
Building Comprehensive Education: Caroline Benn and Holland Park School^[1]

JANE MARTIN

ABSTRACT This article is based on an inaugural professorial lecture given by Jane Martin at the University of Birmingham on 3 December 2014. It grew out of research in progress on the life and work of the leading educational reformer, Caroline Benn, wife of one of the most prominent and controversial post-war socialists in Britain, Tony Benn.

Epigraph

All of us who have spent a teaching life within comprehensive schools and those who have received a comprehensive education should remember Caroline Benn.^[2]

Introduction

A lifelong fighter in the cause of comprehensive education, Caroline Benn believed passionately in the need to destroy the myth of 'fixed innate ability'; that is, the idea that we are all born with a certain amount of 'ability' which can then be measured by an intelligence test and used to justify academic selection in the formal educational system. While she believed in the concept of human genius, she did not think it could be defined by, and limited to, the world of intelligence quotient (IQ) testing and she opposed all attempts to commandeer it for the purpose of preserving a school system designed for a social elite. 'Giftedness is what education itself helps to create and release and the purpose of the education system is to help foster as many gifts as possible in as many children as possible. Selection for giftedness ... stunts our chances of helping the gifted, she said. 'The way we help giftedness is by encouraging a flexible, alert, high-standard, stimulating, and supportive comprehensive education service for everyone at every stage. A comprehensive system is the only way we

can openly ensure attention to all equally and at the same time protect and reveal the full range of human gifts'.[3]

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1926, Caroline was twenty-one years old when she met Tony Benn over tea at Worcester College, Oxford. Nine days later, knowing she was about to return to America and he might never see her again, he asked her to marry him. They were married in Caroline's hometown in June 1949 and had four children, all born in the 1950s. Tony was elected Member of Parliament (MP) for Bristol South East in 1950 and the young couple made their home in Holland Park Avenue, ten minutes' walk from Holland Park, the new state comprehensive secondary school that opened in west London in September 1958 and which they chose for their children's education. Caroline became a governor of Holland Park, serving in total for 35 years. This article fulfils our duty to remember, in the face of ridicule and memory loss, the history of the struggle for comprehensive school reform. In recreating Caroline's contribution to modern educational and political history it attempts to address legacies and identify continuities – not for the sake of nostalgia, but as a way of beginning the task of producing a reading of the past from the present for the future.

The use of the building metaphor in my title comes from an interview-conversation with Tony Benn when he said that Caroline's 'absolute preoccupation' was to build comprehensive education at Holland Park.[4] I want to share with you a small part of the story of her life and work, to convey a sense of education as a site of struggle and how she juggled her roles as wife, mother, social researcher, socialist campaigner, writer and school governor. In recreating her work within the labour movement and her campaign for improvements in working-class education, I will describe the comprehensive education movement in the 1960s and 1970s, using events at Holland Park in the autumn/winter of 1976 as a case study in the relationship between teaching, learning, policy and practice. This is a local history but it is one with wider significance, since Holland Park was the most singularly visible of London's pioneer comprehensive schools. Nearness to Fleet Street and the headquarters of national television meant that political actions to do with the school occurred under the close scrutiny of government administrations, and were reported on regularly by news media. For Holland Park the 'politics of place' had repercussions for pupils, parents, teachers, governors, administrators and politicians themselves.

My study builds on 25 years of research investigating a largely hidden story of women struggling to establish a progressive and radical tradition in London education by campaigning to improve the quality and increase the quantity of educational opportunities for the vast majority of city children. The crux of my argument is that an appreciation of Caroline Benn's life and work, and of the political and cultural context in which she lived, enables us to better understand women's distinctive contribution to the struggle for what Caroline saw as the *third* stage of the development of state education in Britain.

The article is divided into four sections. It starts with an overview of the expansion of mass schooling in London up to the launch of the Comprehensive Schools Committee in 1965. The article goes on to examine the making of Caroline Benn – a woman whom Chris Searle described as ‘a pioneer, not of the Mayflower people who entered America to colonise it, but an American woman who crossed the Atlantic the other way to struggle and to work and to give and help build a better beginning to the lives of millions’.[5] Melissa Benn’s *School Wars* reports an interview with Anthony Seldon, Master of Wellington College:

Meeting Seldon in his large and elegant study, I am aware, suddenly, of an interesting intergenerational element to the school wars. I suspect that he is, too. Seldon’s parents were active members of the educational radical right. His father, Arthur, was a founder of the Institute of Economic Affairs in 1957, the right-wing think tank which laid the basis of much of Margaret Thatcher’s philosophy in government; his mother Marjorie was an early advocate of vouchers in education. Seldon dedicates his pamphlet on ‘factory schooling’ to her. Did Arthur and Marjorie Seldon at any point come across, clash with or curse those of their opponents such as my own parents, Tony and Caroline Benn, who were socialists and energetic advocates of the comprehensive ideal from the 1960s onwards? No explicit reference is made to these differing heritages during our exchanges, yet the entire conversation – that touches, inevitably, on the central question of the ways in which parents shape their children’s values as well as life chances – feels suffused with the ghosts of battles past.[6]

I want to keep that notion of education as a site of struggle in this article. The third section centres on the question of local government and comprehensive education planning in London after 1945. Finally, the article uses newly available and underutilised contemporary material to explore developments at Holland Park School after the official start of comprehensive reform in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Rise of Mass Schooling

Universal basic education was introduced in the period from the 1870 Education Act to the first decade of the twentieth century. Grant-aided academic secondary education was established as a second stage in the development of state education in Britain. But it was confined to a chosen few, accessible through the payment of fees or through competitive scholarships from the elementary schools. Some critics, notably the National Labour Education League set up by Mary Bridges Adams in 1901, attacked the elitist idea of a ladder of opportunity for the few.[7] Adams and others warned ‘that this selective process, if it is allowed to be made the substitute for the higher education of the people, will simply take certain individuals and put them

through a class machine, in order that they might become effective guardians of the vested interests of the possessing classes of this country'.[8] The League argued that secondary education should be available to all children, as an essential qualification for intelligent and active citizenship in a democratic society.

In the 1920s and 1930s the class basis of educational politics was transparent. Secondary education remained the preserve of the fee-paying middle classes, while nearly 90% of young people left elementary school at 14. By the 1930s the strongest articulation of the demand for a common secondary school came from the London Labour Party and the National Association of Labour Teachers. The only way of achieving educational equality, and ensuring that social inequality did not reproduce itself in the schools, they said, was to establish a system whereby all the various kinds and curricula of adolescent education were available under one roof. When Labour won control of the London County Council (LCC) in 1934 it made history as the first local education authority to recommend the establishment of a common secondary school for all, one that would be large enough to provide within its four walls most, or all, of the activities carried on in existing types of post-primary school.[9]

The 1944 Education Act introduced free secondary education for all children aged between 11 and 15. But this did not mean that all schoolchildren then received what before this date had been described as secondary education. Eighty per cent of the age group were placed in secondary modern schools with inferior resources and less well-qualified staff.[10] Entry to the grammar school was determined by a child's performance in the 11-plus examination. In the 1940s and 1950s those most likely to fall at this hurdle were working-class children, and girls; girls had to outperform boys to get a place at a selective school.[11] Those who accepted the crude grading of three 'types of mind' – the academic, the technical and the practical – supported the separation of children into grammar, technical and modern schools. Increasingly, social investigators like A.H. Halsey pointed to the 'wasted talent' the divided educational system produced. Secondary modern schools were seen as second best and the weight of support for the comprehensive reform came from the experience of teachers, children and parents aware that selective secondary education rested on spurious thinking (to do with IQ testing) that made it acceptable for many, if not most, children to fail.[12] The sense of lost talent strongly motivated many campaigners for non-selective education. In 1955 the Labour Party conference committed future Labour governments to establish comprehensives as the norm.

