

Charlton Park Open Air School

Presented by George Burton



Why the need for open air schools?

- ❖ **1904: The LCC replaced the old school boards with a School Medical Service for mentally/physically handicapped children.**
- ❖ **But the School Medical Service did not include any provision for “delicate” children.**
- ❖ **The LCC had no legal powers to provide for delicate children and it would need an Act of Parliament to include them.**

Why the need for open air schools?

❖ **Many children had conditions such as:**

- **Anaemia**
- **Asthma**
- **TB joints/glands**
- **Chest infections**
- **Minor heart disease**
- **Bronchial conditions**
- **Nervous problems**
- **Adenoidal conditions**

Why the need for open air schools?

- ❖ **It was noted that children with these conditions were often absent from school and were missing out on their education.**
- ❖ **A way was needed to improve attendance.**
- ❖ **A team of experts visited Charlottenburg in Berlin.**
- ❖ **They found a school that was part open-air.**



The Open Air School Experiment

- ❖ **They tried to get the Government to act on their findings - but the Government would not take any action.**
- ❖ **So a woman called Mrs Bridges Adams approached the RACS Co-op and asked if they could use some of their land for an experiment.**

The Open Air School Experiment

- ❖ **The Co-op offered them a piece of land on Bostel Heath.**
- ❖ **They set up their experimental school on this piece of land.**
- ❖ **It had 108 children, a headmistress, a nurse, 4 teachers and a caretaker.**
- ❖ **There was a ratio of 1 teacher to 30 pupils (the normal ratio was 1 teacher to 60 pupils).**



The Open Air School Experiment

- ❖ **The school was open from 9.00am to 6.00pm, 5 days a week and a half-day on Saturday.**
- ❖ **Breakfast, dinner and tea were served al-fresco in the woods.**
- ❖ **Each day included a 2-hour rest period and lots of fresh air.**

The Open Air School Experiment

- ❖ **Children put on weight, the average was 6 ½ pounds – and one child even put on a stone.**
- ❖ **The experiment ran for three months and was considered a great success.**
- ❖ **So it was agreed that the school should become permanent.**

The Rules for Open Air Schools

- ❖ **The Principal Medical Officer of the LCC laid down the rules for the new open air school:**
 - 1. That summer or winter, sun or snow, drought or tempest, the fresh air routine should always be followed;**
 - 2. No room should ever be closed on all sides;**
 - 3. No form of artificial heat should be supplied;**
 - 4. Even on wet days when the air, clothes, beds and blankets were all damp, the rest period should still be carried out.**

The First UK Open Air School

- ❖ **1908: The school moved to Shooters Hill in a part of Shrewsbury House, with a 21-year lease.**
- ❖ **This school had 75 boys and girls and 3 teachers.**
- ❖ **Mr Broughton became Headmaster in 1920 and made the school his life's work.**
- ❖ **The school attracted a lot of attention.**

The First UK Open Air School

One newspaper wrote:

“Success of Experiment on Shooters Hill – Remarkable Results – How London Children Played at Being Ancient Britons”.





