

EARLY DAYS OF THE WANGFORD HUNDRED WORKHOUSE

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Much has been written about the political, social and economic circumstances in which the famous Hundred Houses came into being but not much detail is available about the actual construction of the Houses, the day-to-day business of building and the inauguration of the new regime. Part reason for the omission is the scarcity of material but through the enterprise of the Suffolk local authorities and the faithful care of the archivists in their employment, it is possible from records which they have in safe keeping to give an account of the House built for the Wangford Hundred.

BUILDING THE HOUSE

In 1764, by 4 Geo. III c. 91, a House of Industry was agreed on for the Wangford Hundred which was to serve the district of Bungay and Beccles. The first weekly meeting of the Committee of Directors was held on June 13 and presided over by Sir Thomas Gooch. Henry Negus was elected Clerk and Isaac Blowers Treasurer. The meeting ordered all churchwardens and overseers of the parishes within the Hundred to bring in their accounts and to help them understand what was required, the following resolutions were passed.

1. That sums charged on account of parish meetings were not to be considered as part of sums to be assessed.
2. That the House of Industry was not 'to intermeddle or have any concern' with Town Houses (or their rents) in which poor persons had been lodged.
3. That all expenses were to be part of sums to be assessed.
4. That all charges not clearly accounted for were to be included in the assessment.
5. That all expenses regarding settlements, bastardy, repairs of houses were to be included.
6. That all rents paid for losses for the habitation of the poor were to be charged in aid of the Houses of Industry.
7. That all sums from the Town Lands or charities which had been applied for the relief of the poor rate were to be included (excepting the rent of the Trust Estate of Bungay applied in aid of the Industrious Poor).

On October 3, a further meeting was held and it was reported that John Farr agreed to sell land at Shipmeadow on which the House could be built. In November an arrangement was concluded with George Peddar of Normington, Surrey, and Henry Riley of Bexley, Kent, both brickmakers, by which they agreed 'to dig, make, burn and complete in a workmanlike manner by 1st September a million bricks or such greater quantity at the price of 6/6 per 1000'. The Directors agreed 'to cover the ground and take away the Callow to the Brick Earth and find all materials necessary'. If the Directors did 'not get the Brick Earth barrowed or wheeled away', Peddar and Riley were to be allowed 6d. per 1000 for doing this.

The arrangement with Peddar and Riley came to nothing and in December, Robert Harmer of Beccles, brickmaker, proposed to hire persons to make 700,000 bricks on these terms: Digging clay at 1/0 per 1000; watering clay at 1/0 per 1000. For the work he was to be allowed 10/6 per week but, if at any time, the men were at a standstill because of frost or for other reasons, he was not to be paid. Harmer agreed to set the clamps himself if he were allowed expenses for assistance and he agreed to give six weeks notice if he could not clamp the bricks.

Meantime, money was borrowed from the Directors and plans for the House were submitted. In November John Redgrave was asked to submit a plan and two plans were forthcoming in December. By the middle of 1765 more plans materialised and one of the Directors, Miles Barne who had lent money, produced a plan for a House which could be built for £3000. He and John Redgrave were asked to co-operate but when in July the latter produced a plan which was accepted, Barne resigned from the Committee because he judged the plan inconvenient and expensive.

Advertisements were then put out for a builder and tenders were submitted by the following:

Matthew Grayston and Thomas Fielden	£4664
John Lane and Gladich Aldred	£4350
Andrew Chandler	£4355
John Harris and William Field	£4060
John Redgrave	£4027

Harris and Field, both carpenters (Harris from Ipswich and Field from Norwich) were asked if they could come down to £4000. Presumably they agreed.

In December the Committee resolved that bricks were 'to be told over and delivered to the builders and that such telling over was to be at the Joint Expense of the said Guardians and Builders'. Robert Harmer was called on 'to cause earth to be dug' to make

500,000 bricks, 145,000 plain tiles and 18,000 pantiles and 80,000 paving bricks. Redgrave was asked to purchase 'Irons and other materials necessary for the burning of tiles, to purchase faggots and other wood for burning the said bricks and tiles'.

The work got under way and Redgrave evidently kept a keen eye on the builders. At the committee of September 30, 1766, he reported that they intended to use Memel timber instead of Riga and Longsoud. The Committee ordered them to abide by the contract. In November, so as to save £14 10s. John Redgrave made an agreement with Harris and Field by which they were 'to ceil the Garrets of the House of Industry against the Roof instead of ceiling against the Joists'.