Labour won the 1964 general election by a majority of four seats. In public life, Tony Benn became Postmaster General. In private, he and Caroline were making the decision to educate their children in state schools. 'We had a lot of angst about it to start with', he said, 'because her parents and my mother were a bit worried that it would sacrifice their educational opportunity but Caroline was very committed to it'.[13] In the same year (1964) city teacher

Ann Glennerster heard Caroline speaking on the radio about her decision to send her elder sons to Holland Park. Ann herself was a product of the elite St Paul's School for Girls in London but retained strong memories of a childhood visit to a secondary modern school with a friend. She remembered being 'very conscious that they were thirteen years old, didn't know any more than me, I could only have been nine years old and they were going to leave school at fourteen'.^[14] A passionate advocate of new ways of teaching mathematics, Ann had joined the Young Fabians, attended Fabian summer schools and met Shirley Williams, then trying to rejuvenate the Fabian Society by encouraging the participation of young people. Williams persuaded Ann to write a Fabian Society pamphlet on social work through which she came to meet her future husband, a young Oxford graduate working for the Labour Research Department.

Howard Glennerster got to Oxford despite failing his 11-plus and never wanted a child of his to experience this early rebuff. Later, at the London School of Economics, he became friends with David Donnison, who had been educated at a public school, a negative experience for him. Both men wanted something different for their children and the children of other people. They were not alone. Increasing numbers of people shared their frustration with segregated schools. As serious electioneering began, they welcomed the Labour Party's election manifesto promising that 'secondary education will be reorganised along comprehensive lines ... no child will be denied the opportunity of benefitting from [academic education] through arbitrary selection at the age of eleven'. Eager to see the leadership come out in full support of the principle and practice of comprehensive education, they began mobilising their networks to bring pressure to bear. In Howard's words: 'We were strong supporters of comprehensive schools, very conscious that the grammar school lobby was good at getting their message out but we were not. We wanted to change this'.^[15]

Early in 1965 the Comprehensive Schools Committee was launched. Caroline Benn was its information officer. The committee headquarters were the Benn family home. 'They used to meet there in the day time when I was at the ministerial office and I'd come home at night and find all their stuff there', Tony recalled. 'I would put it away and then it would be available when they came again and my house really became a centre of campaigning on comprehensive education.'^[16] Ann used to go round and help after work. 'I was acting as secretary. I remember turning the Gestetner.'^[17] Sponsors included London head teachers Rhodes Boyson and Margaret Miles, the Director of the Institute of Education Lionel Elvin, sociologist Peter Townsend, the Bishop of Southwark Mervyn Stockwood, and the novelist Angus Wilson. Historian Brian Simon was both sponsor and chair of the advisory panel, serving alongside Phillip Taylor, a professor in the then Department of Education at the University of Birmingham. Ann had fond memories of Caroline, whom she described as 'warm, really friendly and with a sense of fun. A wonderful hostess, she piled cut vegetables and served them with dips. She introduced me to that.

She taught me how to handle the press. She was very conscious of that. Of how they go through dustbins and she used to say that she did not want them to misrepresent the message about comprehensive schools'.[18] So who was Caroline Benn and how had she become this media savvy?

The Making of Caroline Benn

Caroline DeCamp Benn was the eldest of three children of Anne Hetherington Graydon and James Milton DeCamp, a Cincinnati lawyer. She had a brother, Graydon and sister, Nance. The DeCamps settled in America in the seventeenth century to escape from repression in France as Protestant Huguenots. Her maternal grandfather, Dr Thomas W. Graydon, emigrated from Ireland in 1866 and came to Cincinnati, on the southern bend of the Ohio River, in 1876. He later became a prominent Republican politician and manufacturer of patent medicines. He sent his sons to Harvard and one, who died in a car crash the year Caroline got married, played All-American football. Between 1880 and 1940 Cincinnati was home to Republican boss George Bernard Cox and the presidential Tait family, and Dr Graydon was an important member of Cox's coalition. Caroline grew up during the Depression years and we can only speculate how much the Ohio River flood of 1937 helped shape her ideals. The scale of the flood was unprecedented. One million people were left homeless, with 385 dead and property losses reaching 500 million dollars (in excess of 8 billion dollars today). She described herself as 'violently in favour' of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal, 'much against my family's views'.[19]

Caroline was educated privately, including a spell at a New England boarding school, and then at Vassar College, a highly selective liberal arts college associated with the Protestant social elite, and Cincinnati University, a comprehensive public research university. The progressive Henry Noble MacCracken, Vassar's president from 1915 to 1946, wanted to make Vassar students citizens of the world, as well as of their college, neighbourhood and country.[20] Mary McCarthy, a Vassar graduate, wrote in *The Group*: 'Vassar girls, in general, were not liked ... by the world at large; they had come to be a sort of symbol of superiority'.[21]

In her 'teeny hood', the word she used for childhood, Caroline was particularly close to her sister and her cousin Jean; according to Tony she used to say they were her two friends.[22] There was no family tradition of women working and Caroline satirised the cultural milieu in her novel *Lion in a Den of Daniels*, published in 1962.[23] This told the story of young American wife Lydia Brightbrook and her passage through London society. Lydia, who hailed from Caroline's native Ohio, married Harvard-educated Hank, her best friend's escort at the White Knights Cotillion, the name of the ball where elite local girls made their debut. 'Of course I had to marry', Lydia says, 'What American girl could be counted a true success without her own personalised bridegroom?' Popular magazines drummed the message home – packed full of advice on 'how to hold our husbands, use our left-overs, attract shy men, remodel rumpus

rooms, vote with confidence, sleep without a pillow, enlarge our breasts, flatten our lawns, take our menopause in our stride, and make cocktail tables out of camel saddles'.[24] Lydia can't wait to escape by one of the few routes open to a woman of her background. 'The thought of stagnating in Ohio had dragged me down to the bottom of the well. I couldn't face foreverafter in some split-level house, just an open-ended coffin with a New England lantern out at the end of the driveway'.[25]

Caroline met Tony Benn when she came to Britain for an Oxford summer school. This was a meeting of minds as well as a tremendous love story. When she returned to America, the couple began what they called the Great Correspondence, in which she told him: 'I will try to be interested in the things you are because I do want to know about them and because I do not want to let you down in any way, but the key to the world to me lies in literature and art and philosophy, and that is the only route I can ever take to really discover what this life is all about'.[26] Later that year (1948) she supported the progressive independent, Henry Wallace, in the presidential election. Besides increased spending on welfare, education and public work, Wallace's platform advocated new civil rights legislation and he refused to appear before segregated audiences, to eat, or to stay in segregated establishments. As Tony Benn said of her, 'Caroline resisted the sexist and right-wing philosophy of Cincinnati and brought her own judgment to bear'.[27]

