

**“A Fearless Frankness:
The professional formation of psychiatrist Donald
Winnicott, and a crucial lost episode in the history of
therapeutic residential child care”**

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This is the text of a paper presented at a one-day workshop organised by Dr. Jonathan Toms at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick on November 21st, 2009. An earlier version was presented in May 2009 at the University of Stirling in the Department of Applied Social Science seminar series.

The workshop in Warwick, entitled "**Therapeutic Community, the Archive and Historical Research**" aimed *"to open up a discussion on the relationship of the historian, the therapeutic community and the archive. How can exploration of the archive enrich our historical knowledge about key figures associated with therapeutic community theorising? In what ways might therapeutic community theorising be brought into engagement with theories employed by historians? How might the management of historical practice relate to the management of therapy in therapeutic communities?"*

Unless otherwise noted, all quotes come from archive material held in the Planned Environment Therapy Trust Archive and Study Centre. Their citations have been removed to help with the flow of the paper.

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First, I would like to thank Jonathan for framing this as a workshop instead of a conference.

When the Planned Environment Therapy Trust asked me to begin work on creating an Archive and Study Centre twenty years ago, devoted broadly to therapeutic community, I had just completed my seven years of PhD research and still thought and saw the world through the eyes of an academic researcher. That in turn was on the heels of five years of research for a masters degree in theatre history, on ‘Medieval Theatre in Indo-European Context’; which grew out of my undergraduate degree in Theater. The relevance of this is that it was in theatre – primarily but not exclusively spent back stage - that I acquired my approach to research. This was the time of Grotowski and the Poor Theatre, so a time of intense commitment and belief in the possibility of personal and social change; and I fell in love with Stanislavski and the full immersion approach to understanding a character and a play. Put them together and when I came to England I was an intense fully-committed Method Historian, which translates into a radical ethnology rooted in deep participant observation and a belief in possibility: In which you build up theory and understanding through living the subject and commanding, insofar as you can, its every intimate detail. An immersion through which the character, the time, the place, the field, the authentic ontological structure of the subject, instead of in some way

being imposed - and how difficult is it not to do that - , reveals itself, to give a nod to my Heideggerian influence. It's a tough ask, and very different in many respects from the mindset of the archivist. When that inner translation from researcher to archivist reached tipping point, I don't know; for several years on the Archive's letterhead I styled myself "Research Archivist". But in recent years I have been almost entirely an archivist, where my knowledge of things has come mostly through handling information, much of which no one else has seen; and, of course, servicing queries and talking to people. But over the past two years I have been increasingly drawn away even from that beautifully pristine role, and been immersed instead in the very different mindset required in chasing after grants, and fitting my camel-like mind through the needle eye of forms.

All of which is by way of apologetic explanation. I shall be talking about Donald Winnicott today, but I do not have the command of his life and career that I would expect if I were a researcher, in the terms that I understand research. Similarly I shall be talking about residential therapeutic child care pioneer David Wills today, and I don't have what I feel is the requisite command of his life and career; I haven't chased Winnicott's involvement in the Oxfordshire Evacuation Scheme into the Oxfordshire Record Office or into the National Archives; I haven't immersed myself in the early 1940s or the local newspaper archives from the period when Wills and then Winnicott were at work in the Oxford area; and I can't pretend to have command of the literature.

Indeed, I have the temerity to present this paper at all only because

- a) I feel that the subject, despite being virtually unknown to historians and practitioners, is immensely important, with the potential to enrich and change our idea of the history of residential therapeutic child care, and ought to be brought to the attention of historians and practitioners;
- b) because Jonathan has asked me; and
- c) because I can be relatively certain that no one here today will be able to embarrass me entirely. The archives I am drawing on today have been in my care for the past twenty years, and despite face to face and published hints and indications over that time, no one - historian, student or practitioner - has looked at the particular episode I am addressing, or published from the archives. Of course Jonathan Toms, or Elaine Boyling, or Sarah Hayes of Exeter have been into the David Wills Collection, which includes the Q Camps archives, and may be able to contradict me.

The paper itself started life a little over three years ago with a query from Takae Itakura, then a Japanese PhD student at Kyoto Prefectural University in Japan, who wrote:

"I would like to know who was organizing Oxfordshire Hostel Scheme, who were hired in the scheme, what kind of information exchanges they had between

the officer at the county council and Dr. Winnicott or Clare Britton etc. and what curriculum they adopted for those children in difficulties."

These are wonderful questions, and absolutely right. What does lie beyond the very limited information which is available in Winnicott's Biographies? What was the context for his professional formation? How did he become the remarkable practitioner and theorist he became? Who else was involved? How? And what can the rest of us learn from that period, which was part of Takae's motivation – 'How can I put the early experience of Donald Winnicott to practical use in the situation in Japan today?'

In presenting this paper, I am making a several assumptions.

