰⁷ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Third Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1900* (Swansea, 1900), 18.

termed 'liberty' boys, who were allowed two afternoon strolls a week. Their leisure time was framed to the public through the Report as both well-earned and character-forming: 'Pupils are daily sent out on errands, are trained to take care of themselves, and are sometimes thrown upon their own initiative and resourcefulness', proclaimed the report.¹⁰⁸ Money was used as a development tool designed to teach 'thrift', and when pupils occasionally abused it by stealing money, it was reported and used as a deterrent for others.¹⁰⁹ The values of individuality and social duty were thus central to pupils' spare time and presented to the public as such.

This assignment of leisure time as an essential space for character-building and good manners was almost certainly a reaction to the fearful tales being received of the pupils at home and in the holidays, as explored earlier in the chapter. It was also parallel to a much wider cultural shift in which leisure took an increasingly prominent space in all areas of public life, and as such became a target for moral regulation. Children's games and play time in both a school and family environment had long been, as Thompson describes, 'supervised for its moral content', and we have seen examples of this above.¹¹⁰ Yet the regimented and clean programme of leisure on offer at the Cambrian Institution arguably fits in with broader philanthropic trends. The initiatives, which Peter Bailey has collectively termed 'rational recreation', were themselves reactions to stories of depraved working-class leisure.¹¹¹ In noting the popularity of spaces like pubs and music halls, philanthropic organisations saw an opportunity to provide their own interpretation of acceptable leisure time for both children and adults.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-First Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1908* (Swansea, 1908), 10. It also included a story of a congenitally deaf boy who was 'entrusted with a cheque for the lodgement in the Bank', which he did successfully.

¹⁰⁹ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Sixth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1903* (Swansea, 1903), 12; WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr William Mainwaring, 9 July 1904.

¹¹⁰ Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society*, 126.

¹¹¹ Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

¹¹² Hugh Cunningham, 'Leisure and Culture' in F.M. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-195 Volume 2: People and their Environment*, 327.

As fears grew of a decline in the physical and moral wellbeing of the British 'stock', these organisations began also to address worries about the decline in 'national efficiency'. Organisations such as the Boys' Brigade and the early Scout movement aimed to confront this issue in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, using militaristic, imperialistic and patriotic imagery.¹¹³ This was also utilised in the Guild of the Brave Poor Things, who draped their meetings with flags and militaristic imagery, and described their disabled members as 'a great army of suffering ones'.¹¹⁴ Children in special education were not excluded from these discourses, as a number of the social activities laid on by the Cambrian Institution exuded patriotic and imperialistic loyalty. Jubilees, weddings and royal visits to Swansea (such as one from its patron King Edward VIII in 1904) were celebrated with events or decorations.¹¹⁵ The change of name to the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in 1897, too, appeared in the Annual Reports as an example of the national values being instilled into the children.¹¹⁶

A number of other factors made the Cambrian Institution's pupils particular targets for 'rational recreation'. This may well have had a national character specific to Wales. Croll and Johnes argue that leisure was a crucial site for maintaining a 'virtuous Wales'. This involved policing the disreputable working-class 'other' who were supposedly expressing themselves increasingly clearly through leisure pursuits like drinking, play and prostitution. 'Contemplation of the vicious' was, they argue,

¹¹³ See John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 17.

¹¹⁴ Ada Vachell, 'The Account of a Guild at Work' in G. T. Kimmins (ed.), *Heritage Craft Schools and Hospitals, Chailey 1903-1948: Being an Account of the Pioneer Work for Crippled Children* (London: Baynard Press, 1948), 17.

¹¹⁵ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fifty-Seventh Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1904* (Swansea, 1904), 13. The pupils were also visited by the Mayor of Swansea on the Prince of Wales' wedding day. WGAS, E/Cam 1/2, Minute Book 1855-66, 4 March 1863. The increasing prevalence of imperialistic themes was epitomised by the Empire Day Movement, founded by the Earl of Meath in 1903. This was successful and led to schools across Britain adopting 24th May to celebrate the Empire through activities, flag demonstrations and singing. Horn, *Victorian and Edwardian Schoolchild*, 131.

¹¹⁶ Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Fiftieth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1897* (Swansea, 1897), 20. The Home Office signed the name change form describing the Institution as 'a well-established institution, of which the Prince of Wales is Patron.' The National Archives, Kew, HO 144/407/B23782, Home Office Correspondence, Title Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb.

‘something of a national pastime’ for Wales.¹¹⁷ This definition of the ‘other’ could most certainly include deaf children in institutions: many of their ‘disreputable backgrounds’ were kept noted, and their leisure hours were interpreted as a potential area where they could be easily corrupted.

One area in which exposure to corruption was particularly pronounced was the potential consumption of alcohol. Temperance societies aimed at children were increasingly common in the second half of the nineteenth century; the Band of Hope was formed in 1847 to teach the sinfulness of alcohol to children, and it appears that its message was carried through to the Cambrian Institution through visits and presents from a local branch.¹¹⁸ Temperance was part of character training at the Cambrian Institution and at one point in 1909 appeared to be suggested as a taught subject in itself by the Honorary Secretary.¹¹⁹ Temperance had a particular resonance for philanthropic deaf societies and in religious sections of the national deaf community, who regarded it as an essential component of Christian morality.¹²⁰ An organisation called the Deaf and Dumb Temperance Army was set up in 1886.¹²¹ An essay prize in the publication *A Magazine Intended Chiefly for the Deaf and Dumb* (edited by the deaf Rev. J.F. Kitto) was entitled ‘The Evils of Intemperance in Drinking’, in which the deaf author argued that, ‘It is very dangerous for the deaf and dumb to indulge deep in drunkenness; for they are liable to dangers, and be killed. So they should beware of drunkenness, having no sense of hearing.’¹²² Thus deafness was specifically related to the need to avoid alcohol; this essay implied that moral reasons went hand in hand with practical ones, such as avoiding getting into danger through drunkenness without a sense of hearing to guide one back to safety. In the

¹¹⁷ Croll and Johnes, ‘Heart of Darkness?’, 153-171.

¹¹⁸ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1869* (Swansea: E. and J. Griffiths, 1869), 29. One of the ‘presents’ listed this year read ‘British Workmen and Band of Hope’.

¹¹⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 11 June 1909.