A discussion took place about paving and Redgrave was ordered to tell the Directors the difference between paving with Yorkshire stones and white paving bricks. The latter were agreed on and early in 1767, John Redgrave was asked to get them.

In February the Committee told John Loames that 'he must do the paving in a better manner and with a fall in the arcades . . . that he must take up the paving already done and pave the same again . . . that the ceiling mortar must be prepared with more hair and that he must amend the ceilings already made, with better mortar'. Robert Harmer who had been invited to prepare bricks for 100,000 bricks was also told 'to have in readiness a sufficient quantity of bricks, they being very much wanted'.

By April 1767 work was sufficiently forward for rooms to be requisitioned and appointed to appropriate uses. For example, the room over the kitchen was allotted as a Committee room and John Harris was told 'to render and skirt the same and that there be window linings, a corner shelf and ovals and that the stone slab which is now laid in the Surgery is to be taken up and laid in the Committee room'. 20 feet of small lead pipe was to be added to the pump below and the motion of the pump was to be worked single instead of double. 500 feet of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch pipe was to be bought to convey water to different parts of the House.

THE HOUSE IS COMPLETED

The Hundred House was as unpopular in this part of Suffolk as elsewhere and the Committee learnt that 'many people resort to the House on Sundays and behave in a disorderly manner and do mischief there'. Harmer was ordered to provide two men to assist William Gillingwater, a Constable from Bungay, to keep order and a watchman was also provided.

In June the Committee told Redgrave that the House must be completed. An inspection was made and numerous defects were

found. The Committee considered that the arches of the windows were not turned high enough, that the arches in the Infirmary wards were turned down a foot too high, that the arches in the east and west courts were too high and did not admit of a proper fall from the House to the cesspool, that the door case of the Infirmary was too high and that the posts in 'the Hoggs yard' were too short. The following month Harmer reported that of the bricks delivered to the House, 16,000 were good, but that there were 1050 bad and soft ones and 200 soft lump. By this date, the great gates of the House were fixed. In October, 1767, about 120 poor persons were sent in from five parishes.

At this point, perhaps because of the expense or because of their doubts about the wisdom of the undertaking, Sir Thomas Gooch and seven other directors refused to act. Ten new directors had to be appointed to replace them and two members who had died.

EQUIPPING THE HOUSE

While the House was being built, preparations for equipping it were completed. In October 1765 Thomas Walker was asked to put the lands around the House 'in such a course of husbandry as he shall think will be most beneficial to the Corporation'. In November 1766 the Directors decided to obtain patterns of clothing used for the poor in the workhouses of Bulcamp and Oulton. John Redgrave was asked to 'give an account of brewing utensils, coppers, copper irons, bedsteads, brasiery, pewter, tin, iron and tinderstone as is necessary'.

At the committee on January 13, 1767 various tradesmen attended and the goods listed below are of interest both because of prices and because they show kinds and origin of goods used. Only one tradesman is mentioned by name—John Preston of Beccles—but it appears that other persons presented themselves:

1. *Braziers goods*: 1 Brewing Cooper to hold 12 barrels with cock; 1 washing copper to hold 150 gallons ditto; 1 dish copper to hold 60 and 1 ditto to hold 50 gallons—all at £6 . 19 . 0 per cwt. 4 saucepans at 20d. per lb.; 1 copper warming pan at 2/3 per lb.; 1 large frying pan at 20d. per lb.; 2 brass warming pans at 2/- per lb.; 4 beer cocks at 18d. each.

2. *Pewter*: 1 Pewter callender at 5/6 or 7/- each; 2 dozen hard metal plates and 7 dishes sorted—both at 12d. per pound; 2 pewter basins at 2/- each; 4 close stool pans at 4/-; 2 pewter bedpans at 6/-; 100 chamber pots at 13d. per pound.

3. *Tin Work*: 18 pudding pans 16 x 12 and 3 deep made of strong double tin at 2/6 each; 4 two gallon pots strong and well

supported at 6/9 each; 4 caudle boxes at 11d.; 30 pints at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ pints at 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.; 2 funnels at 4d. or 6d.; 4 pepper boxes at 2d.; 2 flour boxes at 4d.; 1 dripping pan at 2/-; 6 dust pans at 6d.; 6 tinder boxes and steels at 18d.; 6 tin candlesticks at 8d.; 6 iron candlesticks at 8d.; 6 lanthorns at 2/-; 2 basting ladles at 6d.; lamp by pattern.