One is that you share some knowledge about paediatrician turned psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, and either know that he has had an immense influence on the theory and practice of residential therapeutic child care in Britain and around the world since World War II; or that you will at least take my word for it. Not entirely uncorrelated, of course. His biographer Brett Kahr, for example, has written:

"With the obvious exception of Sigmund Freud, perhaps no other figure in the history of psychoanalysis has contributed as much to our understanding of the origins and treatment of mental distress" (Kahr , "D.W. Winnicott: A Biographical Portrait" (1996), xxvii).

And Judith Issroff, in her Foreword to Harry Karnac's "After Winnicott: Compilation of Works Based on the Life, Writings and Ideas of D.W. Winnicott" (2007) - a book which itself testifies to Winnicott's influence, as it lists over 1200 articles, books and reviews which are significantly concerned with and/or draw on Winnicott and his work - writes

"Here is evidence that Winnicott is as important in applied psychoanalysis and the humanities as is Freud...a man who is undoubtedly amongst the most significant heirs to the mantle of Freud..." (p.2)

With which you don't have to agree. Indeed, you don't have to know or like Winnicott or Freud to see that there is an important and influential person there.

The Second major assumption I am making is that you know, or will take it on faith from me (as well as Winnicott himself, quoted later), that the Second World War experience, a part of which we are addressing today, was decisive in the professional and personal formation of this profoundly important and influential man. Again, I can offer correlation, from the editors of "Deprivation and Delinquency" (1984), the posthumous collection of Winnicott papers, co-edited by his wife Clare Winnicott who, as psychiatric social worker Clare Barron, decisively met him during his war-time period:

"The Second World War was a watershed for Winnicott in many ways, but perhaps in none was it more apparent than in the broadening and flowering of

his theory of development into something truly original and truly his own. There can be little doubt that his war-time encounter with deprived children contributed to this.” (p. 9; and see also Clare Britton's "Introduction")

I won't necessarily make the assumption that you know anything about David Wills, like Clare Barron a qualified psychiatric social worker, albeit from an earlier generation; and important enough to the nation to have been awarded an OBE for his pioneering work in residential therapeutic child care; nor will I assume you know anything about the remarkable psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Marjorie Franklin: As things currently stand, you are yourself in remarkable company if her name means anything to you. But I am hoping again that you will accept my assertions about them; as someone who has handled their archives and seen remarkable unknown detail after unknown detail pass through my hands.

What am I hoping to accomplish today?

- To draw attention to an experiment in residential child care which could be said to have gone wrong; but which has had an immense and largely hidden/unstated influence on the history and development of residential therapeutic child care in Britain;
- To draw attention to an underused set of archives, which include correspondence from Donald Winnicott.
- To ask: If it is so important, what has happened to this story?
- And to ask what, if anything, does all this have to say to us: As historians, students, archivists, practitioners?

At this point, before I start the paper proper, I will cut straight to the punchline. This is a scan of the final report that Donald Winnicott made to the Q Camps Committee as a member of their team, on April 4th, 1941. I will come back to pick specific quotes out of it later; but given its significance, I thought you might like to have a copy of the original in your hands [the text is presented in full below].

In a talk he gave to fellow professionals in January 1967, almost exactly four years before his death in January 1971, the eminent paediatrician turned psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott said:

"I've realised more and more as time went on what a tremendous lot I've lost from not properly correlating my work with the work of others. It's not only annoying to other people but it's also rude and it has meant that what I've said has been isolated and people have to do a lot of work to get at it. It happens to be my temperament, and it's a big fault."

- D.W. Winnicott, "Psycho-Analytic Explorations" (1967/1989), p. 573

Dr. George Makari seconds this in his preface to Brett Kahr's *Biographical Portrait* of Winnicott:

"Winnicott's theories announce their own originality: they seem to demand that the reader look for the origins of these thoughts not in a tradition but, rather, inside a creator - D.W. Winnicott. A friend once wryly commented that there are two kinds of "original geniuses": those who cite their sources and those who do not. Winnicott was - to the chagrin of some of his colleagues, like Balint - of the latter breed."

- Makari, "Introduction" in *Kahr* (1996), p. xxiv

By self-admitted temperament Winnicott did not properly correlate his work with the work of others, and did not cite his sources. And yet a little over two months before he died he did precisely that, in a remarkable talk, the significance of which appears to have been overlooked not just by Winnicott's biographers, but by almost everyone else, including one of the main protagonists in the story, who was present at the lecture.