For Tony Benn, Caroline was his socialist soul mate, the person who had the greatest influence on his life. The second son of William Wedgwood Benn, a leading Liberal and Labour politician, he was born into the British political establishment. Tony's mother, Margaret, was a theologian and feminist prominent in the campaign for the ordination of women from the mid-1920s. It was she who taught him to support the prophets over the kings, who had power, as the prophets taught righteousness. Both his grandfathers were Liberal MPs and his father crossed the floor to join the Labour Party in 1928. Growing up in a Victorian terraced house overlooking the Thames, as a boy he shook hands with Gandhi and Lloyd George. His father was created Viscount Stansgate in 1942 and his elder brother Michael would have succeeded to the title, but was killed in the Second World War. When Tony Benn succeeded to the title in 1960, he was MP for Bristol South East and had to fight for more than two years to renounce his peerage and keep his Commons seat. For Tony it 'was a nightmare because I was sacked'. The support Caroline gave was 'absolutely phenomenal because I was very despondent. I'd lost my job and thought I was bankrupted by the legal bills and she just rallied round and kept me going'.[28] On the day that he gave up the title, the press were relentless. The telephone rang non-stop and a television crew came to film the family preparations. Nine-year-old Hilary gave a 'sensational' interview in which he denounced the hereditary system as 'ridiculous'. His proud parents 'had no idea what he was going to say, but after they told him they were going to ask him some questions, Caroline found him in the bathroom washing his face, and saying, "I am really nervous"'.[29] Typically plain-speaking diary reflections

include Tony's thoughts on a *Daily Mirror* reporter who came to interview Caroline. 'He hasn't the slightest idea of what the peerage battle has been about or why and is only interested in the ludicrous status aspects and what it means not to be a peeress and all that crap.'[30]

Tony's *Diaries* offer testament to Caroline's love and support, showing both his love and pride in her achievements and the high regard in which she was held by others. We learn, for example, of Caroline's being voted 'the best wife for a leader of the Labour Party' following a dinner party at Richard Crossman's house (in 1957), of how Dora Gaitskell touched his heart 'by saying how devoted she was to Caroline and admiring her for the way she ran the house and brought up four children without any fuss'.[31] Caroline became both a part of British labour history and its chronicler. Writing her biography of Keir Hardie (1992), the boy-miner who became the founder of the Labour Party, she brought her own experience as the wife of a leading Labour politician to bear, including the private story of family tragedies like the loss of his three-year-old daughter. 'Only two of Hardie's biographers mention Sarah's existence, let alone her death', Caroline notes. 'Personal events often get elbowed out of male political biography, which tends to centre on the pursuit of power. No biography of a woman would omit the death of one of her children.'[32]

In common with working-class British women who took their fight for the vote to the male establishment in Westminster, Caroline's generation negotiated the interconnected domains of work, education and family. Writing on the politics of motherhood from the perspective of 1990s Britain, Melissa Benn recalls that her mother 'did not believe that children were a woman's destiny: she spoke instead of her *great enjoyment* in us, often quoting the French writer Colette on how pregnancy was like one long holiday'.[33] At home she remembers how Caroline pursued her own projects in 'all of the moats of time in between'.[34] Seemingly doing things society's way, but actually doing things her way (including an MA at University College, London in 1951 when expecting her first child). Besides politics and gardening, Caroline's activities included service on a committee to investigate the death of President Kennedy and being engaged by the BBC to read E.B. White's American fairy tale, *Charlotte's Web*, on the children's programme *Jackanory* (in 1966), and making a film on comprehensive schools, *Carry on Comprehensives* (in 1980).

In the field of education politics Caroline played a leading role in comprehensive reform, as founder of the Comprehensive Schools Committee (subsequently Campaign for Comprehensive Education), and as parent and governor at Holland Park comprehensive school. In the early 1970s she produced an annual survey of the reforms' progress. So great was her knowledge that, in the 1960s and 1970s, politicians and policy makers would telephone her for information and she was co-opted as an expert member of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA, 1970-77). Across three decades, she contributed numerous articles for education journals (for example, *Comprehensive Education*, the journal of the Comprehensive Schools Committee, *Forum*, *Socialism*

and *Education and Teaching London Kids*) and co-authored the two most thorough investigations of the comprehensive movement, *Half Way There*, written with Brian Simon in the late 1960s and *Thirty Years On*, written with Clyde Chitty in the mid-1990s. She was also President of the Socialist Education Association and a member of the UNESCO Commission. Contemporaries lauded her energy and her indefatigable campaigning, as evidenced by her husband's comment that she did more evening meetings than he did.

Comprehensive Planning: London after 1945

In the winter of 1934-35, suffragist and Labour politician Hugh Franklin chaired a council committee set up to consider the future of London's post-primary education. Franklin's committee argued for comprehensive secondary education. Unpopular with grammar school teachers, who were concerned about their status and working conditions, the recommendation was disregarded but when the Education Act of 1944 introduced free secondary education for all, the LCC established eight experimental comprehensive schools. In 1947 the Labour government approved London's plans for more comprehensive schools. Two years later, the education minister, George Tomlinson, approved a proposal to build the capital's first purpose-built comprehensive secondary school. Despite obstruction from Conservatives after Labour left office in 1951, Kidbrooke School opened in 1955. *Time and Tide* magazine said its motto should be: 'All equal and all stupid'.

Margaret Miles, pioneering head of Mayfield Comprehensive School, found the 'general attitude of gloom and doom' one of the most wearing things she had to deal with. She could not understand 'a lack of imagination which assumed that girls who had not been accepted by the grammar schools were different kinds of people from those who had'.^[35] Or the sense of alarm that the assumption being that 'grammar' girls, diverted from their 'grammar-school path' by studying subjects like shorthand and typing would leave school at 15, while 'modern' girls wouldn't wear uniform or do homework. Miles also disagreed with arguments that presented 'the conversion of a grammar school into a comprehensive school as the destruction of a school'. Apart from anything else, the description displayed a wilful ignorance of the history of English grammar schools which, before the abolition of fees in 1944, did not select those paying their own cost by 'type' or learning ability. Finally, she posed questions as to 'what we mean by grammar school education' and whether the institutions were failing to meet the needs of their current intake. 'The changes in scientific progress and technology are now so rapid that much that is learnt in school will be out of date by the time the children go to work; therefore they must learn to be observant and to know how to learn, rather than just acquire knowledge.'^[36] The building of new schools gathered momentum in the mid-1950s and Holland Park was formed as a result of a merger of three other schools.