Charlton Park Open Air School

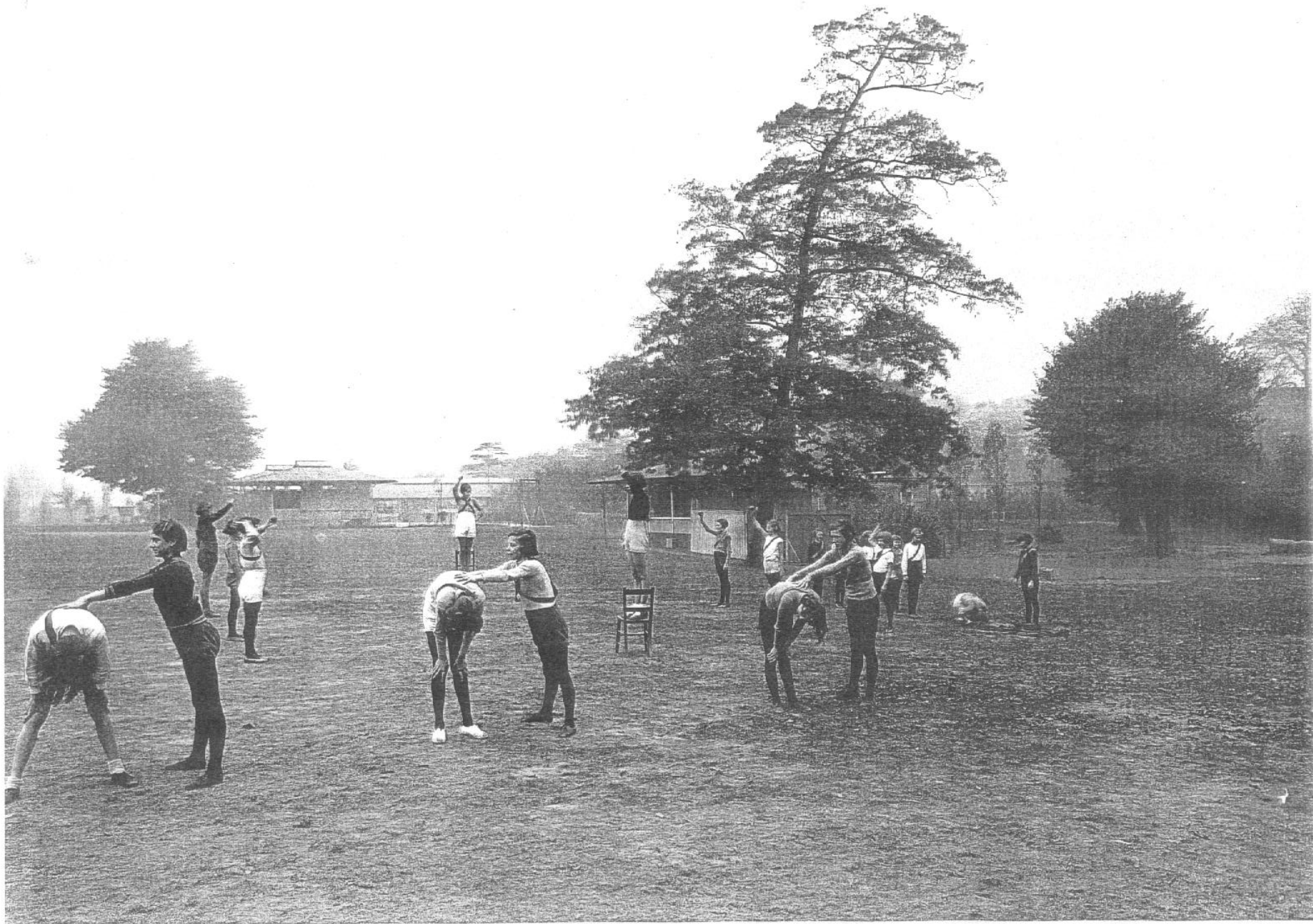
- ❖ **1929: The lease ran out, so they brought the school to Charlton Park.**
- ❖ **It was an agreement between LCC Parks Department and the Education Department.**
- ❖ **The three-acre site cost £1,500 for the land and £4,900 for the buildings.**