The talk was the David Wills Lecture of October 1970, and the protagonist who was present was David Wills himself. The Lecture had been instituted by the Association of Workers for Maladjusted Children in January 1970 to honour David Wills on the occasion of his retirement from active residential work; but because too few people had attended the Lecture in January, a second was organised for October. It was at this second Lecture that Winnicott said:

"I do not need to go far to find an inflated psychotherapist. There's me. In the decade called the thirties I was learning to be a psychoanalyst, and I could feel that, with a little more training, a little more skill, and a little more luck I could move mountains by making the right interpretations at the right moment....At one time I could have been heard saying that there is no therapy except on the basis of fifty minutes five times a week, going on for as many years as necessary, done by a trained psychoanalyst...But sooner or later the process of growing smaller starts, and it's painful at first, till you get used to it. *For me I think I started to grow smaller at the time of my first contact with David Wills.* [emphasis added]. David will not let himself be proud of his work in an old Poor Law Institution in Bicester. It was notable work, and I am proud for him"

- D.W.Winnicott, "Residential Care as Therapy" (in "Deprivation and Delinquency" (1984), p. 220)

Winnicott and his future wife Clare Barron refer to this old Poor Law Institution and the notable work that went on there in their 1947 paper "Residential Management as a Treatment for Difficult Children: The Evolution of a Wartime Hostels Scheme" (reprinted in "Deprivation and Delinquency" (1984):

"In our county a big disused institution was first used; but from the difficulties of this initial experience the local authority developed the idea of setting up several small hostels, to be run on personal lines..." (p. 57)

After that the place and the work that went on there more or less disappear until Winnicott himself calls them back for the 1970 Lecture. In Winnicott's "Children's Hostels in War and Peace" published in 1948 (republished in "Deprivation and Delinquency" (1984)), the "big disused institution" and the work it contained (or didn't) have been subsumed entirely in their aftermath: "I was fortunate [writes Winnicott] in being employed by a county council (from 1939 to 1946) in connection with a group of five hostels for children who were difficult to billet." (p. 73). That's it. The Bicester episode is gone. We'll come back to that.

**“It is a dreadful building and everything is at present in a state of chaos”:
Market End House, Bicester**

When Donald Winnicott met David Wills at Bicester at the beginning of February 1940 for the first time, David Wills was already one of the most experienced therapeutic workers with children and young people in Britain.

He was seven years Winnicott's junior - Winnicott [1896-1971] was 44; Wills [1903-1980] was 37 -; but leaving aside things like boy scouts and so on, Wills had already been a youth worker at Norwich YMCA; a brother and housefather at Wallingford Farm Training Colony in Oxfordshire; had worked at the Lingfield Epileptic Colony; won the Willard Straight Fellowship to the New York School of Social Work where he formally trained as a psychiatric social worker; worked in "The Children's Village" in New York State; been warden of the Oxford Settlement in Risca in Wales; served briefly as a Borstal Officer specifically to gain the experience before going to Hawkspur; and from 1936 to the beginning of 1940 was Camp Chief at Hawkspur Camp, the pioneering therapeutic community in rural Essex for youths and young men aged 16 ½ to 25, which was set up by the Q Camps Committee to demonstrate and develop the principles of planned environment therapy, a term coined by Marjorie Franklin and largely cognate with the later term "therapeutic community", at least in the early years of that term. The Q Camps Committee moved its work from Hawkspur Camp in Essex to the "old Poor Law" institution of Winnicott's lecture at the beginning of 1940.

This "big disused institution" was Market End House in Bicester, Oxfordshire, about 15 miles North East of Oxford and a good 80 miles West of Hawkspur. It was the Bicester Workhouse, built in 1836 to cater for 350 people, and it appears to have been used as such until the end of March 1939, after which it was used (in part at least) as a short-lived and apparently ill-fated Home for Boys, before the Q Camps Committee took responsibility in February 1940. Indeed, the Oxfordshire County Council Public Assistance Office remained involved in the clothing and provisioning of the boys sent to Market End House, certainly during the time that David Wills was there.

By the standards of the day (and in many ways still today) the Q Camps Committee and its Hawkspur Camp took an unorthodox approach to difficult and delinquent people. In part because of this it never gained formal government recognition, and in part because of this the Camp was perpetually starved of funds from its beginning in 1936 on. Along with the young men for whom it was originally designed, to survive

financially Hawkspur therefore had to take on a range of "grossly" unsuitable but fee-bringing members: In his unpublished autobiography David Wills said "We accepted an ex-prisoner (a previously banned category) who was a compulsive thief; an ex-convict who had been flogged, and was so obsessed by his flogging two years after the event that he told the whole neighbourhood about it; a parson's alcoholic son; a homosexual con-man above our age-range" - , and as World War II approached, the Camp took on an increasing number of disturbed German refugees.

With the beginning of war in 1939, the Q Camps Committee faced the prospect of a reduction in the charitable giving which had enabled the camp to more or less survive, as well as the loss of the least difficult camp members - and the funds and therapeutic depth and stability they brought - to National Service. The looming loss of funds and stability, threw the entire future of the Camp, the staff, the camp members, and of the Q-Camps enterprise itself into doubt.

As early as the Munich Crisis in 1938 the Q Camps' Honorary Secretary Marjorie Franklin had approached the London County Council suggesting with some prescience "that in the event of war it might be found that a number of evacuated children were unable to settle in their new environment and that the persons in whose charge they were might in these cases feel that they were unable to deal with the children..." She offered the experienced services of the Camp. The suggestion was made again at the onset of war in 1939, and Hawkspur geared up for the possibility of starting a school (Marjorie Franklin wrote to Finchden Manor-founder George Lyward about possible head teachers), and taking in up to twenty difficult children aged 11 to 17 (Wills canvassed paediatrician and child psychologist and psychotherapist Margaret Lowenfeld for possible referrals). In the event, the authorities decided to house problematic evacuees in hostels rather than camps, and the Q Camps Committee had to think again, and very quickly.