Aspirations were high. It was hoped and anticipated that the new mixed comprehensive school would be a jewel in the crown of the comprehensive system. The school buildings, including a swimming pool, were large, glass-plated, with open staircases, designed by the LCC's chief architect, Leslie Martin, who had planned the Festival Hall. Built on the site of three large houses on the estate of Lord Holland, the school stood on the top of leafy Campden Hill, bordered by Holland Park on one side and the homes of the rich on the other. For several years after it opened the students were expressly forbidden to use the entrances that bordered the road of the South African High Commissioner's residence in case they disrupted his garden parties.[37] The sixth form was housed in Thorpe Lodge, the residence of a former governor of the Bank of England. Its oak-panelled rooms and library prompted contemporaries to comment on the vastly different experience of those who joined Holland Park at that stage rather than at age 11. The pupil intake was broad, with students drawn from the Notting Hill slums as well as the prestigious crescents of the wealthy Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. These provided a significant number of middle-class children whose parents were supporters of comprehensive education. At its official inauguration Lady Norman (Justice of the Peace and former chair of the Campden Hill Preservation Society) described it as a great 'factory of education'.[38] By 1960 the school had a 12 or 13 form entry with 2000 pupils on the school role. This was in keeping with the belief at London's County Hall that you needed a school this size to produce a viable sixth form.

The school's founding head was Allen Clarke. The history page on the Holland Park School website describes him as 'mild mannered, traditional, courteous and patrician. He led benignly in an academic gown'.[39] Educated privately, Clarke read history at the University of London, trained as a teacher in Oxfordshire and joined the London Teaching Service in 1933. During the Second World War he rose from the post of gunner to major and in 1946 joined Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham boys' school as assistant master before becoming head of a secondary modern in Islington and then in Battersea. He ran Holland Park more along grammar school lines symbolised by a school uniform, school houses, streaming, a Latin motto and a prefect system. The school's crest was a fox gripping a dahlia in its teeth. The flower was chosen in homage to society hostess Lady Holland, who had introduced it into England in the early nineteenth century.[40]

As the 1960s came to an end Caroline Benn joined the governing body and the school became what Tony described as her 'main life'. He said she 'was very happy there and the children got on very well and she threw herself into the Board of Governors and chair of it and everything and her life really rotated around that school'. At this point she was also serving on the ILEA so being a school governor was not her only experience of voluntary action in the community. As a parent at the school she was involved in the setting up of a parent/teacher association which later became the Holland Park School Association whose members included parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and

pupils.[41] Together with others on the governing body, she assisted in developing education in the school in humanistic directions in which social justice was a key component. How did this play out in practice? The school's website tells us that 'As the Sixties progressed, prefects, Latin mottos, speech days and Houses, began to give way to rather more egalitarian ideals. Standards of discipline fell, the fabric of the building declined and what had met the need in the early Sixties was deemed outmoded: a student demonstration in December 1970 rather heralded in the new era of liberalism and a period of mixed fortunes'.[42] The evidence in Caroline's papers and personal recollections of key actors tells a rather more complicated story.

A Comprehensive School: Holland Park in the 1970s

Official records, correspondence and Caroline's handwritten notes show the problems facing Holland Park at this point. Some problems were specific to Holland Park. Some were wider London problems, including political tensions over the body that planned London's education service and the decision to end selection (in 1977). In 1959 the election of a Conservative government contributed to the termination of the LCC. The Macmillan administration, infuriated by Labour's near-monopoly of power at County Hall, created a new administrative system for the capital consisting of the Greater London Council (GLC) and the ILEA, established as a quasi-autonomous committee of the GLC. The ILEA was the education authority for the 12 Inner London boroughs from April 1965 (when it assumed the LCC's education powers) until its abolition in 1990. It was ruled by Conservatives from 1967 to 1970 but the boroughs were mostly Labour supporting. Often Labour-dominated, eventually the ILEA was deemed expensive and educationally ineffective.

Caroline was elected chair of governors at Holland Park in the autumn of 1970. Weeks later a pupil demonstration acted as a catalyst for debate. Reporters were on site almost immediately and there were allegations that some incited pupils to create the impression of disorder.[43] The pupils' protest was in support of a temporary teacher whose appointment had been terminated. Between three and four hundred pupils were involved and the rest of the school carried on as normal. Ashley Bramall, leader of the ILEA, complained bitterly about the colourful articles by Conservative politicians and journalists. 'I can understand Charles Curran, MP, as a right-wing journalist pouncing on last week's disturbances at Holland Park School as a heaven-sent opportunity to carry on ... about the awful dangers of "pupil power"', he said, 'But Mr Curran does not mention that at Holland Park last Wednesday representatives of the press and television went further than reporting. They attempted by bribes and provocation to create incidents'.[44]

Less than two weeks later the *Spectator* published a story about the conduct of sixth-form girls at Holland Park. The article's author was George Gale, who edited the political magazine between 1970 and 1973. Sensationally, Gale claimed one of the school's governors had told him about a 'vice-ring' operated

by sixth-form girls. Unsurprisingly, the authority wrote to all the school's governors who were in appointment at the point the information was alleged to have been obtained (October 1968). Since no one had knowledge of such a situation, the former chair of the school's governors, Lady Brabazon, asked Gale to name his source. He declined. In the summer of 1971 Caroline communicated with Gale. 'Every single governor was contacted. Each one replied personally. Each denied knowledge of any such situation and, of course, giving any information to you', she told him. Governors had now been given these replies and had asked her to write to him: 'we thought that, as you and your publishers are bound to have a concern for responsible journalism, you would be interested to have this account of the time and trouble the local education authority has taken to follow this matter to its conclusions', she said.[45]

John-Paul Flintoff attended Holland Park School between 1979 and 1986. His comedic memoir, *Comp: a survivor's tale* (1998), noted that: 'Like the Wizard of Oz, Allen Clarke communicated as a disembodied voice through the school's whizz-bang, up-to-the-minute tannoy technology, broadcasting his thoughts to everybody at once. As the 1960s came to an end, he became unwell; he took to the bottle'.[46] When Caroline canvassed parental attitudes, one mother told her: 'Most parents, as well as some of the more responsible media, are aware that Allen Clarke is an alcoholic. As an alcoholic, he is a success, by which I mean that he is never seen in a compromising situation – in fact, according to at least one fifth-former, he is rarely ever seen outside the administration block at all. For that reason alone, as a headmaster, he is a failure'.[47] One father expressed a wish for the school to have 'the very best, convinced, dynamic and progressive direction available'. He thought the governing body 'should seriously consider whether it is getting it, and if not, what should be done to remedy matters'.[48] In the summer of 1971 Clarke retired to Norfolk.

Change came with the appointment of Dr Derek Rushworth, a Huddersfield grammar school boy and Oxford graduate. The head of Modern Languages at Holland Park when the school opened in 1958, he left to take up a headship in London's East End. When he returned to Holland Park as the head teacher in September 1971 the buildings were in a poor state and morale was at rock bottom. Parents, pupils and teachers complained of smelly toilets, broken windows, leaky roofs, vandalised lockers and chewing gum on the floors. All years were streamed into 12 classes: six 'fast learning' classes and six 'slow learning' classes. Each pupil was assigned to a stream based on previous attainment and there was hostility between the streams. The streams were named after the school's initial letters (six Hs and six Ps) and the two 'remedial' classes were called S1 and S2.[49] Among the biggest problems the school faced was a large turnover of staff (a difficulty common to all the capital's schools at this point, due to the poor pay and conditions for many years as well as the high cost of living in London), the condition of school premises and equipment and security. Change for the better depended upon improving

morale and the school's relationship to the community outside, including the Campden Hill Residents' Association.