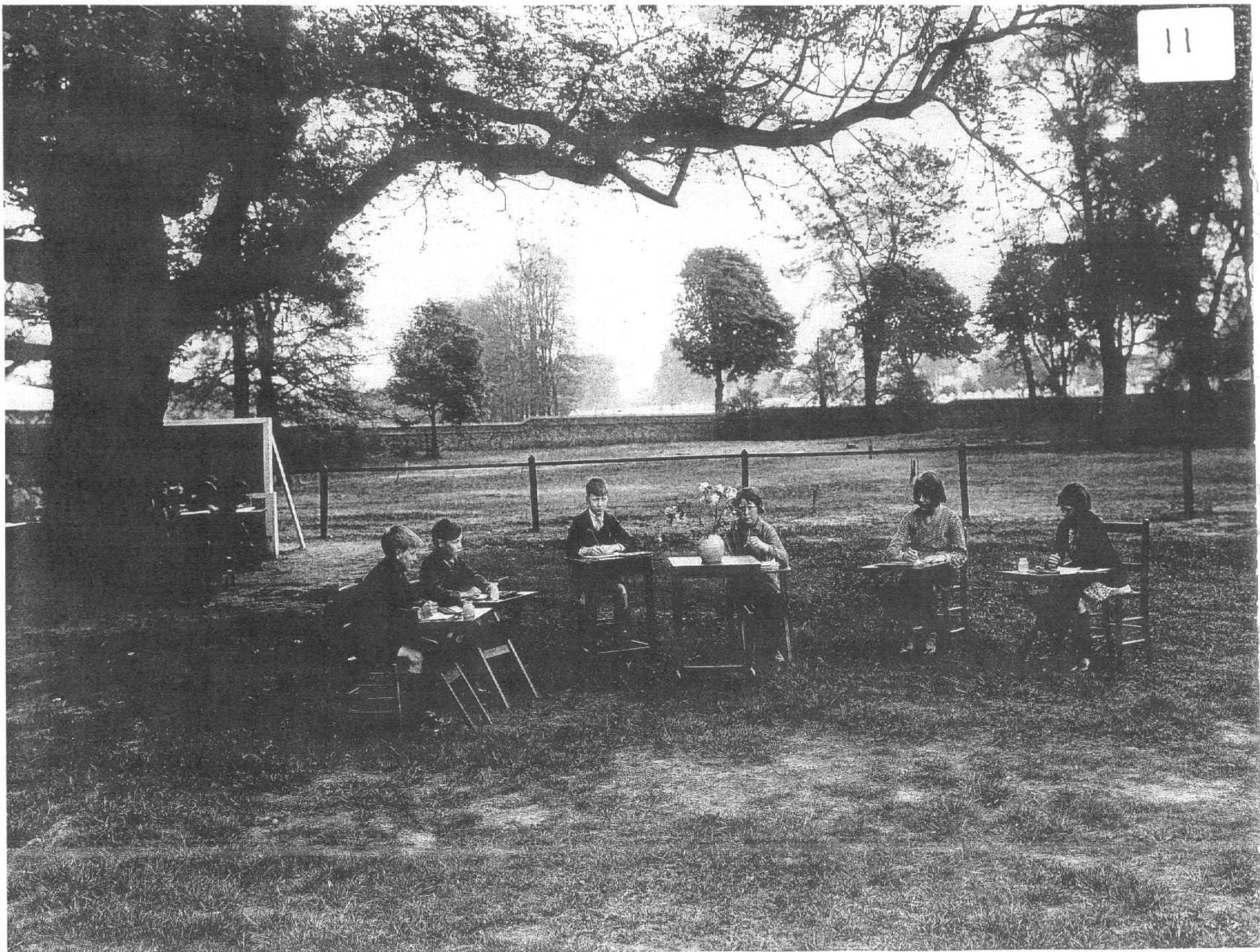










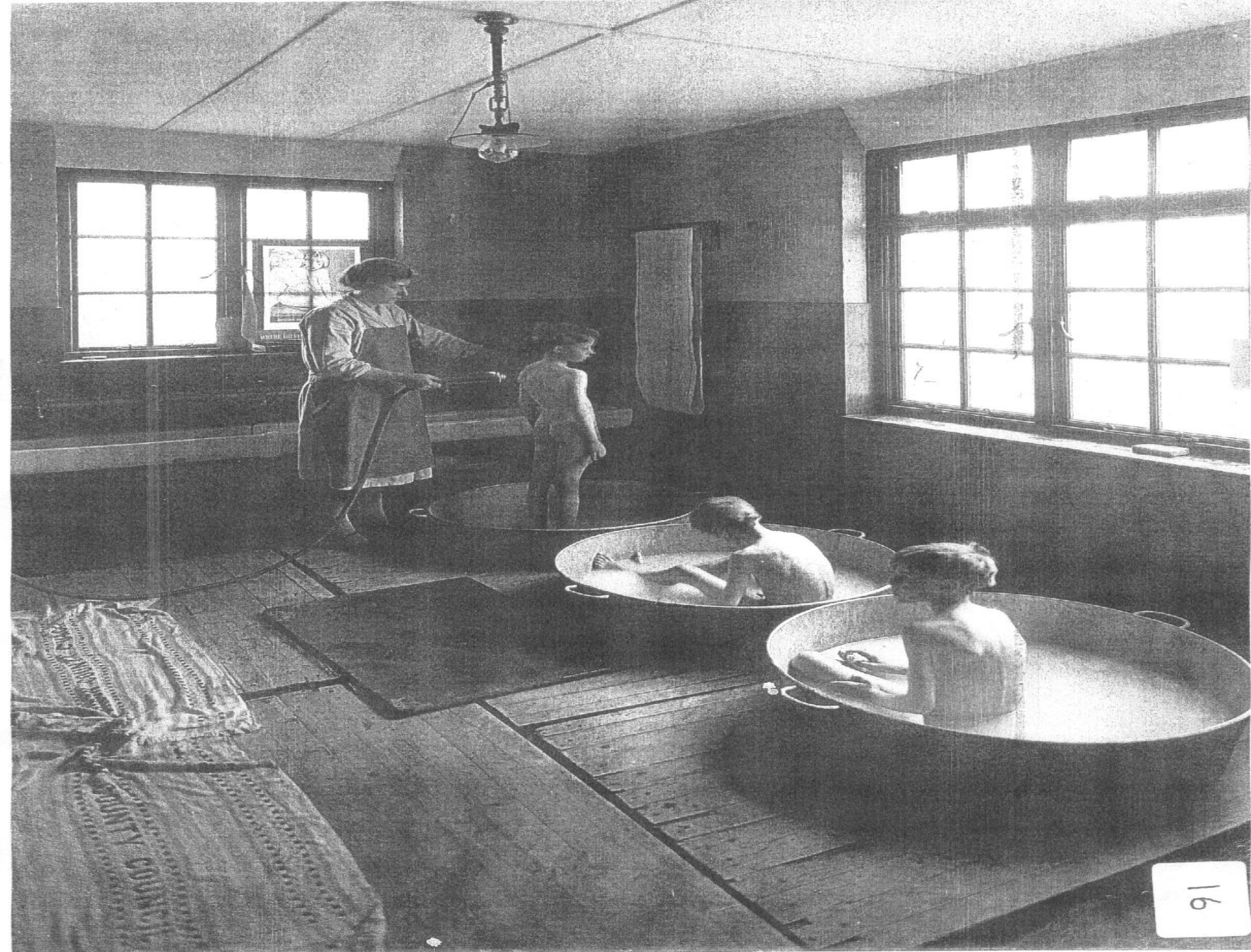












Charlton Park Open Air School

- ❖ **1957: Charlton Park Open Air School celebrated its Golden Jubilee.**
- ❖ **July 1962: The school closed.**
- ❖ **The remaining 5-15-year-olds were moved to a newly-built school at Hawthorne Cottage in Swingate Lane, Plumstead.**

Charlton Park Open Air School

❖ **As a grand farewell on the last day there was a stage coach with:**

- **Two chestnut horses**
- **An exhibition of past work**
- **A folk dance festival**
- **Over 1000 people attended.**

❖ **It was the end of an era.**

The Open Air Schools

- ❖ **Can you imagine children today going to a school with these rules?**
- 1. That summer or winter, sun or snow, drought or tempest, the fresh air routine should always be followed;**
- 2. No room should ever be closed on all sides;**
- 3. No form of artificial heat should be supplied;**
- 4. Even on wet days when the air, clothes, beds and blankets were all damp, the rest period should still be carried out.**

Thank you for listening!