David Wills wrote in his unpublished autobiography that "A possible solution presently emerged, as a result of Marjorie Franklin's usual unflagging pertinacity"

The Oxfordshire County Council was responsible for a hostel for "unbilleteable evacuees", which was housed in one wing of an old condemned workhouse at Bicester. The plan was that we all - men, animals, furniture and equipment - should transfer ourselves to another wing of the same building, and I should be responsible for both the evacuated children and the Hawkspur men, running them however as two separate units. I cannot say that I was ever enthusiastic about the project, but I reminded myself that beggars cannot be choosers. On the one hand it enabled us to continue to provide for our remaining members (most of them by now German refugees) until the chances of war should determine their next move; and it provided us all with salaries again!

Franklin herself wrote at the beginning of January 1940

"We are being invited, on the initiative of the Oxfordshire County Council and with the approval of the Ministry of Health, to remove our organisation for the period of the war to Bicester in order to take charge of a hostel for schoolboys

over the age of 11 who have proved unadaptable to the billets to which they have been sent, and in this way to serve the whole region, which includes the Counties of Oxfordshire, Berks, Bucks and Surrey

To Wills at the time it looked as if “Q is saved at any rate for the duration of the war”, but caveats quickly emerged:

The building, for example, was against them: Maurice Bridgeland writes in 1971 that Wills "found that the accommodation offered for both members and children was a disused workhouse with nintey-five rooms, barely equipped and with most of the windows painted out." (Bridgeland, "Pioneer Work With Maladjusted Children" (1971), p. 217). Wills himself wrote at the time: “It is a dreadful building and everything is at present in a state of chaos.” :

“We are considerably hampered in our efforts to establish the social adjustment of our children by having very little outlet to offer them for their high spirits and energy. We have few games, less resources and almost no room for the children to play in except a small quadrangle in which they can not make all the mischief natural to children between the ages of eleven and fourteen, some of whom, because of a lack of affection and harmony, show delinquent tendencies.”

And again,

“We have taken on a very difficult task in that we are not only dealing with difficult children but we are also dealing with a very difficult and indeed quite unsuitable building.”

Furthermore, between a community led and staffed by a core of pacifists on the one hand, and a group of difficult and acting-out children who were being approached with affection and understanding rather than punishment and discipline on the other, relations with the local police and community teetered from the uncomfortable into the hostile and unpleasant.

Nor was the experiment of combining “eleven boys (six of them refugees)” from Hawkspur and the “difficult evacuees” a success. It was part of the original agreement with Oxfordshire County Council that Q Camps could bring with it up to 10 of the Hawkspurians. In his autobiography Wills wrote

The two groups had (although they met for certain meals) separate identities each with its own ethos and its own separate needs. It was very difficult to switch over from one to the other, with the result that I was able to give neither group what it needed.

As a consequence, in March 1940, for example, "even while the [Q Camps] committee was in session an enormous amount of damage was done to the property as a result of clashes between juniors and seniors..." David Wills recorded that on one occasion a senior boy went to the police “to lodge a formal complaint about the

behaviour of the boys and the incapacity of the staff at Market End House which was duly passed on to the County Council. He afterwards expressed regret for this and sent to the Police a complete withdrawal which was as untrue as his original allegations had been”

Given the difficulties and given their new primary responsibility to the young evacuees, it was ultimately decided to send the older Hawkspurians away. Not surprisingly, this itself did not go entirely smoothly. David Wills wrote to Audrey Turner of the Germany Emergency Committee that as he left, one of the seniors "went to the police and made spiteful allegations against people here which are having rather serious repercussions as the police are not too friendly."

And yet in 1970, thirty years later, Winnicott said in his David Wills Lecture: “It was exciting to be involved with the life of this wartime hostel for evacuation failures.” ("Residential Care as Therapy" in "Deprivation and Delinquency" (1984), p. 221)

Four Critical Months in the History of Residential Therapeutic Child Care: Wills and Winnicott at Market End House

Marjorie Franklin recruited both David Wills and Winnicott to the Q Camps project. She knew Winnicott professionally ("I had been fortunate in obtaining his collaboration in a children's home managed by a friend of mine some years before", she wrote). Winnicott later reminded her "that I [Franklin] had at various times tried unsuccessfully to enlist his interest in Q. I did not try very hard because I felt there was no definite job for him then and knew he was a very busy man..."