¹²⁰ For example, one of the ‘objects’ of the Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb was, ‘To inculcate the principles of Temperance, and encourage the Mutes in habits of Virtue and Religion. Glamorgan Missions to the Deaf and Dumb, *The Annual Report of the Glamorgan Missions to the Deaf and Dumb for the year ending Christmas, 1899* (Pontypridd, 1899).

¹²¹ *The Deaf and Dumb World*, 4:1 (1886), 38.

¹²² *A Magazine Intended Chiefly for the Deaf and Dumb*, 1:11 (1873), 172-3.

Cambrian Institution, temperance in leisure was potentially informed by these same attitudes towards deafness.

One controversial area of leisure was the role of sport. Children were allowed to play football games on the field and to check the scores in newspapers, and the boys' compositions in the Annual Reports sometimes mentioned the boys having a kickabout.¹²³ Yet in the context of organised games against other teams, the attitudes were heavily regulated according to whether it would be morally and pragmatically acceptable. When the pupils were invited to play a formal game against a group from Bristol, the headmaster denied them the possibility, sending pessimistic responses to the challenges - they had no club, they mostly played rugby, and it was simply 'impossible'.¹²⁴ Even more unacceptable was an invitation to an 'Athletic Meeting' in Bolton for adult deaf people in the district, and presumably in the school. Angry at the invitation for each gentleman to bring a female, Principal Payne insisted the females would need a Matron to accompany them. The girls in the Institution, it was said, 'require to be told' these 'rules of society'.¹²⁵ Replying to the seemingly annoyed letter back, it was confirmed that 'I do not object to sports', only to the potential of social intercourse with a woman who was not a wife or daughter.¹²⁶

This was an interesting contrast to the development of team games and athletics elsewhere in British schools. Team games like rugby and football were growing, having originated on public school fields.¹²⁷ As Mangan explores, games were seen as an important contributor *to* moral reformation rather than against it; they were important outlets of manliness and good character.¹²⁸ However in the Cambrian Institution sport was encouraged, or forbidden if it crossed a social and sexual line.

¹²³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr H. Noble, 3 October 1889; Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1896*, 20.

¹²⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr W.H. Hodge, 3 March 1892; Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr James Davies, 1 February 1893.

¹²⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Joseph Barnes, June 1892.

¹²⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Joseph Barnes, 20 June 1892.

¹²⁷ Walvin, *Child's World*, 81.

¹²⁸ J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000). See also Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 128.

This said, these episodes still shed light on the historical significance of deaf sport. Atherton, Russell and Turner have explored the significance of football especially. The earliest Scottish teams such as the Glasgow Deaf and Dumb Football Club (formed in 1871) were connected to local deaf institutes, which were part of the culture of 'muscular Christianity'.¹²⁹ Atherton, Russell and Turner argue that football 'has... played a major part in maintaining and strengthening the social and cultural ties which bind members of the Deaf community together.'¹³⁰ The sporting leisure activity taking place at the Cambrian Institution confirms that this was happening in Wales too, even if it was heavily regulated. The final section of this chapter will continue examining the role of leisure, asking how far the school could be involved in building community and friendship amongst its pupils, and between deaf people across Swansea and Wales.

Communities and social lives

The Cambrian Institution undoubtedly played a central role in the lives of deaf people in Swansea. Victor Golightly describes the 'distinct and self-organized Deaf community' in the town and, though he was writing about the age of Dylan Thomas' poetry slightly after the period studied here, the community would have included both current and past pupils of the Cambrian Institution.¹³¹ With time, the Institution's publicity material started emphasising community and friendship amongst deaf people, suggesting an increasingly public attitude to the creation of deaf communities. A letter from a former pupil, now a 'young tradesman', appeared in the 1911 Annual Report, which stated, 'My wife likes the deaf people better than the hearing people and she said to me that she wished if she is dumb or deaf.'¹³² The social role of the

¹²⁹ Martin Atherton, David Russell and Graham Turner, 'Playing to the Flag: A History of Deaf Football and Deaf Footballers in Britain', *The Sports Historian*, 19:1 (1999), 44. The role of sport is also pointed out by Brian Grant who provides a short history of organised deaf sport in Brian Grant, *The Deaf Advance: A History of the British Deaf Association* (Edinburgh: The Pentland Press, 1990), 142.

¹³⁰ Atherton, Russell and Turner, 'Playing to the Flag', 40/.

¹³¹ Victor Golightly, " 'Speak on a Finger and Thumb': Dylan Thomas, Language and the Deaf", *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 10 (2005), 75.

¹³² Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Fourth Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1911* (Swansea, 1911).

school in bringing together deaf people became more pronounced and confident in later years, but hints at a deaf community can be found even in early material, such as the 1859 Annual Report which states the school was 'at times striving to render it of greater benefit to the community of the Deaf and Dumb'.¹³³

Amanda Bergen argues, in her study of the Yorkshire Institution of the Deaf and Dumb, that the public demonstrations of the children's education were attended by deaf people themselves and provided a useful meeting point for young deaf people, both studying at the school as well as past pupils and friends. For Bergen, they were important for creating a deaf community and a sense of cohesion and identity.¹³⁴ A similar situation appears to have developed at the Cambrian Institution, with the school taking a place at the centre of many deaf people's lives. Many school trips included adult deaf people in Swansea and past pupils. For example, a day trip to Oxwich specifically for 'the deaf mute adults' was organised through the Principal.¹³⁵ Reports in *The Cambrian* newspaper suggest that important events in the school drew crowds of its former pupils. When its deaf Principal Benjamin Payne was presented with a surprise party for his marriage, the attendees included both the Institution's staff and pupils and 'the adult deaf and dumb of Swansea', indicating the role of both Payne and the school in local deaf matters.¹³⁶ Even though newspaper reports were framed around the tropes of affliction and suffering, they emphasised bonds of friendship and community, many of which would have been formed whilst at school. Contemporary deaf newspapers also carried reports of activities at the school in their local pages.¹³⁷ Weddings and funerals were attended by schoolfriends and adult deaf people: when an elderly deaf man died in 1888, for example, his funeral was 'chiefly

¹³³ Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1859*.

¹³⁴ Amanda Bergen, 'The Public Examination of Deaf and Blind Children in Yorkshire, 1829-1890', *Northern History*, 41:4 (2004), 155. The idea is explored further in her PhD thesis: Amanda Bergen, 'The Blind, the Deaf and the Halt: Physical Disability, the Poor Law and Charity c.1830-1890, with particular reference to the County of Yorkshire' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2004).

