

February 2024

THE SCHOOL MEALS SERVICE

PAST, PRESENT - AND FUTURE?

Welcome to our newsletter!



February has been an incredibly busy month, so here are just a few snapshots of what we've been up to! We would like to extend a special thank you to everyone who has participated in an interview this month (14 of you!), plus all the staff, pupils, and parents connected to our partner school in Bradford and advisory school in Lincoln, as well as members of the History & Heritage Group at Lambhill Stables in Glasgow, for being so welcoming to us on our visits this month.

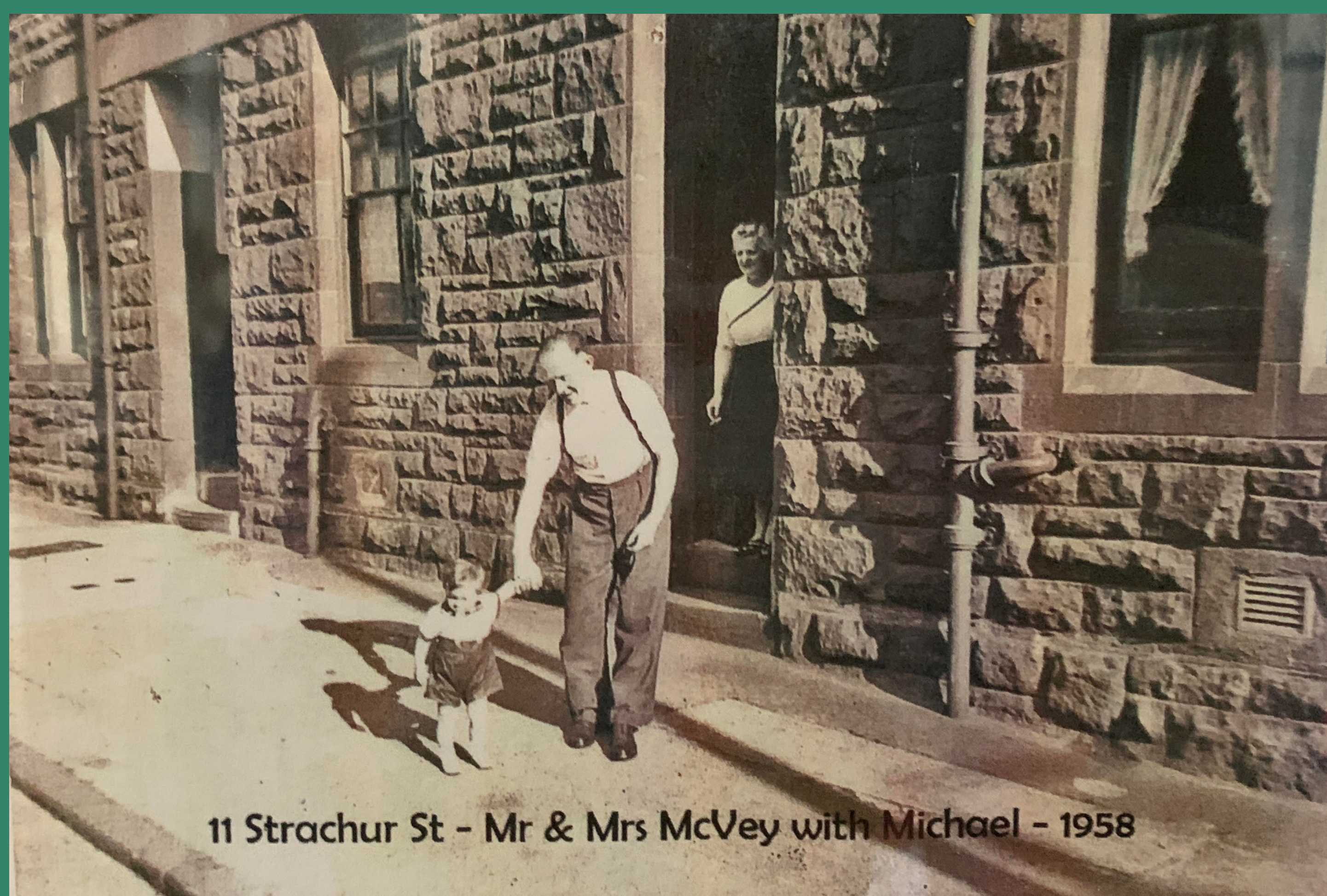
February across the project

This month, the University College London team have been working in archives across London to find out more about school meals policy. Some key findings so far relate to tensions between economic and medical justifications for school meal provision in the inter-war period; the varied nature of communal feeding centres in the Second World War; and questions as to who is responsible for supervising children at dinnertime. Meanwhile, the University of Wolverhampton team have started to analyse the data collected during fieldwork with partner schools. Emerging areas of focus include children's capacity for choice; food education; and the cost of school meals.

Next month, the University of Sheffield team will be travelling to Tampere University in Finland to present at the History of Experience conference. The title of our paper is: 'School Meal Memories: Oral Histories and Communities of Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain'. This will be followed by a visit to the British Library Sounds Archive to listen to more oral history interviews!



Special thanks to Linda, the cook at our partner school in Bradford, who shared this wonderful book with us about the role of dinner ladies in the 1980s. The book highlights the varied roles of school kitchen staff, including cooking, menu planning, ordering supplies, serving children, managing pupil behaviour, cleaning, washing up, and using a cash register and cashing up. It has prompted us to think about how the role has changed from the 1980s to the present day.



11 Strachur St - Mr & Mrs McVey with Michael - 1958

This month we returned to Lambhill Stables in Glasgow to talk with the History & Heritage Group. We were delighted to see this photo of Michael, one of the groups' members, as a child in 1958. Michael shared stories with us of the creative ways he would get seconds (and thirds!) in the dinner hall.



Thank you to Val for kindly sharing photos from her days as a Catering Manager in the mid-1980s. On the left we see Val working on the four-week menu cycle; on the right, we see a trainee preparing food in the kitchen. As Val highlighted, this shows the different responsibilities staff held in delivering school meals! If you'd like to share a photo please email isabelle.carter@sheffield.ac.uk