Once the focus of Q shifted to younger evacuees, however, she did have a definite job for him and we can date his engagement in the project with some precision based on correspondence in the Q Camps archives. Franklin wrote to Winnicott on January 9, 1940, asking if she could meet with him on the morning of Thursday, the 11th. She told him “Q Camp is accepting a proposal to take charge of a Hostel for evacuated boys over 11 who have proved difficult in billets...It is in connection with that that I am very anxious to see you.” They met on January 17th, 1940, and a week later he wrote back: “I feel I should like to be of use in the way you suggest.” Interpreting the correspondence, he probably paid his first visit to Market End House a month later, during the weekend of Friday, February 16th. By March 1st he may have seen his first Junior Camp Council meeting – the “weekly session in which all the boys met and were free to talk” as Winnicott described it in his David Wills Lecture (p. 222), and part of the core of Wills' approach; and certainly had already paid several visits by the beginning of March and “is now giving psychotherapy to one boy.... and hopes very shortly to be able to take on another”, according to Wills at the time.

The Bicester project developed at a gallop. Marjorie Franklin wrote that Major Scott, the County Clerk acting on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council, “seems to hold the opinion, rare in officials, that if a thing ought to be done the best thing is to do it and get it legalised afterwards”; and not surprisingly if, as she also says, the former superintendent was “running the place in such a way that our coming was just in time

to avoid a public scandal!” On the other hand, the Ministry of Health “intimated verbally their disapproval of the County Council handing the work over to a voluntary society”, and questions were asked locally on what authority Q Camps had taken over management of the hostel, but no formal objection was received, and by moving quickly, the Ministry of Health was presented by Oxfordshire County Council and the Q Camps Committee with a *fait accompli*. The Ministry didn't bless the arrangement, but caught on the back foot, it allowed the enterprise to proceed on the basis that the Ministry would recognise and deal with the County Hall, to which Q Camps was then responsible; and on the condition that the hostel take fifty boys and that it serve the entire Southern Region - Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Surrey – as well as Oxfordshire.

In this galloping, Winnicott was appointed Medical Psychologist and became part of the Q Camps staff before that agreement with the Ministry was concluded. Indeed, insofar as Winnicott is concerned, it was another seven months before the next official step was taken, and the County finally took responsibility for his expenses from the Q Camps Committee.

So, Winnicott joined the Q Camps staff in February 1940 as Medical Psychologist. He was involved in this role over the next sixteen months, until the partnership between Q Camps and Oxfordshire County Council - which did not take very long to become shaky - broke down entirely, Market End House closed as an evacuation hostel for difficult to billet boys, and the Council opened a series of smaller hostels under Winnicott's psychiatric oversight instead. By inference it was at this point, in the Spring of 1941, that he met Clare Barron and their partnership began.

For the first four months of Winnicott's involvement with Q he worked closely with David and Ruth Wills. During this period, Juniors and Seniors were both onsite, and it is in this period that Winnicott's 'growing smaller' begins. As he said in his 1970 lecture, he could feel his brilliantly offered psychoanalytic interpretations of individual boys “fall on stony ground” with the staff, and, in a classic statement, “Rather quickly ... learned that the therapy was being done in the institution, by the walls and the roof; by the glass conservatory which provided a target for bricks...” The therapy “was being done by the cook, by the regularity of the arrival of food on the table, by the warm enough and perhaps warmly coloured bedspreads, by the efforts of David to maintain order in spite of shortage of staff and a constant sense of the futility of it all...” ("Residential Care as Therapy" in "Deprivation and Delinquency" (1984), p. 221).

The conflict and sense of futility led Wills to submit his resignation in a letter to the Clerk of the County Council on April 15th, 1940, saying "it occurs to me that in view of the numerous complaints you have received it may be quite other than an embarrassment to you to have my resignation in your hands." He left at the end of May when a successor had been appointed.

That that four months in which Wills and Winnicott worked together had not been futile is stressed time and time again in subsequent correspondence, reports and Q Camps Committee minutes. Marjorie Franklin wrote to Wills in June 1940 just after

he'd left that Winnicott "somewhat comforted me by saying that the firm work you and he had done together in these 4 months was not merely introductory but that that type of child could be cured by the methods you and he used and it may have permanent fruits as well as research value." To a Q Camps Committee meeting later in the month Winnicott "paid tribute to the very high value of Mr. Wills' work at Bicester and expressed the opinion that the four months had not been merely a period of preparation but that definite cures had been effected and that more than half the cases had, in his opinion, probably benefited permanently." In September 1940 "Dr. Winnicott spoke at the committee of the value of David Wills' pioneer work at Bicester."

Winnicott at Market End House: After Wills

When David and Ruth Wills left Bicester at the end of May 1940, Winnicott's role at Bicester and within Q changed markedly, going well beyond working with and supporting the new superintendent and his wife (who did not themselves have experience of the kinds of children and methods Q Camps employed). There were malicious and unfounded rumours circulating, for example, that Wills had taken kickbacks from local tradesmen and had left behind unpaid bills. It was Winnicott who challenged and dealt with these. He and Denis Carroll – a leading member of the Q Camps Committee who later commanded Northfield Military Psychiatric Hospital at a critical juncture in the famous "experiments" there – were responsible for interviewing the shortlist of candidates to replace the Wills, and when the experienced candidates preferred by the Q Camps Committee were rejected by the County's Management Committee, Winnicott and Carroll convinced the Q Camps Committee to nevertheless stay in the project, at least on a trial basis. Marjorie Franklin wrote "In an exceedingly difficult and precarious period it would be difficult to exaggerate our indebtedness to Dr. Carroll and Dr. Winnicott." It also became Winnicott's job to work closely with the couple who were appointed, the Cheales, offering his support and explaining, in Winnicott's words, "the reasons for the bewildering things that happen in the management of anti-social types." Franklin wrote to Wills that in order to gain this experience, Winnicott had turned down paid employment elsewhere for the Ministry of Health, with Franklin describing the working relationship between Mr. Cheale and Winnicott as a "close and happy friendship..."