As the new head, Rushworth was determined to get rid of the grammar school trappings and make the school truly comprehensive. Like Caroline Benn, he 'rejected determinism, whether by notions of intelligence, social class or curriculum'.^[50] Tony Benn said Caroline was very pleased about Dr Rushworth's appointment and worked with him. 'Well I think Caroline would see Derek as a great partner in the changes they tried to bring about. Whether he would have done it without Caroline's encouragement I don't know or whether she would have taken the view without Derek I don't know. I think of them as partners'.^[51]

Caning went in Rushworth's first term.^[52] By the end of term two, school uniform was optional. The school began to operate without dividing pupils rigidly into a hierarchy based on attainment and staff set about developing common curriculum and learning in mixed-ability situations so that activities and teaching took place in groups where attainment was mixed. A teacher who had been at the school for three years described the impact of Rushworth's arrival: 'There was such a drive, such a belief that it ought to happen, that the school ended the academic year in July as a streamed school and returned in September with all the lower school organised along mixed ability lines. We all had this determination and had, I suppose, subconsciously been teaching in this way all along'.^[53] Boldly anticipating that Holland Park alumni would be running the country in the twenty-first century 'in a society which we can only dimly foresee, using scientific, technological and sociological knowledge which we at present do not even possess', the school's aims were values driven. 'It follows therefore that we want them to leave us with the attitudes, knowledge and understanding necessary to be able to survive and play a part in such a world, to understand society and help change it for the better, and to come to terms with life and with themselves'.^[54]

Derek Rushworth increased democracy inside the school to start staff discussion and develop staff involvement in decision making on all school issues. The Social Education Department helped students to run their own council, there was an annual staff conference, a teacher's common room association and dedicated working groups to help make school policy collectively. The new head wanted discussion and debate and encouraged teachers to initiate new practices on assessment, the content of courses, the rights of students, and a wide range of out-of-school activities and school visits. Documentary evidence shows the variety of sources (including the sociological examination of education) teachers used to enrich their understanding and help them make more informed pedagogical decisions. The close interrogation and exploration of key concepts of law and order (including discussion of why 'stop and search' was disproportionately used against young persons and ethnic minorities) was one politically divisive example that was presented in fearsome and inaccurate detail in 1975. What vocal opponents omitted to mention was that local police came into the school to help teach a topic that had been part of

the Social Education programme at Holland Park for three years. Having read everything carefully, Caroline saw no reason to 'treat the story defensively'. Indeed she congratulated the teacher concerned 'on pioneering work in this field which is both realistic and constructive' while adding, 'it could be said that my task would be a lot easier, and your good case a lot stronger if future papers paid more attention to spelling and presentation and proofing before being circulated!'[55]

Tom Buzzard joined Holland Park as a young teacher in 1973 and became a teacher governor toward the end of the decade. He described his head teacher as a 'charismatic, inspirational, amazing guy'. He remembered Caroline being around the school quite a lot. At meetings of the governing body 'She was always quietly spoken. Very knowledgeable, knew what was going on. Often let people rant on a lot before coming in and summing up. She worked closely with Derek'. Tom kept papers from the 1973 staff conference which focused on 'the neighbourhood school'. The remit included looking at: '(1) "Our" primary schools – their outlooks and products as we see them; (2) "Our" parents – their interests, pressure groups, their effect on us, communication with them; (3) First and second year curriculum in the light of these points; (4) Education Welfare Service and Holland Park School North Kensington background. Why truant?; (5) Discipline and the curriculum: inter-relation?; (6) Discipline and class-work organisation: inter-relation?'[56] Writing to Caroline in 1998, in retrospect what was most striking was how fortunate he 'was to be a young teacher at Holland Park in the seventies. In that large, exciting multicultural environment with leadership from yourself and Derek that was firmly committed to justice for all, many of us were able to refine our ideas and become enthused about the possibilities of genuinely democratic education for all'.[57]

At home, Caroline and Tony Benn talked about the development of comprehensives on a daily basis. 'She was very concerned about the exclusion of children from the school and always defended them because she thought that would be a very damaging thing to happen to them.' She also spent a lot of time thinking about how to improve the schools' public relations generally, and improving security. This included mobilising support for a boundary wall to seal the school off from woods. We see Caroline's collective way of working in a note she wrote to Derek Rushworth:

Thank you for your note about the intruders. I wonder if the time has not come for us to have a working conference of all interested parties on this matter ... I won't do anything further on this until I talk to you but I think it has reached the point where something must be done – and we cannot allow the fear of 'bad publicity' to deter us any longer. For this reason I would also like to have a representative of the police attend. After all, we have to call them in often enough. The conference would be a limited group in numbers and could meet one day for a few hours to see if there was any consensus on what could be done, or any constructive offers of help

from outside bodies. It would be a meeting I would be glad to convene.[58]

A meeting *was* held and a wall *was* built. The associated press coverage was typical of the period. When teachers were issued with two-way radios to combat vandals, Max Wilkinson, writing as the *Daily Mail's* education correspondent, derided Holland Park as 'the walkie-talkie school'. Rushworth denied as 'nonsense' claims that the radios were needed to deal with indiscipline by the school's own pupils. 'Holland Park was one of London's earliest comprehensives', the article concluded; 'In the 1960s it became a showpiece for the new style of liberal non-selective education. It has been chosen by many famous people for their children, including the Energy Secretary, Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn. His wife, Caroline, a militant campaigner for comprehensive schools, is chairman of the governors'.[59]

All of this should be understood as part of the alarmist reporting not just of comprehensive schools but in respect of 'progressive' education generally. From the late 1960s the educational radical right started to gain ground with the publication of Black Papers denigrating comprehensive education, and the unexpected return of a Conservative government in the 1970 general election pledged to withdraw Circulars 10/65 and 10/66.[60] The large, urban, comprehensive school was the target for hostile press coverage and Holland Park was particularly vulnerable in the context of the fall of Rivington, another mixed London comprehensive school which the ILEA closed in 1970. Between October 1975 and February 1976 column inches given to the public inquiry on events at the William Tyndale junior school in Islington raised the temperature, fanning Black Paper concerns about failing schools in which left-wing ideology had taken over from good teaching and blighted the educational opportunities of working-class children. In October 1976 Prime Minister James Callaghan made his Ruskin College speech on education, which rearticulated questions raised by sections of the media about unsatisfactory standards of school performance. A month later the press was full of stories about Holland Park examination results. Newspaper headlines included 'School of failures' (*Daily Mail*), 'Showpiece school in exam flop' (*The Sun*), 'Too many failures at top school?' (*Evening Standard*).