¹³⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Messrs Bullin, 2 July 1889.

¹³⁶ *The Cambrian*, 28 April 1876.

¹³⁷ See for example, a report about a St Stephens' Day celebration in *Ephphatha*, edited by the Rev F.W.G. Gilby of St Saviour's Church, in which forty adult deaf people were invited alongside the pupils to a picnic. *Ephphatha*, 1 (1896), 135.

composed of inmates from the Deaf and Dumb Institution', with the service interpreted into sign by Principal Payne.¹³⁸

As this suggests, the school could provide occasional services for local deaf people, indicating a distinct signing community in Swansea. This was widespread - Christopher Stone and Bencie Woll have used the records of the London courts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to uncover examples of deaf people using interpreters.¹³⁹ *The Cambrian* regularly reported on crimes involving deaf people. When a deaf man was robbed by 'a well-known prostitute' in 1860, Principal Alexander Melville interpreted the statement of the prosecutor.¹⁴⁰ These incidents shed some light onto how the school engaged with problems experienced in deaf people's lives. A 'deaf-mute' man from Pontardawe was summoned to court in 1872 for drunkenness, but had his charge withdrawn when it was agreed that 'the conduct which had led to his being summoned arose not from drink, but from excitement caused by his having been teased by a number of boys in the village'. Principal Alexander Molison attended to speak for the man's character, and the magistrates 'expressed a strong feeling of disapproval of the conduct of the lads who amused themselves by teasing and irritating an unfortunate person afflicted as the defendant was'.¹⁴¹ Here, the staff of the Institution not only provided a translation service but actively addressed an incident of social prejudice. This also highlights the strong presence of sign language in the deaf community, undoubtedly strengthened by the school's insistence on maintaining manual teaching techniques.

Another bond seen in deaf social life in Swansea was that of religion. The Cambrian Institution introduced a Special Service to be held at the school monthly 'for senior pupils and adult Deaf' in the town, to go alongside the standard service and Sunday

¹³⁸ *The Cambrian*, 24 February 1888.

¹³⁹ Christopher Stone and Bencie Woll, 'Dumb O Jemmy and Others: Deaf People, Interpreters, and the London Courts in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Sign Language Studies*, 8:3 (2008), 226-240.

¹⁴⁰ *The Cambrian*, 26 October 1860.

¹⁴¹ *The Cambrian*, 9 August 1872.

School for children every week.¹⁴² These were intended as a supplement to regular church going, and were intended as a place for free usage of sign. Planning one in 1897, the Principal wrote that ‘sign language should be freely and properly used’ at Special Services.¹⁴³ These services were important outposts of the deaf community and provided a place for congregation and discussion. Many also seem to have been organised out of demand rather than imposition. A ‘Special Service’ was planned in 1896 as ‘old pupils in other towns are enquiring about it’. ‘The adults,’ wrote the principal, ‘expect something to be done for them...’¹⁴⁴ The Special Services therefore represented one of the clearest indicators of deaf people socialising through the school and building a collective identity through its congregations, in which the preferred language of signs was available without prejudice. This was the symbolic thought behind St Saviour’s Church in London, which opened in 1873 after a long-running campaign by the Royal Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb to build a place for a religious congregation and services in sign language. As Lees and Ralph argue, the church ‘became a great symbol for deaf people, for the right to worship stood for many other rights – to be educated, to have work, to participate and to socialize’.¹⁴⁵ The Cambrian Institution’s services, despite being more strongly linked to formal schooling, attempted to satisfy similar principles.

Services were also an advertisement for the school. They would, the Principal and Honorary Secretary agreed, ‘[draw] the attention of the Public to the Institution’, and should be publicised as much as possible.¹⁴⁶ The services were considered to be an important chance to convey the religious knowledge and feeling which had been instilled into the pupils since their education; children at the Institution were regularly and systematically baptised or confirmed, with the ceremonies taking place at Special Services and translated into sign language for fellow pupils and adult deaf people.

¹⁴² Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1894* (Swansea: J. Wright, 1894), 25.

¹⁴³ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr George E. Bridge, 29 March 1897.

¹⁴⁴ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 9 June 1896.

¹⁴⁵ Colin Lees and Sue Ralph, ‘Charitable provision for blind people and deaf people in late nineteenth century London’, *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 4:3 (2004), 157.

¹⁴⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 24 November 1891.

This was sometimes requested by parents, but more likely initiated by the school.¹⁴⁷ They were also important chances to try and convey the importance of good character values to those deaf who had left the Institution or were not educated there: an adult who visited the Institution on Sundays was invited by Principal Payne for a 'quiet talk' about his family.¹⁴⁸ Though the adults and children bonded together on these Sunday afternoons, their allotted space as a time of recreation was kept separate from regular school business. If an adult spent too much time with the boys, the separate social dimension of leisure and schoolwork might be breached. One man who visited the school for longer than invited was a subject of concern:

The present teacher very naturally objects to his presence among the boys, one of whom might have behaved as he did, return next Sunday, take his place with the men, say "how do you do" to me and talk of any subject whatever with the boys and men independently of our control and regulation.¹⁴⁹

This reminds us of the limitations of seeing the school-sponsored church as leisure: we see the adults and children mixing, but certain aspects of these social relationships could be interpreted as disruptive. The presence of deaf adults is here seen to violate the cultivation of a particular type of (male) character. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that religious services were important social events, and visiting clergy became respected figures amongst both the children and adults. Principal Payne's son, Arnold Payne, clearly won affection amongst attendees: the adult deaf of Swansea signed a document in 1905 asking for him to talk in the town.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Matthews, 30 October 1895. Here, the letter recipient had to be persuaded that the candidates for confirmation were conscious of their decision. In two cases, 'the Candidates, although they understand what they are about to do, and have memorized the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Commandments, can hardly answer questions in words, and I hope you will accept their expressions in the Sign Language.'

¹⁴⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs L. Dwight, 4 September 1899.

¹⁴⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mrs Davies, 24 June 1889.

¹⁵⁰ WGAS, E/Cam 5/5, Principal's Letter Book 1903-6, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 30 October 1905.