Such freedom and conditions as the Q Camps Committee had had to develop and explore their approach at the hostel were compromised not simply by the appointment of Mr. and Mrs. Cheale over the experienced candidates preferred by the Q Camps Committee; the Cheales proved far better than Q had expected. Marjorie Franklin wrote to the Clerk of the County Council as late as December 1940 reminding him that in deciding "to co-operate with the work we made drastic criticisms on the buildings and on the scanty grounds and too great proximity to town." More staff were needed for this kind of children, and Q had consistently pressed the need for a school of their own, "run on lines suited to the emotional difficulties of the boys" - even "before we knew how unsuitable was the particular local school to which the

majority of the boys go". The complexity of the situation at the end of 1940 is indicated by her further suggestion:

Immediate removal of adult refugees and infants, or at least to the extent of another dormitory and two class rooms. If some must remain they should be as separate as the A.R.P. wing, and have their own catering arrangements. At present Mr. Cheale has to give a quite unreasonable amount of time (over an hour a day) and much worry and anxiety to the business of catering for these people..."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the relationship between Q and the County Council, and between Q and the local community, deteriorated over the opening months of 1941, a time when travel difficulties were making it difficult for Winnicott to visit as frequently as he had. At the April 4, 1941 meeting of the Q Camps Committee it was noted that the County Council had served formal notice of the closure of the hostel, and for their part the Q Camps Committee said they were willing to waive the three months' notice and to go straight away. The experiment in Oxford came quickly to an end.

It was noted at that meeting that

"The County Council are hoping later on to open two new hostels in another part of the County...under a fresh Committee, and the County Council are proposing to ask Dr. Winnicott to act as psychiatric Adviser to the new hostels."

The rest, to a certain extent, is history. Winnicott was taken on by the Ministry of Health and Oxfordshire County Council; he met psychiatric social worker Clare Barron; and their immensely important and influential collaboration began. Marjorie Franklin reported to the Q Camps Committee a month later that Winnicott, Harold Carter and T.C. Bodsworth of the Q Camps staff had all been employed in the new County Council undertaking: "We thus have the position that, while Q Camps is to be regarded as failing and the cause of the failure of M.E.H., all 3 of the Q personnel remaining at Bicester are to be retained. This seems to me anomalous..."

Winnicott's last formal act as a member of the Q staff was to report to the Committee on Friday, April 4, 1941. This is the document I circulated at the beginning. It is extremely interesting all the way through, but for today's purposes I would like to emphasise just a few quotes:

Q Camps Committee

Meeting held at 50 Porchester Terrace, London, W.2. on Friday, April 4th, 1941

Report by Dr. Winnicott.

Dr Winnicott read a report on his work at Bicester. It was as follows: "1. **Although not a member of Q Camps I have been glad to be given a chance to gain first hand experience of anti-social boys, and I am grateful to the**

committee, and especially to the Secretary, for the year's work at M.E.H., made possible by Q enthusiasm. (2) At the start I was without work on Saturdays, which gave me a chance to make a weekly visit, staying Friday night. In the summer, however, my hospital reopened and I no longer had a free Saturday. I had become interested in the work, however, and so decided to remain and do what I could in the limited time at my disposal. The distance of Bicester now became a serious obstacle, and this has recently beaten me so that I have not attended much during this year. (3) **The contact I made with David and Ruth Wills was of inestimable value to me, and because of their fearless frankness I was able to learn of the practical problems that beset the head of such a place as M.E.H. What I learned from the Wills' I was able to use in giving support and understanding to Mr. and Mrs. Cheale who had no knowledge whatever of the work when they arrived on the scenes.** (4) In the course of the year I have taken interest in 45 boys and have given about 50 personal interviews (apart from informal walks and talks). In other ways I have tried to get familiar with the workings of the institute. (5) **My chief work, as it has turned out, has not been the treatment of individual boys, although this is the work I like best and for which I am fitted by my training. My main use has been to give moral support to the superintendent, and in the case of the Cheales, to explain to them the reasons for the bewildering things that happen in the management of anti-social types.** (6) I wish to emphasise that there is, in my opinion, a difficulty inherent in this work, and in that which Q attempted by participation in the M.E.H management. I mean that if anti-social boys are to be treated other than morally or legally, the general public will treat those who are protecting the boys from moral condemnation and the arm of the law as if they, themselves, were the criminals. I can see no way out of this dilemma, and I think the feeling against M.E.H in Bicester is the crude aspect of this while the feeling of the County Council against Q is the more refined aspect of the same. In other words, Q is getting blamed for the boys' misdemeanours, and so, in a way, Q is enabling the County Council to proceed with the scheme for the medical treatment of these boys (as opposed to moral and legal) without losing the support of the electors. The same problem will arise later, though perhaps in a different form. (7) The success of M.E.H has to be gauged by the character development of the nucleus of boys who have stayed over for a period of 6 months or more. More or less this is the group of boys now left at Bicester. It is difficult to assess the advance, but in my opinion it is real and makes the M.E.H work worth while. I am leaving out consideration of the alternative bad treatment from which our M.E.H work may have saved the boys. (8) While I do not think the opposition to Q which I find in official circles is objective and fair, I do [think] that we can look at ourselves critically. I, myself, have, failed at M.E.H through being too far away, and failure to bring about staff meetings, since the Cheale's came, and in failure to bring about proper organisation of the boys' spare time, admittedly a difficult thing with this kind of boy. Q, I think, fails to pay sufficient lip service to the real nuisance value of anti-social acts, such lip service would do no harm, if at the same time the idea of the illness of the children and their need for psychotherapy were maintained. (9) **I have tried to learn from all the mistakes and failures as well as from the undoubted**