Holland Park policy was to give all pupils the chance to gain an examination qualification. This was done for the sake of gaining more passes for individual pupils in accordance with the wishes of their parents. It also meant the school had no non-examination classes. This policy had most impact on Holland Park's sixth form and it was the performance of this group that skewed results. However, 1976 was atypical. That year, the school entered more pupils for the General Certificate in Education (GCE) Ordinary level (75% compared with 44% of all leavers from comprehensives nationally) because more 16-year-olds joined the sixth form after failing to get a job. Steve Keiri, chairman of the teachers' common room association defended the policy of giving as many children as possible the opportunity to sit the exam. 'The bare percentages

reflect this policy. Obviously if one only enters the children one knows will pass, near 100% pass rates are possible.' But the pass rates for the fifth year alone were 'comparable with the national averages', he said. To show that the policy did not 'restrict or damage the bright academic child', he gave the example of one Holland Park fifth former who passed 10 O-levels in 1976, seven of them with grade A marks.[61] Lorna Christie, who'd been at Holland Park for a year, also spoke up for the school. 'My old school just dismissed me as dumb', she said. 'They wouldn't let me try for any exams there.' Nina Taylor said, 'It's not fair to us that everyone in London thinks we're a load of tearaways. I'm taking seven O-levels this year, and I may not get decent grades in all of them, but I can only try my best. I wonder if people will stop us getting jobs now, after they hear we're from Holland Park School'.[62]

Two Conservatives were to the forefront of the controversy: Robert Vigars, opposition spokesman for education from the ILEA, who joined the school's governing body in June 1975, and borough councillor Muriel Gumbel, a former mayor of Kensington and Chelsea who sent her son to Eton. Before becoming a governor at Holland Park, Vigars drew in shadow education secretary, Conservative MP Norman St-John Stevas, to visit the school. The visit took place in the spring of 1975. In preparation, Caroline briefed herself on examination performance, the needs and problems of the school's disturbed pupils, staff attendance, liaison with parents, security and the building. Derek Rushworth took the opportunity to sum up improvements in school life since his return. Staff morale was no longer at rock bottom; there was a steady reduction in staff turnover, and greater stability. Staff disputes had reduced, and all staff meetings were now open, with new committees and many working parties. In addition, Holland Park was one of the few schools to have written aims. Now he wondered, 'if it is sound policy to be honest and open. People tend to take one at one's own valuation and Heads who put all their achievements in the shop-window and hide the rest in the cellar are widely believed to be telling the whole truth'. At this juncture Rushworth designated a staff post of responsibility to deal with the media.[63]

One of the damaging comments that Robert Vigars made was in drawing direct comparisons between what was happening at Holland Park and what had happened at William Tyndale. 'I warned the Government months ago that things were not right at the school', he told the *Kensington News and Post*. 'I urged that an inquiry should be held into last year's exam results, which were equally disturbing ... I feared then we could have another William Tyndale on our hands if we did not investigate.'[64] A group of parents petitioned the ILEA to have him removed on the basis 'that a man so prejudiced against comprehensive education in general and Holland Park School in particular is unfit to govern a school under the terms of the 1944 Act'. They wanted him replaced by a Conservative Party nominee prepared to offer constructive criticism rather than 'denigration and malicious and destructive action against the school and its good name'.[65] Vigars was censured by the governing body, who printed a strongly supportive statement on behalf of the head teacher and

the school's policy concerning examinations. A press release from Holland Park deplored the ill-informed, unconstructive and apparently politically motivated criticisms.[66] Parent members of the Holland Park School Association wrote to the headmaster to express their complete confidence in and support for the school and its staff and to voice their objections to those who attacked the school on the basis of a partial and distorted set of exam pass rates.

In March 1977 Vigars publicly retracted his comparison between Holland Park and William Tyndale and expressed confidence that 'the headmaster and staff of Holland Park School are aware of the importance of examination results as an indicator of academic standards'. Was this too little, too late? In January 1977 Rhodes Boyson, former supporter of comprehensive reform, now Conservative MP and deputy education spokesman, repeated Vigars' allegations to support the argument in his article 'Towards the Tory Future?'[67] His figures were wrong and Caroline wrote and told him so, but the damage was done. Boyson wrote and thanked her for putting him right before going on to say, 'It would seem to me, however, that these misunderstandings would not happen if all schools, including Holland Park, did publish all their results instead of newspapers, the general public and in many cases the parents having to acquire their information from so-called leaks'.[68]

Caroline spent much time refuting the barrage of criticism. Among the many apocalyptic warnings from the press cuttings in her personal papers is the following article in the *Sheffield Star*, written shortly after her election as chair of governors at Holland Park School:

When you mix under one roof many hundreds of teenagers ranging in intelligence from the frankly dim to the potentially brilliant, those able and willing to learn are naturally far out-numbered by the couldn't-care-less brigade. Streamed and graded the children may be, but the very spirit of the school community, the very pattern of general behaviour, is inevitably set by the restless majority and the unteachable militants. What this leads to is becoming disturbingly clear in many of the bigger comprehensives. Instead of the new schools providing equality of opportunity, they are dangerously near promoting educational anarchy. The dreaming theorists appear to have overlooked at least one vital factor in their plan for educational perfection. Discipline! How, I wonder, did they expect the headmaster of a comprehensive with two thousands pupils to cope with a revolting horde of several hundred teenagers rampaging through the school breaking glass doors and windows, wrecking furniture and pelting the staff with the bits? It happened at the new educationists' show place, the custom-built Holland Park comprehensive in West London, where no expense was spared to equip and make it their idea of a perfect seat of learning ... The headmaster, quite rightly, consulted the chairman of the elite school's governors. She happens to be Mrs Caroline Wedgwood Benn, wife of the Minister of Technology in the last Labour

Government. When she called at the school on a fact-finding mission, the all-too-equal children continued their 'demo' with renewed enthusiasm, pelting her with tomatoes and other fruitful hand-outs.[69]

Much of this was invalid. At no time was any pupil or member of staff put at risk. The school lodged a complaint with the Press Council which was printed correctly, and in full, in *The Times* on 3 December 1970. The correct information was that when Caroline left Holland Park after giving a press conference, she was pointed out by reporters to the pupils as 'another of your teachers who has been sacked'.[70]

Despite Caroline's best efforts, the imagery of large factory schools, full of undisciplined, 'revolting youth', stuck. In 1976 she wrote to Lord Butler, architect of the 1944 Education Act and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, to protest at the way in which he was falsifying the picture of 'her' school. In the course of an interview he had said that he thought large schools were a 'pity' and mentioned Holland Park. 'What do you know of the school's many attainments in academic, sporting and cultural and social fields?', she asked. 'It would appear that even your information on size was second hand and incorrect. You will forgive me, I hope, if I write a strong letter, but many of us consider your own letter to be a piece of plain prejudice rather than a reasoned argument. I know you would write in the same way if you thought your own College was being denigrated unfairly'.[71] Behind the myth-making around 1970s Holland Park were the writers and activists of the educational radical right. Unlike Caroline Benn, they did not see all forms of selection, including those for grammar schools, as a part of yesterday's education system.

