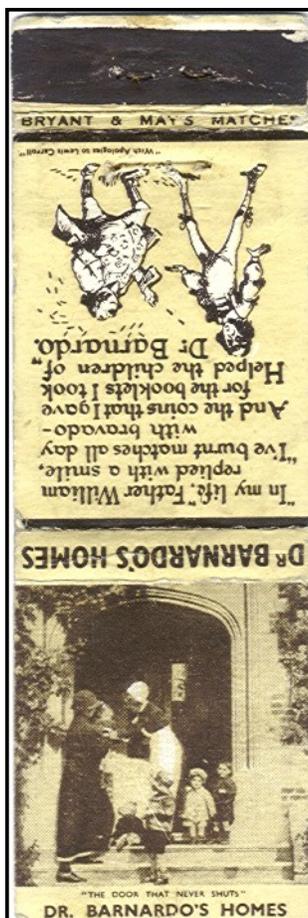


The Fascinating Story

[Ed. I've had the two covers shown here for a number of years, and I had a hunch that the story behind this organization might make for good reading, but I couldn't find any information. Then, several month's ago, Dr. Barnardo's Homes were mentioned in one of Ken Ryesky's 'Matchbooks In The Lawbooks' columns, and that finally prompted me to try again...and this time I found their web site!]

Thomas John Barnardo, a lad of 16, set out for London to train as a doctor. A few months after arriving, an outbreak of cholera swept through the East End killing more than 3,000 people and leaving families destitute. Thousands of children slept on the streets and many others were forced to beg after being maimed in factories. Thomas soon (1867) set up a ragged school in the East End, where poor children could get a basic education. In 1870, Barnardo opened his first home for boys in Stepney Causeway. He regularly went out at night into the slum district to find destitute boys. One evening, an 11-year old boy, John Somers was turned away because the shelter was full. He was found dead two days later from malnutrition and exposure and from then on the home bore the sign 'No Destitute Child Ever Refused Admission'.

Victorians saw poverty as shameful as a result of laziness or vice. However, Thomas Barnardo accepted all children and stressed that every child deserved the best possible start in life, whatever their background - a philosophy that still inspires the charity today. Barnardo later opened the Girls' Village Home in Barkingside, which housed 1,500 girls. By the time a child left Barnardo's, they were able to make their own way in the world - the girls were equipped with domestic skills and the boys learnt a craft or trade. Thomas Barnardo strongly believed that families were the best place to bring up children and he established the first fostering scheme when he boarded out children to respectable families in the country. He also introduced a plan to board out babies of unmarried mothers. The mother went into service nearby and could see her child during her time off.



By the time Thomas Barnardo died in 1905, the charity he founded ran 96 homes, caring for more than 8,500 children. Residential care emphasized children's physical and moral welfare rather than their emotional wellbeing. Some homes housed hundreds of children and staff sometimes were harsh and distant. Many adults who grew up in the homes look back with affection and believe the charity was a true family. Others remember loneliness, bullying and even abuse. Child emigration was extended to Australia after the First World War as it was still seen as an appropriate response to the social problems of the day, even if by today's standards the practice seems cruel. These ideas continued largely unchallenged until after the Second World War when the emphasis shifted towards keeping children and their families together in the community.

The war marked a turning point in Barnardo's development and the history of childcare in the UK. Evacuation ought 'charity children' and 'ordinary' middle and upper class families into contact with each other and they gained a greater understanding of their circumstances. The disruption of war also improved understanding of the impact of family break ups and effects on children brought up away from home. Then in 1946, a national report on such was published,

of Dr. Barnardo's Homes

prompting a revolution in childcare. For the first time, children were acknowledged as the nation's responsibility. This report paved the way for the Children's Act of 1948, which placed the duty of caring for homeless children and those in need on local authorities.

So, during the 1940's and 1950's, Barnardo's began working more closely with families. The charity awarded grants to families in difficulties because the breadwinner was unable to work due to illness or an accident. In the mid 1950's it developed a plan to house whole families affected by ill health, housing problems, unemployment and crime.

The 1960s were a time of radical change for Barnardo's. Single parenthood was becoming more acceptable; greater use of contraception meant that there were fewer unwanted children, and improved social security benefits meant that it was no longer necessary for parents to hand over their children to Barnardo's. The number of children received by Barnardo's was decreasing and so a commitment was made to cut down on residential services and develop new work with disabled children and those with emotional and behavioral problems. The charity changed its name in 1966 to Dr. Barnardo's. By the end of the decade plans were made to close down large numbers of homes and to convert them into specialist units.

From the 1970s onwards, Barnardo's continued to expand its work in fostering and adoption, and family centers were set up in communities to support families in deprived areas. They set out to help families facing problems such as unemployment, poor health, bad housing and poverty, with the aim of defusing the stress and tension that might lead to family breakdown and child abuse. Barnardo's pioneered schemes for young juveniles and disabled children and throughout the 1980s and 1990s developed new areas of work in response to public concern over issues such as child sexual abuse, homelessness and children affected by HIV/AIDS.

In the 1990s, society became aware that a significant number of children in residential care homes in the UK during the last century were victims of physical and sexual abuse, neglect and discrimination. Some of those children were among the 350,000 cared for in Barnardo's homes between the 1870s and 1980s, and when the facts were known, they were immediately dealt with. In 1988, the organization changed its name from Dr. Barnardo's to Barnardo's to reflect the contrast with its Victorian past. The last traditional-style home closed in 1989.

Today, Barnardo's runs over 357 services across the UK helping children and young people in need. Barnardo's also works with families in a variety of ways, including fostering and adoption, disability and domestic violence. It also works within communities through its work with child poverty and the Better Play scheme. And, Barnardo's research department works to promote excellence in childcare in the UK find out more about the work they do.

[<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/whoweare/history/index.jsp>]

....A fascinating story...and isn't it fascinating what you can get out of collecting matchcovers!