successes of the M.E.H venture, and I hope that as I seem likely to be used in the new venture of the Ministry of Health and of the Oxford County Council at Shiplake I shall try to build on the M.E.H experience. *If I do, Q will be participating in this indirectly through having given me the chance to get a training.* [additional emphasis added] The fact of Shiplake's comparative accessibility from London should make a great deal of difference, so that my difficulties will be more those inherent in the job than was the case at Bicester. Obviously everything in the new experiment depends on the superintendent and staff elected, and without the right superintendent and staff no amount of help from me, either general or personal and physiotherapeutic, can bring about success. (10) **I may add that the local Ministry of Health and the Oxfordshire County Council seem to have faith in me at present. I am too experienced to imagine that this is due to a true appreciation of my good qualities. This belief in me is as subjective as the eclipse of Q, and is, indeed, the other side of the same coin. I can think of the eclipse of Q as the unconscious antagonism to me, and Q, if you like, can see in the support I am obtaining, unconscious belief is the Q Principle (whatever it is) and gratitude for services at M.E.H.** As far as I can understand it the Q principle is a general belief that individuals should be recognised as such, even when anti-social. I think you could state your principles better than you do, as for instance by referring to the mental distress that you know exists in the background of the anti-social character, and which becomes transformed so easily into joy and pride in the techniques of stealing and lock picking and banditry in general. It is the suffering of the children which gives hope to those who treat the delinquent, for if the child is caught before the suffering is transformed he has something to gain from getting well. It is also the suffering of the child which the public (if they understand it) would wish to see treated medically instead of morally and legally. (Signed) D.W.Winnicott. 1/4/41

Concluding remarks: Why has the story disappeared?

If this was such a significant episode in the professional formation of Donald Winnicott and the history of residential therapeutic child care, what has happened to it? - why has the story disappeared?

The short answer is that, by and large, it is because the archives have been left out of the history; and where history has been written, it has drawn, uncritically, on the equivalent of the protagonists' own oral history.

The Winnicotts and a myth of creation:

We have seen what happened to the Bicester episode in the writing of the Winnicotts, who both occluded and then, in the 1970 David Wills Lecture, brought the episode to our historical attention again - but with the significance of what Winnicott said effectively hidden for historians because of the filter of those earlier Winnicott/Britton articles.

The Winnicotts were not historians, and were not writing history in the 1940s when they subsumed the Bicester period into the work they undertook together afterwards. When Winnicott writes "I was fortunate in being employed by a county council (from 1939 to 1946) in connection with a group of five hostels for children who were difficult to billet", the fact that virtually none of that statement is *archivally/historically* true doesn't matter in the context of the article: Of course he wasn't employed in 1939, but in 1940; it wasn't by the County Council but by the Q Camps Committee, certainly in the first instance; it wasn't in connection with a group of five hostels for children - they came a full year after Winnicott began the work at Bicester. But that is only an issue to the extent that what Winnicott and Britton wrote in the 1940s is taken later, by others, as historically accurate primary source material.

It should be noted that in their first article - "The Problem of Homeless Children" published in the New Education Fellowship monograph "Children's communities (experiments in democratic living)" in 1944, Bicester doesn't appear even by implication. They write accurately "In Oxfordshire there has developed a scheme in which several hostels form a group under the direct administration of the County Council." (p. 2)

As a sidelight, in that same monograph there is an article by David Wills entitled "Shared Responsibility", written from Barns in Scotland. This includes a description of the "meeting", a development of the "weekly session in which all the boys met and were free to talk" described by Winnicott in his 1970 David Wills Lecture. Interestingly, in their 1947 "Residential Management as Treatment for Difficult Children" Winnicott and Barron write:

"Surely, experiments in getting children to create their own central government should be made first, if they have to be made, with those who have had a good early home experience? With these deprived children it seems to be cruel to make them do the very thing they feel hopeless about." (fn, p.67)

It is relatively easy to see Winnicott's and Britton's narrative of their early work together as establishing a kind of foundation mythology, with a new therapeutic world rising *de novo* and *ex nihilo* from their meeting. But can it be argued that at that point in time, writing Bicester and David Wills out of the picture was, on some conscious or unconscious level, a consequence of differences of ideology and approach?