Conclusion: a comprehensive life

To return to the political ideas with which we started, this article fulfils a duty to remember the story of Caroline's struggle to improve teaching, learning, policy and practice in a local, community-based comprehensive school. When Jane Shallice described the excitement of being a teacher at Holland Park in the 1970s she wrote of Caroline Benn: 'No one can overestimate her contribution, with her profound commitment to comprehensive education, her tremendous political acumen and her clarity of vision, she was a strong support for staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and for the rights of students'.[72]

The private became political in Caroline's case. Derek Rushworth underlined this in a letter he wrote to the editor of the *Evening Standard* at the height of the controversy over publishing examination results. In a passionate defence of his partner in the struggle to build comprehensive education at Holland Park, he wrote:

How pitiable is the concern for Inner London's education system expressed by Mrs Gumbel (*Letters*, November 19) of Kensington and Chelsea. What, I wonder, does she think the occupation of the

husband of the chairman of governors of Holland Park School has to do with the examination results of that school? Mrs Gumbel exposes by her innuendo the political background to the whole smear campaign against the school. Its 'unique catchment area' includes the worst slums in London, which are, need I say it, the responsibility of the borough council on which Mrs Gumbel has the honour to sit and in which she exercises considerable influence. It is 'pure arrogance' on her part to sit in her council seat and pontificate about examination percentages.[73]

Undaunted, Caroline refrained from personal attacks. Her writing in *Comprehensive Education* includes an article in which she asked what Rhodes Boyson had done, other than put forward his opinion. For her, the fault lay with editors and programme makers 'who choose to give ten times more prominence to pro-grammar and pro-independent school statistics and choose to exaggerate even the smallest incident in comprehensives and to blame all trouble on the non-selective principle, while treating drug-taking or violence in selective or fee-paying schools as one-off mishaps'.[74]

Never a polemicist, Caroline chose 'to serve and further the purposes of the comprehensive movement through empirical research, effective campaigning' and by acting as advocate for the mass of British working-class children within the struggle for comprehensive school reform.[75] She recognised her vulnerability as a representative target of the anti-comprehensive onslaught in the popular media but learned from criticism and only talked about Holland Park when 'satisfied the writer is genuinely ready to write objectively about it, and has not been sent to cover it from a particular (or negative) angle'.[76] Observing Caroline, one relieved mother wrote: 'The adverse publicity means so little so long as we can still declare our belief in the place and the people. It was encouraging to hear you take the positive line ... What we all need is more courage. You have given a shining example'.[77] For a committed young teacher like Tom Buzzard, Caroline helped shape a moment of real excitement and genuine achievement.

Caroline Benn was a public intellectual whose careful, well-informed scholarship and tenacious campaigning brought the educational causes she championed into the general culture. In a 2014 issue of *FORUM*, Melissa Benn suggested the Tory-dominated Coalition government needed a little history lesson on the story of the Comprehensive Education Movement.[78] I am proud to announce the founding of the Caroline Benn Society at Birmingham to promote research into the modern history of the people's schools so as to foster greater awareness of what we can learn and take forward from Caroline's scholarship and social action to promote a fairer education system for the twenty-first century. The Society will concentrate on the varied forms of comprehensive education without losing sight of the democratic and communitarian implications of a system intended to develop *everyone* across the full age and ability range.[79]

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- [1] This article is based on an inaugural professorial lecture given by Jane Martin at the University of Birmingham on 3 December 2014, being part of a larger study of the life and work of the leading educational reformer, Caroline Benn. *Caroline Benn: a comprehensive life, 1926-2000*. British Academy/Leverhulme Award Number: SG1311085.
- [2] Chris Searle (2001) A Comprehensive Woman, *Morning Star*, 6 January.
- [3] Caroline Benn (1982) The Myth of Giftedness (Part II), *FORUM*, 24(3), 83-84.
- [4] Tony Benn to Jane Martin, 20 December 2013.
- [5] Searle, 'A Comprehensive Woman'.
- [6] Melissa Benn (2011) *School Wars: the battle for Britain's education*, p. 137. London: Verso.
- [7] See Jane Martin (2013) *Making Socialists: Mary Bridges Adams and the fight for knowledge and power, 1855-1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- [8] Quoted in Rodney Barker (1972) *Education and Politics 1900-1951: a study of the Labour Party*, p. 18. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- [9] See Jane Martin (2008) Engendering City Politics and Educational Thought: elite women and the London Labour Party, 1914-65, *Paedagogica Historica*, XLIV(IV), 379-413.
- [10] Caroline Benn & Clyde Chitty (1997 edition) *Thirty Years On*, p. 6. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- [11] See Robin Pedley (1970 edition) *Comprehensive Education*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- [12] See Clyde Chitty (2009) *Eugenics, Race and Intelligence in Education*. London: Continuum.
- [13] Tony Benn to Jane Martin, 19 December 2012. Tony Benn's diary entry for Wednesday 11 November 1964 reads as follows: 'At 11.30 pm the *Daily Telegraph* rang up to ask if it was true – as reported in the first edition of the *Daily Express* – that I had sent my sons to Holland Park School, a question Caroline had answered when the *Express* had asked earlier. I hope it does something to get comprehensives moving'. Tony Benn (1988) *Out of the Wilderness: diaries 1963-67*, p. 184. London: Arrow.
- [14] Ann Glennerster to Jane Martin, 30 September 2013.
- [15] Howard Glennerster to Jane Martin, 30 September 2013.
- [16] Tony Benn to Jane Martin, 19 December 2012.

- [17] Ann Glennerster to Jane Martin, 30 September 2013. Made by Gestetner Ltd of Tottenham, the Gestetner duplicating machine revolutionised the modern office and was used throughout the twentieth century until photocopiers were introduced.
- [18] Ann Glennerster to Jane Martin, 30 September 2013.
- [19] Quoted in Tony Benn (2005) *Dare to be a Daniel*, p. 143. London: Arrow.
- [20] Henry Noble MacCracken, president of Vassar College 1915-46, cited in E.A. Daniels (1994) *Bridges to the World: Henry Noble MacCracken and Vassar College*, p. 84. New York: College Avenue Press.
- [21] Mary McCarthy (2009 edition) *The Group*, pp. 27-28. London: Virago.
- [22] Tony Benn to Jane Martin, 20 December 2013.
- [23] Caroline Wedgwood Benn (1962) *Lion in a Den of Daniels*. London: William Heinemann.
- [24] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
- [25] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- [26] Quoted in Tony Benn (2005) *Dare to be a Daniel*, p. 146.
- [27] Tony Benn to Jane Martin, 20 December 2013.
- [28] Tony Benn to Jane Martin, 20 December 2013.
- [29] Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness*, pp. 45-46.
- [30] *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.
- [31] Quoted in Tony Benn (1994) *Years of Hope: diaries, letters and papers 1940-62*, pp. 48, 61. London: Hutchinson.
- [32] Caroline Benn (1997) *Keir Hardie*, p. 54. London: Richard Cohen.
- [33] Melissa Benn (1998) *Madonna and Child: towards a new politics of motherhood*, p. 31. London: Jonathan Cape.
- [34] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
- [35] Margaret Miles (1968) *Comprehensive Schooling: problems and perspectives*, pp. 7-8. London: Longman.
- [36] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- [37] Jane Shallice (2004) In Praise of Sixties Idealism, in M. Benn & C. Chitty (Eds) *A Tribute to Caroline Benn: education and democracy*, p. 32. London: Continuum.
- [38] C.M. Whitaker (1959) London Unit Notes: Holland Park School, *The Woman Teacher*, 41(1), 157.
- [39] www.hollandparkchool.co.uk/school/history
- [40] Melissa Benn (2007) Allen Clarke: first head teacher of progressive west London school, Holland Park, *The Guardian*, 25 August.
- [41] Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness*, p. 317.
- [42] www.hollandparkchool.co.uk/school/history
- [43] 'Children in our care have been provoked, manipulated and deliberately mis-used by those whom one can only regard, at the most charitable level, as ill-

informed, irresponsible sensation-seekers and at worst, as “wreckers” deliberately attempting to disrupt the work of a fine school’, she said. Caroline Benn papers, Report to the Governors of Events at Holland Park School During the Week Ending Friday 4th December 1970. CB Box 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.