It should also be remembered that not all social opportunities were to the school. A number of deaf 'missions' were available in Wales in which deaf people had space to socialise and go to meetings and sermons, many of which were attended by former pupils and deaf people with connections to the school.¹⁵¹ A Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb was set up by a former pupil of the Cambrian Institution, Edward Rowland, in 1869 on little to no budget.¹⁵² Listed amongst its objects were home visiting, finding employment for its members and to 'minister to the Spiritual Wants of the adult Deaf and Dumb People'.¹⁵³ The records of the Glamorganshire Missions indicate the wide variety of deaf life and employment in Wales: meetings were offered to deaf people, the men of whom 'work at collieries, on pit tops or in the yards'.¹⁵⁴ Rowland toured Wales and wrote in the *Deaf and Dumb Herald* in 1876 about members who had little opportunity for connections to urban communities: 'there were at the time several deaf and dumb persons on farms and other places about Wales without the spiritual instruction which is enjoyed and heartily appreciated by their fellow-mutes in large towns.'¹⁵⁵

Missions have been subjected to varying historical interpretation. They have been presented as limited and even potentially oppressive. A.F. Dimmock describes them as such: 'These places were drab and its participants led drab lives, usually going no further than home, work and mission.'¹⁵⁶ Indeed, their outlook was somewhat limited to religious matters, although Dimmock points out that dissenting factions existed who rejected the moralistic outlook or had been spotted in public houses.¹⁵⁷ However, Neil Pemberton argues for their function as 'dynamic socio-cultural spaces' in which

¹⁵¹ The Cambrian Institution itself has been recorded as offering a mission; according to the *British Deaf Monthly*, a mission for all deaf people in the locality was set up in 1864. However, this was simply referring to the Institution's Sunday Services, and the formal Mission to the Swansea and District Adult Deaf was not set up until 1915. *British Deaf Monthly*, Royal Diamond Jubilee Number (1897); Mission to the Swansea and District Adult Deaf, *The First Annual Report of the Mission to the Swansea and District Adult Deaf 1915-1916*.

¹⁵² *The Deaf Mute*, 4:1 (1888), 39.

¹⁵³ Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb, *The Annual Report of the Glamorgan Missions to the Deaf and Dumb for the year ending Christmas, 1899* (Pontypridd, 1899), 2.

¹⁵⁴ Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1899*, 4.

¹⁵⁵ *The Deaf and Dumb Herald*, 7:1 (1876), 126

¹⁵⁶ A.F. Dimmock, *Cruel Legacy: An Introduction to the Record of Deaf People in History* (Edinburgh: Scottish Workshop Publications, 1993), 51.

¹⁵⁷ Dimmock, *Cruel Legacy*, 51. Dimmock describes these dissenters as 'the very people who, consciously or unconsciously, begot the feeling for the rights of the Deaf and their individual identity.'

deaf people could discuss their lives and develop 'a shared language and culture'.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the Glamorganshire Missions certainly suggest that, despite being confined by limited money and regular interference by strikes (and, indeed, the Great Revival in Wales in 1904-5, which shut out special meetings for the Missions due to the continuous services), its participants used it as a space to discuss their lives and freely use sign.¹⁵⁹ Whilst it is difficult for the historian to attach to these communities the labels of identity and culture as used by modern deaf and disability activists, what can be learned of them from reports and deaf newspapers suggest that many were founded on ideas of linguistic unity, and even an active objective to counter social prejudice. Deaf magazines, many of which reported on the missions, occasionally hint at these attitudes: the *Deaf and Dumb Herald* in Oldham even outwardly rejected the media portrayals of deaf people which shaped public opinion. 'We do not want to be reminded of our sad condition in consequence of our privations... for it is certain that we are generally far from being miserable as our hearing brethren take us to be: we find happiness in our various pursuits like them.'¹⁶⁰ In some cases, therefore, leisure could be outwardly used to counter prevalent sympathetic and melodramatic social definitions of deafness.

Whilst the missions in Wales were certainly limited - and appear to have experienced a fair amount of infighting - they are indicative of an open and inclusive community of deaf people, something largely overlooked by historians.¹⁶¹ Yet the connection of

¹⁵⁸ Pemberton, 'Deafness and Holiness', 66.

¹⁵⁹ Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb, *The Seventeenth Annual Report of the Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb, for the year ended Christmas, 1904* (Pontypridd, 1904). The mission cast itself partly as an educational extension for deaf people in Wales, and a means of teaching adult deaf people life skills: 'The language learnt in school can never avail for every emergency throughout mature life, and it is here, in continuing their early instruction, that one of the finest avenues of usefulness on the part of the adult missions is found'. Interestingly, written English was stressed but the Welsh language was not forgotten, suggesting an acknowledgement of its importance to the Welsh deaf community and nationality: '...although I have among my flock mutes of Welsh parentage, the difficulty in acquiring *one* language has been such that none of them have acquired more than an isolated word or two of Welsh. But like the Irish, of whom many attend my Mission, they retain their patriotism undiminished'. Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb, *Annual Report 1904*, 8.

¹⁶⁰ *The Deaf and Dumb Herald*, 1:1 (1876), 4.

¹⁶¹ Rowland himself was asked to resign in 1888 after an argument with the committee, which appeared to have been resolved. *The Deaf Mute*, 4:1 (1888), 39. Cedric Moon also notes that Rowlands received a number of complaints for his conual 'interference' in children's education in the newly-formed school at Porth. Cedric J. Moon, *A Tale of Three Deaf Schools in South Wales* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2010), 48.

the Cambrian Institution to these missions appears to be varying. Former pupils from the school, wrote the Glamorganshire Mission report in 1913, 'form the bulk of our deaf congregations', and both past and present pupils attended the opening of the mission's new building - the Institute - in 1913.¹⁶² Furthermore, Benjamin Payne provided a connection to wider deaf issues through his role in the British Deaf and Dumb Association, as a founding member and later Vice-President for Wales.¹⁶³ Its 1893 congress was held at Swansea with the Cambrian Institution used as a venue for a number of talks. Despite attendance at the conference being 'wretchedly poor', it cemented Swansea's links to an emerging and active national deaf community.¹⁶⁴

Despite these connections, however, school letter books occasionally suggest a distrust of the mission for threatening the hierarchical nature of deaf schools. Principal Payne wrote to a missionary to let him know he had 'given the members and others a wrong estimate of the Missionary's place and authority. Authority is, or ought to be, derived from above, not from below, however "intelligent" "below" might be.'¹⁶⁵ The careful systems of hierarchy in place at the Institution could potentially be in opposition to the more democratic system in place at missions. Moreover, we saw in Chapter 5 that the Institution expressed concern about pupils signing outside school hours, something in marked contrast to the missions and clubs which encouraged free signing. Few records from the pupil's direct perspective have survived, but what is available shows the social nuances of the Institution and the unsurprisingly variable relationships between pupils. A letter home from a girl to her father in 1906 complained that, 'The children are all dumb here. I am the only girl that can speak. I am better off than they are.'¹⁶⁶ It is unclear what would have sparked this statement,

¹⁶² Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb, for the year ended Christmas, 1904* (Pontypridd, 1904), 9.