4. *Ironwork*: Copper doors, coal ranges, grates, fenders and all blackwork at £1 . 1 . 0 per cwt.; all fire shovels, tongs and pokers at £2 . 13 . 6; 1 gridiron at 5/6; 6 landiron no. 7 at 2/- each; 6 box iron heaters and rests at 6/-; 2 dozen knives and forks at 4/-; 1 large pair of kitchen bellows at 3/6; 1 small bellows at 2/-; 6 iron shovels at 3/-; 6 spades at 4d. afford at 6/- (that is, afford spades).

5. *Cast Iron*: All copper irons, backs for stoves, ranges etc. at 15/- per cwt.; iron coppers to hold 70, 20 and 14 gallons at 18/- per cwt.; 2 iron pots at 18/- per cwt.

6. *Coopers Ware*: 40 barrels at 21/- a barrel (iron bound and hoop); 6 half-dozen barrels at 8/6; 12 stove pails at 2/3 per pail; 4 bread Top Killers at 1/6 (15 $\frac{1}{2}$ at top and 6 inch stave); 1 tub at 7/- for broth (22 inch top 19 inches stave 3 iron hoop 1 bread hoop and 2 iron ears); 1 killer with ears (23 inch top 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ stave); 2 ditto (21 inch top 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ stave)—all at 5/- each. 4 dish killers at 2/6 (22 inches top 9 inch stave of Hamburgh oak and bread hoop); 3 pudding killers at 1/6 (21 inches top 8 inches stave); 2 powdering tub at 10/-, 27 gallons each; 2 ditto at 8/-, 18 gallons each; 2 ditto at 5/6 each, 12 gallons each; 2 large funnels at 5/- with wings and copper spout; 2 jetts at 1/6 each; 2 gutterers for brewing at 1/-; 1 bushel iron bound; 3 measures at 2/6 (viz. peck, $\frac{1}{2}$ peck and $\frac{1}{4}$ peck); 2 milk pails with bright iron hoop at 5/-.

7. *Turners Ware*: 12 hand bowls at 6d.; 24 porridge dishes at 3/- per doz.; 24 trenchers at 3/- per doz.; 20 bowls 17 inches at 2/-; 18 and 19 at 2/6; 19 and 20 at 3/-; and 21 and 22 at 4/-; 23 and 24 at 5/-; 25 and 26 at 6/-; 26 and 27 at 7/-; 6 pot ladles at 2/- the whole; 300 soup dishes at 4/- per doz.; 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ gross of spoons at 4/6 the gross; 24 pudding spoons 16 inches long at 4/- the whole; 12 handle cups 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches over at 12/- per doz.; 6 caudle dishes at 3/- the whole; 2 deep bowls 24 inches wide at 14/- for 2; 1 skimmer; 1 sieve at 1/-; 6 hair sieves at 4/6 the whole; 2 sieves for beans 21 inches wide at 4/-; 2 yokes to carry pails.

In addition, 20 hogsheds at 10/6 each and 100 bedsteads according to the longer pattern at 16/- each and 50 according to the smaller pattern at 15/- each.

8. *Clothing*: Shirtcloth $\frac{3}{4}$ hemp cloth at 13d. per yard and $\frac{1}{2}$ ell at 11d. per yard. Shirtcloth if ready made for men's shirts at 4/3, for boys $\frac{1}{2}$ ell at 2/9, women's shirts at 3/9 and girls at 2/6.

Sheeting $\frac{7}{8}$ width, hemp bleached at 12d. per yard. Picking for beds at 2/6 a stone ($4\frac{1}{2}$ stones to a bed). Coverlids at 7/- each, $2\frac{1}{4}$ yards long and 2 yards wide. Feathers at 8d. per lb. 7/4 Witney blankets at 7/9 per pair and 6/4 stout diaper at 4/9.