David Wills: Self-Occluding?

The reason the episode is largely lost in David Wills' writing is, in a sense, fairly straightforward, at least until further research is carried out. He simply moved on from a difficult and unpleasant episode, effectively writing the Bicester period out of his personal and professional history.

In his letter of resignation in April 1940 he says "I have received an attractive offer to do congenial work elsewhere", which was at Barns House in Scotland, where the

Edinburgh Society of Friends had put together a hostel **and** school for difficult/unbilletable boys near Peebles, and where Wills spent the next four years as warden. It does indeed seem to have been congenial.

At Barns he wrote his account of his Q Camps experience, published in 1941 as The Hawkspur Experiment. He refers to the work in Bicester in this way in the Preface:

"We remained chronically short of funds and by January 1940 the war had made it impossible to continue the work we had so far been doing, though the Q Camps Committee is still in existence and is working with evacuated children".

As simple as that.

In writing his classic 1971 book "Pioneer Work with Maladjusted Children", Maurice Bridgeland interviewed the pioneers still living, and as part of his method sent drafts of the chapters referring to them to the pioneers themselves, for their thoughts and corrections; or, in the case of George Lyward, re-writing. The account which Bridgeland gives of Winnicott's Oxfordshire work is drawn from the Winnicott/Barron articles ("Pioneer Work With Maladjusted Children" (1971), p. 208). Wills *may* have seen this part of the chapter, but will almost certainly have had a chance to correct Bridgeland's treatment of the Bicester period, which Bridgeland notes in a later section of the chapter, on Arthur Barron:

"In 1940 Wills was asked to transfer the members and staff of the Hawkspur Camp to Bicester in connection with a scheme to house unbilletable evacuees. He found that the accommodation offered for both members and children was a disused workhouse with ninety-five rooms, barely equipped and with most of the windows painted out. Faced with these conditions and official lack of acceptance of Q Camp principles Wills and his staff, including Barron, resigned." (p. 217)

In this account there is no Time, no Experience, no Engagement, and little opportunity for learning. Just a bad experience, quickly left behind.

Wills is very clear. In his unpublished autobiography he says:

"On the whole we were not happy at Bicester...Putting aside temporary depressions and upsets, I believe that on the whole one knows whether one can really do a thing or not, and if one is sure of that, it is a mistake to go on doing the thing one feels one cannot do. It was being borne in upon me that the work at Bicester was something I could not do."

The real mystery to me insofar as David Wills goes seems to be his occluding of the role of the Q Camps Committee in bringing Donald Winnicott into the work, and his role personally in the education and training of Donald Winnicott; thereby occluding his own and others' recognition of an element of his influence on subsequent residential therapeutic practice.

He writes in his autobiography that he had "two happy memories of Bicester." One was the artist Arthur Segal, and painting;

"The other pleasant memory is Donald Winnicott, who had been appointed by the Oxfordshire County Council as psychiatrist to their evacuation hostels, so he was quite a frequent visitor at the hostel."

Has he himself forgotten the history?

After Winnicott's death in 1971 Wills went through his typescript autobiography and changed references to Winnicott into the past tense. This tells us that he had the opportunity not only to hear Winnicott's lecture, but to change the story in his autobiography. He didn't change the story. Wills does not seem to have taken on board the influence he had been for Winnicott; or even the importance of that four months at Bicester for the history of therapeutic environments. He left his draft relating to Bicester as it was, with its inaccuracies, and the historian has yet to come along to correct them.

Marjorie Franklin: Lost Essential Catalyst

Another mystery in the occlusion of the episode is psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Marjorie Franklin. She brought David Wills into the Q Camps organisation in 1935-1936, and therefore brought him into the career for which we know him. She drew Winnicott into the work which changed his life and career, and that of many others since. She is the Essential Catalyst in a key area of the history of residential therapeutic child care: but her life and influence virtually disappear from all of the accounts of the Bicester period, including her own; as well as from the history of residential therapeutic child care generally.

Final note

When David Wills retired in 1970, the year of Donald Winnicott's lecture, Marjorie Franklin wrote: "At Hawkspur David Wills achieved the impossible, so some who read his account of it must think that it did not really happen and the description was largely coloured by phantasy. If that were so, they might think, they could chop off bits of ideas and fit them into quite incongruous patterns and claim, and believe, they were using "Willsian methods". I can assure you, Hawkspur did happen, every bit of it." What he did was "impossible" - and I [Franklin] hesitated to put the word in inverted commas, so extravagant it all seems now to an octogenarian!"