¹⁶³ London Metropolitan Archives, British Deaf and Dumb Association, *Third Biennial Report of the British Deaf and Dumb Association from 30th June 1895-30th June 1897* (London, 1897), 4. The British Deaf and Dumb Association - later renamed the British Deaf Association, is explored in Grant, *The Deaf Advance*.

¹⁶⁴ *The British Deaf-Mute*, 2:23 (1893), 161; *The British Deaf-Mute*, 2:24 (1893), 175-6.

¹⁶⁵ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Pearce, 4 January 1896.

¹⁶⁶ WGAS, E/Cam 5/6, Principal's Letter Book 1906-9, Girl's letter home, undated.

but it suggests language and class differences had the power to create divides between the pupils.¹⁶⁷

The social opportunities offered by missions is a reminder that some children would have had some opportunities for active social lives outside the school. Some conducted social lives which had no connection to the Institution at all. A number of children were recorded as receiving gifts from friends; in one case, when a girl did not understand their origins, the matron explained by signs who they came from and made the child learn their names.¹⁶⁸ Like any interference to the regimented institutional life, outside friends were regulated and restricted. Thus when a girl came to visit her friend in 1896 to take her out, she was declined; however it was celebrated that a 'boy's friends dress very respectably and see him often' in 1899.¹⁶⁹ This suggests that issues of morality and friends' character could dictate who could see their friends from outside the Institution - the latter example was approved because of their respectable appearance. Though it was regulated according to social behaviour, pupils had occasional opportunities to participate in leisure lives with other friends, even whilst they were still studying at the Institution.

¹⁶⁷ The question of class appears as another factor in discussion of deaf social life. Writing to a private tutor of deaf people in Lincoln, Payne wrote that there are 'two deaf ladies in this town' who want companionship. 'I have an idea that the deaf of good social position are comparatively few,' he wrote in his letter. 'The feeble in mind and body are more numerous among the gentry, etc., than the Deaf.' The link between poverty and deafness had of course been made in numerous pieces of public material, but here local deaf people appear to be categorised and separated according to issues of class. WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from B.H. Payne to Miss Kathleen Sills, 25 November 1892

¹⁶⁸ WGAS, E/Cam 5/2, Principal's Letter Book 1889-93, Letter from Florence Payne to Mrs Lewis, 1 May 1890.

¹⁶⁹ WGAS, E/Cam 5/3, Principal's Letter Book 1895-7, Letter from B.H. Payne to Mr Thomas Bowen, 30 May 1896; WGAS, E/Cam 5/4, Principal's Letter Book 1897-1900, Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 3 June 1899. The girl's friend was declined because 'we thought she had no authority', however it was hoped 'she will set a good example in person and manners'. Another example came when a pupils' 'friends' example and influence too often stand in the way of their behaving as they know they ought to.' Letter from B.H. Payne to Joseph Hall, 26 September 1890.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that, even with very limited and problematic source material, the home and leisure lives of pupils in deaf Institutions is a valid and visible line of enquiry for historians. Home and leisure was, of course, very much limited. Pupils spent most of their time tethered to the Institution and, for the most part, lived very routine lives. The designated spaces in school for leisure, too, gave little autonomy to the pupils: they were shaped by the wants and desires of the school's staff, Committee and - perhaps more visibly than in any other area of school life - the philanthropists who donated to the Institution. School leisure was carefully planned and regulated according to moral codes. So too were the pupils' home lives - it was hoped that any 'undesirable' associates or family members could be removed from the vulnerable deaf child's sphere of influence as much as possible. This became stronger over time, possibly due to the stricter organisation of the school. By the late nineteenth century, absenteeism and the potentially corruptive influence of parents and friends was being recorded and regulated.

This said, home and leisure lives offered some pupils a rare and valuable chance to express themselves away from the school: during holidays, on trips and outside school hours, the pupils made use of the space to see friends and family, and form bonds and relationships with each other. Crucially, studying the areas of home and leisure in an institutional study allows deaf pupils to become historical actors, and the historian to challenge existing narratives of disability and deafness. It is possible to a degree to offer historical agency to the pupils, placing them in national discourses from which they have largely been excluded. Thus the children can be seen to have an active role in family relationships; though many came from backgrounds of poverty and neglect, their communication could display a sense of family bonds, love and friendship. Differences in class and geography can also be seen, which affected everyday relationships in the school. Deaf children also took part in the moral reformation of children's leisure time taking place in schools, on streets and in clubs across Wales and Britain. This connected them to the philanthropic scene at the heart of the school's organisation. At the same time, their leisure time exposed them to local and national

communities of deaf people, often centred around the Institution itself. Life in an institution may well have been monotonous, but studying the pupils' and leisure lives prevents them from remaining passive figures in deaf and disability history.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This thesis has provided a thorough analysis of the records of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Swansea. The work is intended not simply to present it as a straightforward narrative history but as a valuable case study to burgeoning and exciting historical work on deafness, disability and special education. It has also argued for the previously ignored place of deaf and disabled children in the wider social history of children and education. This Conclusion will firstly identify the themes, arguments and chronological developments which have emerged from the research, before placing these in the context of the historiography of disability, deafness and special education. Recent studies which address subjects such as local deaf communities, special education institutions and disability organisations have identified key debates and theories which provide essential frameworks for historians working in these areas. These were introduced in Chapter 1, and this Conclusion hopes to resituate our central case study within these debates.

Analysis of the Cambrian Institution's records show that a complex social and cultural construction of deafness was projected to the public. However, focusing only on this can obscure the crucial issue of the children's perspectives and experiences. The themes of modern deaf history which have become well established - the effects of oralism, the formulation of a distinct deaf community connected to schools - are visible in the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, but a detailed study of its records reveals many other areas which are in need of discussion. Finally, the Conclusion will consider briefly the further questions which this case study opens up, and call for future work both on the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and on individual institutions of special education.