- [44] Ashley Bramall to the Editor, *Evening News*, 7 December 1970. Caroline Benn papers, CB Box 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.
- [45] Caroline Benn, Chairman Holland Park School Governors to Mr Gale, 31 July 1971. Caroline Benn papers, CB Box 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.
- [46] John-Paul Flintoff (1998) *Comp: a survivor's tale*, p. 55. London: Victor Gollancz.
- [47] Nancy Tuff to Carol Benn, 22 December 1970. Caroline Benn papers, CB Box 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.
- [48] Arthur Levy to Mrs Benn, 18 December 1970. Caroline Benn papers, CB Box 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.
- [49] Jane Shallice, ‘In Praise of Sixties Idealism’, p. 33.
- [50] Tom Buzzard papers, ‘Holland Park Inset Day Conference November 14 1981. Background document for all participants’.
- [51] Tony Benn to Jane Martin, 19 December 2013.
- [52] According to the mother quoted earlier, one head of house was caning pupils with what she called ‘gay abandon’ for reasons ranging from ‘making a noise on the stairs’ to drawing patterns in the margins of exercise books’. Nancy Tuff to Carol Benn, 22 December 1970. Caroline Benn papers, CB Box 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.
- [53] Jane Shallice, ‘In Praise of Sixties Idealism’, p. 35.
- [54] Mrs Benn, the part you didn’t hear, FDR. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.
- [55] C. Benn to C. Deane, February 1975. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.
- [56] Tom Buzzard papers, FDR. ‘Holland Park School Report on Weekend-End Staff Conference Worthing 12-14 October 1973’.
- [57] Tom Buzzard papers, Tom Buzzard to Caroline Benn, 28 October 1998.
- [58] Caroline Benn to Derek Rushworth, undated, brown folder. Caroline Benn papers, CB XLI Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.
- [59] Mark Wilkinson (1976) Beating the Vandals Radio Link for the Teachers, *Daily Mail*, 26 July, p. 14.
- [60] The Black Papers were all edited by C.B. Cox & A.E. Dyson and entitled *The Fight for Education* (1969), *The Crisis in Education* (1969) and *Goodbye Mr Short* (1970).
- [61] Sue Thomas (1976) Holland Park Teachers Defend Exam Results, *Evening Standard*, 12 November. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.

[62] Holland Park Pupils Hit Back at Critics, *Kensington News & Post*, 19 November 1976. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.

[63] Mrs Benn, the part you didn't hear, FDR. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Caroline Benn notes. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.

[66] PRESS RELEASE FROM HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL

The Governors of Holland Park School passed the following resolution at their meeting last night (Monday 15 November): The Governors of Holland Park School reaffirm their support for the school, its headmaster, and its staff; and deplore the ill-informed, unconstructive and apparently politically motivated criticisms to which they have been subjected recently. The Governors welcome the fact that a greater percentage of leavers obtain external qualifications and proceed to higher education at Holland Park than is the case nationally; and that Holland Park's pass rates in the CSE and CEE examinations are well above the national average. The Governors accept that the school's policy of encouraging all pupils to sit for external examinations, and in particular of permitting almost twice the national average to attempt GCE O level, risks a lower pass rate in some exams for the sake of more actual passes for individual pupils – in accordance with the wishes of their parents. In view of the widespread support for the school among parents, pupils and staff, the Governors are concerned that irresponsible comparisons should have been drawn between the position at Holland Park and that revealed in the Auld Report (on William Tyndale School) where a dispute arose between parents, teachers and managers, and a special inspection was opposed. Holland Park Governors fully support the school's teachers and both accept the coming inspection as the normally scheduled event which every school receives in turn. Parent members of the Association of the School also met on Monday and agreed to:

Write to the headmaster expressing their complete confidence in and support for the school and its staff, and to voice their objections to those who attacked the school on the basis of a partial and distorted set of exam pass rates.

To write to the heads of all the local primary schools to let them know the true picture of academic and other success at the school, and to offer, if needed, to visit these schools themselves to talk to teachers and parents there about what good work Holland Park does for its pupils.

The staff of the school passed the following resolution on 11 November: The whole staff of the school – meeting in the Common Room Association – have passed a resolution of support for the head and for the school's policy of encouraging as many pupils as possible to take examinations. The staff deplors the use which has been made of exam pass rates to misrepresent the school's

many academic achievements and they repudiate any analogy to the William Tyndale situation. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.

- [67] R. Boyson (1977) Towards the Tory Future?, *Times Educational Supplement*, 28 January, p. 2.
- [68] C. Benn to R. Boyson, April 1977. R. Boyson, MP to C. Benn, 12 April 1977. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.
- [69] Press cutting attached to letter from Barbara Bullivant to Caroline Benn, 14 January 1971, Caroline Benn papers, CB 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s, UCL Institute of Education, Newsam Library and Archives.
- [70] Provocation by Press – Protest at School, *The Times*, 3 December 1970.
- [71] C. Benn to Lord Butler, 4 November 1976. Caroline Benn papers, CB Box 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.
- [72] Jane Shallice, 'In Praise of Sixties Idealism', p. 34.
- [73] Letters, *Evening Standard*, 1 December 1976. Caroline Benn papers, CB XL1 Box 41/1. Holland Park School 1970-1978.
- [74] Caroline Benn (1979) Media Matters, *Comprehensive Education*, 39 (Winter), 4.
- [75] Melissa Benn & Clyde Chitty (2004) Introduction, in M. Benn & C. Chitty (Eds) *A Tribute to Caroline Benn: education and democracy*, p. 2. London: Continuum. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/b978-155860907-5/50002-1>
- [76] Caroline Benn to Dr Rushworth, 14 September 1973. Caroline Benn papers, CB 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.
- [77] J.R. Witten to Mrs Benn, 3 December 1970. Caroline Benn papers, CB Box 373/1 Holland Park School 1970s.
- [78] Melissa Benn (2014) Why the Government Needs a Little History Lesson, *FORUM*, 56(3), 425-430. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15730/forum.2014.56.3.425>
- [79] www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/education/the-caroline-benn-society

JANE MARTIN is Professor of Social History of Education and Head of the Department of Education and Social Justice at the University of Birmingham. She has published widely in various international journals in the field of gender and education, history of education, sociology of education and women's history. With Cathy Burke she is an Editor of the Routledge Progressive Education Series. Future publications include *Gender and Education in England since 1770: a social history* to be published in the Palgrave Macmillan Gender and Women's History series. In 2014 she served on the Education sub-panel for the REF. *Correspondence:* j.martin@bham.ac.uk