Plain Scotch camblets 21 inches broad at 23/- per piece; $2\frac{3}{4}$ inch cotton checks at 11 for all; 5 ell wide Broad Hessings 35 yards at 23/- per piece; 7 milled linsey 40 yards at 36/- per piece; 10 Russia drab at 13d. per yard; 11 Fearnought at 16d. per yard; $16\frac{3}{4}$ Lanca-shire hemp at 11d. per yard; 20 boors caps at $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1/16 inches wide at 14d. per yard; 21 worsted caps at 3/8 per doz.; 23 men's do. at 4/- per doz.; 23 Manchester handkerchiefs at 5/- per doz.; 24 Scotch handkerchiefs 13.16 at 5/8 per doz.; 25 Yorkshire plains at 2/- per yard; 29 raw double yarn hose at 12/-; 38 boys felt hats at 10/6; 42 straw hats at 3/3 each; 50 Leghorn hats at 3/3; 60 girls bonnets at 4/3; leather bodices at 20d. each; girls stomachers at 9/- per dozen; maids do. 10/- per doz.; women's ditto 11/- per dozen; blue serge 15d. per yard; best camblet 26/6 piece; striped linsey at 13d. per yard; duck for pockets 11d. per yard; children's knit hose sorted at 3/6 per doz.; girls blue yarn hose at 4/6 per doz.; boys grey yarn hose at 5/- per doz.; youths at 9/6 and mens at 13/6 per doz.

Goods purchased: It appears that the metal goods were bought, but the following month the Committee agreed to purchase other goods from Beccles and Bungay tradesmen. They bought men's and boys' clothes of duffels; waistcoats plain or spotted ermin; men's shirts of Yorkshire linen and Suffolk hempen whited; men's knityard stockings; worsted caps. For the women, best Leeds camblet for gowns, serge or half thicks for coats, undercoats of striped linseys (Kendall) or good bays; Jersey stockings, leghorn hats, cotton check for aprons; brown robes for mantles, check Scotch handkerchiefs and Yorkshire $\frac{3}{4}$ cloth for shifts or Suffolk hemp whited. For boys and girls, $\frac{1}{2}$ ell weavers cloths and for small boys Russia cloth.

ENGAGING THE MASTER

The Committee had also to choose a Master for the House and several candidates presented themselves. They were:

1. John Salisbury, master of Debenham workhouse (in charge of 50 persons). Understands all branches of woollen business and some parts of hempen business. Qualified to be a clerk. Aged 45.
2. John Hobson of Claydon, officer in Excise. Understands woollen business. Qualified to be clerk. One child at home, aged 40.

3. William Cooper of Beccles. Does not understand woollen or any other manufacture. Can act as clerk. Four children at home. Aged 29.

4. William Gillingwater of Bungay. Master of workhouse for eleven years. Understands woollen business and white linen. Can act as clerk. No children.

5. Matthew Spilling of Bungay. Understands spinning and accounts keeping. Five children at home.

6. Thomas Perron, late governor of Blything Hundred House.

7. Samuel Lount, Norwich. Housekeeper for 22 years. Aged 45 years.

Several letters recommending Salisbury and Lount were received and finally, Spilling was appointed at £30 a year. The Committee recognised that his children could earn and their profits be applied to the House but nevertheless 'ordered that the said Spilling be indulged with the liberty of putting out his children to school'. Mrs. Spilling was, however, set to work cutting out shirts and other garments.

OTHER PERSONS APPOINTED AND REGULATIONS MADE

Other persons appointed were put in charge of wool and tow spinning. No chaplain was appointed. The poor were to attend the local church. Tenders were received from local surgeons to attend the House but none was appointed.

The Committee made Rules and Orders for the House which provided that the poor were to work from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. with a break of half an hour each for breakfast, dinner and play. They were to be in bed by eight in winter and nine in summer. No person was to be placed in the wards until he was completely examined, washed, cleaned and clothed. It was ordered that wormwood was to be laid in the bed sheets.

In December 1767 rules for diet were drawn up. Breakfast from Sunday to Friday consisted of bread and cheese or butter and Saturday, of milk broth. Supper was to be bread and cheese or butter all the week. Dinner on Sunday and Thursday was to consist of beef and meal dumpling; Monday and Friday of pease broth; Tuesday of suet pudding; Wednesday milk broth and meat dumpling and Saturday bread and cheese or butter. Tea was forbidden and no liquor or smoking was allowed above stairs. Whether these meals were an improvement on what paupers got in their homes, we are not told but in the early months of the working of the House, 'John Neek ran away because he had not enough food' and when he returned, he was put on bread and water

for two days. Afterwards, it was reported that the poor were content but asked that on days when they got pease broth, they might have half-pint of beer.

In this way, Shipmeadow Workhouse came into being. By the end of 1767 it was learnt that the annual expense would be £2090, which was £300 more than estimated. The Directors' views about the increase are not recorded but the news may have had something to do with the wholesale resignations reported at this time. We can only hope that the poor benefited by the transfer from their homes to the big House.¹

¹ *Source:* Wangford Weekly Minutes, 1764-1768, Volume I.