Key themes

Over the course of this thesis, a number of themes have emerged. Firstly and most clearly, the records of the Cambrian Institution are indicative of wider developments in legislation, and the role of institutional staff in responding to these. The nineteenth century saw the widespread institutionalisation and centralisation of special education. At the beginning of the century, deaf schools in Britain were largely private enterprises, often with secretive teaching methods to ensure profit-making. By the turn of the century, the system of voluntary schools had been established and was in decline, and the role of the state was increasing. The 1870 Elementary Education Act called for compulsory elementary education across Britain; this ostensibly included disabled children but had little impact on provision for separate special education.

Conversely, the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb &c. of the United Kingdom of 1889 and the 1893 Elementary Education Act (Blind and Deaf Children) Act had an immense impact on the existing deaf institutions. At the heart of these developments was the question of oralism. Central to the Commissioners' recommendations and much of the school-building activity after the 1893 Act was the educational doctrine of teaching deaf children spoken language and avoiding the use of signs. This was enshrined in the 1880 Milan Congress and its now-infamous resolution to promote the 'incontestable superiority' of speech over signs.¹ Its legacy ensured that oralism has become justifiably the most controversial and emotional subject in deaf history. There is little doubt as to the harmfulness of this policy in attempting to suppress deaf people's language, as well as the relative failure of 'pure oral' teachers to remove sign language from their deaf pupils. Yet the Cambrian Institution's response to the question of oralism reveals the multitude of opinions and perspectives involved in the debate. This has often been missed by historians who have portrayed the rise of oralism as a comprehensive ideology, either as a leap of

¹ Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf (1880) cited in Harry G. Lang, 'Perspectives on the History of Deaf Education' in Mark Marschark and Patricia Elizabeth Spencer (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Deaf studies, Language and Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15

progress or as an oppressive force. However recent deaf history has begun to examine why the Victorian and Edwardian conception of oralism was so contested.²

The Cambrian Institution is ideally placed as a historical case study of this, holding onto a combined system of signs and articulation throughout the period studied here. The staff introduced methods of articulation and lip-reading into the curriculum and discouraged pupils from signing at home. However, letters show that, even before the Royal Commission was recommending specifically oral teaching, the Principal of the Institution was constantly rejecting requests from officials and parents who requested it. This did not always translate to a full defence of signs, as was happening elsewhere in deaf missions and in the pages of deaf magazines. In the Institution, the use of speech and lip-reading was considered at the top of a linguistic hierarchy; signs were used if this did not work, or for pupils considered unable to progress in articulation. Nevertheless, the Institution resisted the increasing current of oralism.

Oralism was, however, only one aspect of the wider legislative developments in deaf education. The critical and often panicked responses of the Cambrian Institution towards the 1893 Act suggests that the new state recommendations were significantly at odds with the existing system of voluntary education already in place. Whilst the increase in funding was initially welcomed, the ideologies of day schools and governmental inspection were treated by the Principal of the Cambrian Institution with a mixture of criticism and outright scorn. The reaction of the Cambrian Institution is an indication of the slow and contested history of state involvement in deaf education, with the established institutions facing competition from newer, state-assisted day schools. Its comments reflected a divisive community of headmasters of

² See Jan Branson and Don Miller, *Damned for their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled* (Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2002); Iain Hutchison, 'Oralism: A Sign of the Times? The Contest for Deaf Communication in Nineteenth-century Scotland', *European Review of History*, 14:4 (2007), 481-501; Neil Ashley Pemberton, 'Holiness, Civilisation and the Victorian Deaf: A Social History of Signing and Speech in late Victorian England, 1865-1895' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2004).

existing institutions, many welcoming state aid but others in fear of its potential effects on institutional liberty.³

The latter was certainly the case at the Cambrian Institution. Whilst the school had continually utilised assistance via the Poor Law, the intervention of the state violated a distinct philanthropic identity which had been cultivated throughout its history. This conception of charity was central to the organisation of the Institution. By relying heavily on voluntary contributions, the Cambrian Institution developed quickly an identity within the town, which in turn boosted the philanthropic reputation of its financial supporters. Philanthropy was central to the Cambrian Institution; charitable giving kept the Institution afloat during frequent periods of financial uncertainty, but its significance extends beyond this. Through public demonstrations and services, newspaper reports and printed material such as the Annual Reports, a specific construction of the deaf child was presented to the public. Without education, the deaf child was seen as helpless, a burden to society, or even savage and sub-human, unable to hear the word of God. Education at the Institution was presented as the only solution to this social problem.

However, an important distinction to be made is the difference between this public image - informed by melodramatic conceptions of deafness as affliction - and the everyday experience of the Institution's pupils. This distinction is visible most clearly in the Institution's public attitudes towards eugenics. Racial ideas about the threat to British stock informed official discourses of deafness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; this is most clearly seen in the Royal Commissioners' use of Alexander Graham Bell's warnings of a separate, inferior deaf 'race'. The publicity material of the Cambrian Institution did indeed sometimes address these fears. For example, its Annual Reports carried instructions to avoid deaf pupils forming

³ The Headmasters' Conferences are an excellent indication of this uncertainty. See in particular the discussion after Benjamin St John Ackers' 1885 paper 'The State in Relation to the Deaf', in which headmasters of the new oralist training colleges discussed the role of the state with headmasters of existing institutions, struggling to reconcile the need for state aid with a recognition of the role of voluntaryism. B. St John Ackers, 'The State in relation to the Deaf', *Proceedings of the Conference of Head Masters of Institutions and of Other Workers for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 1-3 July, 1885* (Margate: W. H. Allen, 1886), 106-27.

relationships in later life. Yet these overt eugenic warnings were rarely visible in everyday life. There was indeed strict gender separation at the school gates, but pupils built social relationships and, occasionally, past pupils married with full support of the Institution. Thus whilst the public image of the Institution appeared to discourage deaf socialising, intermarriage or signing, they were still part of everyday life for the deaf pupils. More visible was the increasing medicalisation of its pupils as the medical profession was increasingly relied upon within the school, though this development was itself a long and complex process.

Undoubtedly, the social construction of deafness in the Institution's public profile had an enormous impact. The Institution played a significant place in Swansea's social and political life, thus the melodramatic portrayal of deafness as inferior or dangerous informed public attitudes. Yet the everyday running of the Institution was a much less dramatic affair. The curriculum developed over time, from focusing on the 3 Rs and gendered training in subjects such as woodwork for boys and needlework for girls, to bringing in an increased number of subjects and an emphasis on religious training, morality and physical education which reflected mainstream educational developments. Yet this was not the extent of pupils' experiences - a number of children maintained social lives both in and outside the Institution, to meet each other and develop networks which continued long after they left.

Life in the Institution was not wholly defined by the Institution itself; this thesis has argued for the importance of home lives and parental relations, which can become visible through their communication with the principal in Letter Books. The pupils of the Cambrian Institution came from a variety of backgrounds. Some had become detached from their home lives, but many stayed in touch with families and friends from home. It is hoped that this thesis has signalled the need for further work on the home lives of deaf and disabled children; for whilst the records are limited, the findings here suggest a variety of parental and familial attitudes towards deaf children. Leisure time and holidays, though often scarce, can be seen in the records to provide a space for pupils' individual expression and, potentially, resistance to their routines.

The separate spheres of public and private life sometimes overlapped for the pupils. For example, school trips were presented as gifts from kind benefactors, and at social gatherings the children were included along the inmates of the blind institution and workhouse as a homogenous group of poor children. Thus despite overlapping on occasions such as this, the public and private faces of the Institution are a key distinction to make for the historian. The next section will further examine these themes in the context of the existing historiography, arguing that the history of deaf education is not only one of legislative change or linguistic oppression, but also one which involved everyday lives and an active role for pupils, parents and staff, which could sometimes translate to active resistance to the dominant discourse.

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and the history of disability, deafness and special education

Having summarised the key arguments in the thesis, the question remains as to the role this study can play in the wider historiography of disability, deafness and special education. Firstly, outside a small number of recent works, the history of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and of deaf people in Wales is a relatively untouched subject area.⁴ Thus a primary goal of this thesis has been to introduce deaf history in Wales as a field of detailed academic enquiry. Wales has had very little historical writing about disability, and rarely gets much detailed attention in general overviews. The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was the first and, throughout the period studied here, largest deaf institution in Wales. Thus whilst it is by no means an indication of the entirety of deaf life in Wales, it represents the dominant discourses of deafness in the principality.

Through its reports and public meetings, the Welsh public were introduced to institutional deaf education. Particularly in early material produced by the Cambrian Institution, the 'duty' to provide deaf education was often presented in terms of

⁴ See Neil J. Alderman, *Joseph and Mary: A Case Study in Deaf Family History* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2011); Cedric J. Moon, *A Tale of Three Deaf Schools in South Wales* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2010); Victor Golightly, "'Speak on a Finger and Thumb': Dylan Thomas, Language and the Deaf", *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 10 (2005), 73-97; Hay, J., 'Postcard Corner: Royal Cambrian School for the Deaf & Dumb, Pen y Bryn, Swansea', *Deaf History Journal*, 8:3 (2005), 40-41; Cedric Moon, Neil Alderman and Richard Jones, 'Welsh Deaf History - 70 Years On!', *Deaf History Journal*, 15:1 (2012), 23.

nationality and Welsh patriotism, as well as a local concern to Swansea. Of course, much of the activity at the Institution was not specific to Wales - many of its policies did not differ from many English or Scottish deaf institutions and the Welsh language was rarely given any consideration. Yet the Institution connected the Welsh deaf to wider issues in deaf education by engaging in contact and debate with other schools' headmasters. In particular, Principal Benjamin Payne's attendance at Headmasters' Conferences and position as a founding member of the British Deaf and Dumb Association built a firm connection to national deaf discourses. Therefore, this thesis has aimed to help introduce the experiences of Wales to the existing literature.

As outlined in the Introduction, a key goal of the thesis has been to present a history of the Institution which is grounded in existing disability and deaf history and theory. The work has been influenced by several key developments in the historiography without limiting itself to one specific framework. The records of the Cambrian Institution illustrate the ways in which attitudes towards deafness are formed and disseminated. The public sources of the Cambrian Institution presented a particular socio-cultural understanding of the deaf child as afflicted and tragic. The theories of the social model of disability and cultural readings of disability and deafness both help us to understand the ways in which these discourses are created, and can be seen in the records of the Cambrian Institution. The need to address the public and to garner more subscribers and donors to the Institution undoubtedly necessitated the hyperbolic demonstrations, public meetings and printed material which informed the public of the Institution's tragically afflicted children. Thus the material need for support and publicity likely informed the specific social construction of deafness displayed to the public.

Similarly, the historical conception of deaf people as a legitimate linguistic and cultural minority - as theorised by historians such as Harlan Lane, Susan Plann and Paddy Ladd - is essential to understanding the role of sign language in the Institution.⁵

⁵ Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (New York: Random House, 1984); Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003);

The Institution had an inconsistent approach to the question of oralism, but in everyday life, both the pupils and particularly headmaster Benjamin Payne (who was himself deaf) continued to use signs in social situations, and a community of deaf people emerged and strengthened throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, over time the Institution became a meeting place for past pupils and the adult deaf in Swansea, with Special Services offering a space for free use of sign. Thus whilst external forces (and some inside the Institution) were threatening the very existence of signs, the Institution also facilitated the continuation of the signing community.

Yet previous histories of special education and deafness have tended to overlook other aspects of life in deaf schools. Areas such as home life and leisure have rarely been addressed in this period but can offer important details and, crucially, grant the deaf child agency in their own history. Focusing on experience helps avoid a solely top-down perspective which focuses only on the policies made for deaf children, rather than the ways in which they went about their daily lives and, perhaps, resisted those policies. Of course, it is crucial to recognise the limits of understanding the experience of deaf children in the Cambrian Institution. Partly this is a result of universal issues of historical distance; but the sources used present particular problems as the voice presented is almost exclusively that of the Institution's staff. Thus the opinions and many aspects of the lives of deaf children are distorted or lost. As Anna Davin writes about London's board schools, 'the experience of children... is not the central focus of the mass of administrative data which is the obvious source on education in Board schools'.⁶ Yet focusing on experience helps construct a picture of the everyday life of deaf children, and reveals aspects of their history which have been largely overlooked.

As such, it is hoped this thesis has identified the role of deaf children in other social discourses which have hitherto excluded disability and deafness. The constructions of

Susan Plann, *A Silent Minority: Deaf Education in Spain, 1550-1835* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁶ Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram, 1996), 113.

the moral, religious schoolchild and citizen - cemented as part of the development of mainstream education in the nineteenth century - are visible in the lessons and attitudes of the Cambrian Institution. Deaf children also participated in national debates about leisure, which across Britain was becoming increasingly regulated for its potentially dangerous and immoral content. Sometimes deaf children's place in these discourses was framed by disability; for example, the ideals of citizenship and work seen in the Institution's curriculum were often informed by economic rationality, a desire to prevent disabled people from being a burden on society.⁷ Finally, whilst life in an Institution rarely allowed for anything other than the standard daily routine, many of the children had separate lives at home which they went to in holidays and before or after school, and these deserve recognition in historical accounts of deaf children. It is hoped that this thesis has identified areas of the history of deaf children which will continue to be worked on, using a perspective which values day-to-day life and the viewpoint of the child. This final section of the Conclusion will detail briefly some areas for further study.

Further study

The Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb did not close in 1914. On the contrary, it had an eventful subsequent history. This thesis has chosen this end point because of a desire not to stray from the Victorian and Edwardian periods, and because this marked the end of the tenure of Principal Benjamin Payne, whose Letter Books and Minute Books provide a significant number of the Institution's sources available to the historian. In 1936, the Institution installed a teacher from the East Anglian Schools for the Blind and Deaf who was a proponent of oralism, thus ending the combined system previously used at the Institution.⁸ The pupils were evacuated after the blitzes in Swansea in 1941, the girls and junior boys to Newbridge-on-Wye

⁷ See Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 197; Deborah A. Stone, *The Disabled State* (Basingstoke, 1985), 51.

⁸ Victor Golightly, "'Speak on a finger and thumb': Dylan Thomas, Language and the Deaf", *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, Vol 10, 2005, 85. The failed bid by the Education Department to combine the blind and deaf schools had previously modelled itself on this school. The National Archives, Kew, ED 32/227, Proposed Central Institution for Blind and Deaf Children in South Wales, Draft statement of scheme for the provision.

and the senior boys to Rhyader.⁹ A new site was found after the war in Cardiff, but unfortunately it was destroyed in a fire. After this, the Institution closed, and the old Institution in Swansea was taken over by several occupants - amongst them Swansea Grammar School and the Swansea College of Art - before its demolition in 1995.¹⁰

As well as this chronological history, there remains many other areas regarding the Institution which have not been addressed fully in this thesis. Most notable is the lives of deaf adults and past pupils. The Cambrian Institution's records can help with this. The Institution carried out surveys showing what trades and careers the pupils took. Despite the lack of trade-specific industrial training or an apprenticeship fund, the Institution often had a role in finding trades and employment for its pupils, or lodged them after their education had finished or kept them as domestic servants. Former pupils regularly wrote back, the Institution sometimes publicising their successes in terms of economic rationality - the 1869 Annual Report announced that the pupils' 'sphere of usefulness' had been extended when two past pupils started to learn trades.¹¹ The Annual Reports regularly printed letters from past pupils, many of which have interesting reflections on their new work; one in 1914, for example, featured a past pupil supposedly admitting about his apprenticeship, 'When I started work it seems nice but it has gone dull to me.'¹² The Letter Books, too, feature discussions of past pupils when the Principal found out they are in the workhouse or have had personal problems.

The lives of past pupils, then, form a whole other aspect of the Cambrian Institution which time and space issues have prevented from including here. The lives of adult

⁹ Cedric Moon, Neil Alderman and Richard Jones, 'Welsh Deaf History - 70 Years On!', *Deaf History Journal*, 15:1 (2012), 23.

¹⁰ Neil J. Alderman, *Joseph and Mary: A Case Study in Deaf Family History* (Middlesex: British Deaf History Society, 2011), 79; J. Hay, 'Postcard Corner: Royal Cambrian School for the Deaf & Dumb, Pen y Bryn, Swansea', *Deaf History Journal*, 8:3 (2005), 40-41.

¹¹ See, for example, the minutes of 1885, where formal pupils write back who had just finished apprenticeships as a tailor and baker. WGAS, E/Cam 1/3, Minute Book 1867-87, 13 April 1885; Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1869* (Swansea: E. and J. Griffiths, 1869).

¹² Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *The Sixty-Seventh Annual Report of the Royal Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Swansea, for the year ending 30th June, 1914* (Swansea, 1914), 18.

deaf people are also important and have not been discussed fully here. The role of missions and deaf congregations is an overlooked but crucial area of deaf history, and is one which has been addressed recently in the work of Neil Pemberton.¹³ In Wales, a number of deaf missions existed where the adult deaf could socialise, attend religious meetings and receive assistance with problems they faced. The Glamorganshire Missions to the Deaf and Dumb have left several records including Annual Reports, whilst a North Wales Mission to the Deaf and Dumb emerged in the 1890 and was reported in deaf magazines.¹⁴ The lives of deaf adults may also be visible in employment records, the Poor Law and governmental sources. Finally, it must be recognised that institutions represent only some deaf children in the principality. Many did not receive education and did not come into the sphere of influence of the Institution. As mainstream elementary education became compulsory, many children had their deafness ignored or unrecognised.¹⁵ These children have rarely received attention from historians, but their experiences are essential for the writing of deaf and disability history.

However, despite many potential areas remaining unexplored, this thesis has made an argument for the continued importance of individual institutional histories such as that of the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Studying an individual institution in detail offers an important chance to explore the question of experience, and provides the potential to determine the lives of deaf people in their communities and localities, as well as a focal point for social attitudes towards disability, deafness and education. Further detailed analysis of individual special education institutions will help build a comparative study of institutional approaches to disability and deafness which recognises the complexity and variation of institutional outlooks and children's everyday lives. It is hoped that this further work will be done, both on the Cambrian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb itself, and continuing to piece together the experiences of children in institutions elsewhere.

¹³ N. Pemberton, 'Deafness and Holiness: Home Missions, Deaf Congregations, and Natural Language: 1860-1890', *Victorian Review*, 35:2 (2009), 65-82.

¹⁴ *The British Deaf Mute*, 2:19, 109.

¹⁵ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 122.

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