

# THE APPRENTICING OF PAUPER CHILDREN IN THE INCORPORATED HUNDREDS OF SUFFOLK

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When the several Suffolk Hundreds<sup>1</sup> incorporated by local Acts of Parliament<sup>2</sup> for the better care and relief of the poor, the Directors and Acting Guardians (as the Governing bodies) assumed the responsibilities which the existing Poor Law<sup>3</sup> laid upon the parochial Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor. This responsibility included the care of and apprenticing of the pauper children of the separate parishes within the incorporated areas. The manner in which this responsibility was discharged was the subject of successive Reports to the Poor Law Commissioners,<sup>4</sup> but the conclusions of these Assistant Poor Law Commissioners were based upon a limited amount of evidence, and Mr. Mott and Dr. Kay were particularly anxious to show the superior administration effected under the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834. The existence of additional evidence over an extended period of years,<sup>5</sup> enables a re-assessment to be made, in this paper, of the manner in which the Directors and Acting Guardians discharged their responsibilities towards the care of and apprenticing of pauper children and of the attendant problems.

Parochial experience in these rural areas had shewn that the main problem to be encountered, was that of finding a sufficiency of masters and mistresses willing to take pauper children, voluntarily or compulsorily. Therefore the Incorporated Hundreds must at the outset secure adequate and extensive enough statutory provisions

<sup>1</sup> S & B. Webb, *English Poor Law History*, vol. 1, (1927), pp. 125—137, 'The East Anglian Experiments'.

<sup>2</sup> 29 *Geo. II. c. 79* Colneis and Carlford Hundreds; 4 *Geo. III. c. 56* Blything Hundred; 4 *Geo. III. c. 57* Bosmere and Claydon Hundred; 4 *Geo. III. c. 69* Samford Hundred; 4 *Geo. III. c. 89* Mutford and Lothingland Hundred; 4 *Geo. III. c. 91* Wangford Hundred; 5 *Geo. III. c. 97* Loes and Wilford Hundreds; 18 *Geo. III. c. 35* Stow Hundred; 19 *Geo. III. c. 13* Hartismerè, Hoxne and Thredling Hundreds; and 19 *Geo. III. c. 30* Cosford Hundred and the Parish of Polstead (Babergh Hundred).

<sup>3</sup> 43 and 44 *Eliz. c. 2. et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Poor Law Commission, 1834, App. A*, (C. Stuart's Report); *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1835, App. B, No. 2*, (C. Mott's Report); *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1836, App. B, No. 1*, (Dr. J. P. Kay's Report).

<sup>5</sup> Poor Law Records deposited in the East Suffolk Record Office, County Hall, Ipswich.

to deal with this problem. The provisions of the several Acts of Incorporation attempted to solve this problem by authorising at least four alternative opportunities for placing pauper-apprentices. Under these provisions it was clearly intended, that in the first instance, masters or mistresses would be sought, compulsorily, from among the occupiers within the area of the incorporation; preferably in the parish of settlement of the pauper child. The second provision was to permit the master or mistress to discharge his or her liability by taking into service for one year only, an alternative widely adopted. Being thus able to discharge their liability was an advantage to the occupiers, most of whom were engaged in agriculture, subject to the seasonal changes and the periodic booms and slumps which affected farming. It is difficult to see how without such a limited liability that places could have been found for the pauper-apprentices, particularly when suitable masters were considered to be those who already had employees.<sup>6</sup> The limitation of occupational opportunity which also resulted from most occupiers being engaged in farming necessitated two further statutory provisions. The Acts provided that the Directors and Acting Guardians might apprentice males 'to any Captain, Master or Owner of any Ship or Vessel,' a useful provision in view of the maritime trade of Ipswich, Harwich and other nearby ports. The towns of the county, in particular Halesworth, Ipswich, Saxmundham and Woodbridge, also afforded the opportunity of apprenticing to manufactures and trades in these towns, under the permissive clauses of the Acts.<sup>7</sup> Apprenticing was secured in both these cases by voluntary binding on the part of the master or mistress, with but little alternative on the part of the child, and usually involved the payment of a premium. It was with the evils arising from this out-Hundreds apprenticing that Dr. Kay was mostly concerned, but resort to such a practice was only intended as an alternative to apprenticing compulsorily within the incorporated area, preferably in the parish of settlement of the pauper child.

Powers of compulsory apprenticing having thus been conferred upon the Directors and Acting Guardians by statute, it remained for them to work out, for their own corporation, the method of allotment and distribution of apprentices among the occupiers of lands, property, hereditaments and tythes, from whose ranks they themselves were enlisted. In determining upon the provisions of such a scheme, two considerations were paramount. First, the master or mistress must be financially capable of supporting the

<sup>6</sup> *33 Geo. III. c. 126.* 'Occupiers in the parish of settlement of the child and who should normally employ one or more day labourers, or who keep one or more servants'.

<sup>7</sup> *Acts of Incorporation*, see Note 2 above.

apprentice(s) allotted. The second consideration, which ought to have carried more weight than it did, was the type of work to which the apprentice might be put, in order that the boy or girl might grow up as an independent member of the community, trained in industry and religion; although here, the range of available jobs was a limiting factor. An attempt was made, however, to classify the extent of an occupier's liability to take one or more apprentices, and within limits, this might also be taken as the criterion of the master' or mistress' capability of maintaining the apprentice(s) allotted. The basis followed in determining this liability and capability was generally that of the valuation for poor-rate assessment, in the ratio of one apprentice for each £50 so assessed. In allotting apprentices to qualified occupiers, a somewhat complex system of distribution was operative in most of the incorporated areas. Most Corporations followed a system identical with that of the Loes and Wilford Hundreds, where the following method of distribution was followed:<sup>8</sup>

In apportioning Apprentices, the following

TABLE AND RULES

are agreed upon, as most agreeable to the Rule of Law, and the Principle of Equity.

<i>Every Person Occupying per annum.</i>	<i>Who should have.</i>	<i>Order of Apprenticing.</i>
£ 300	6	1st, 3rd, 6th, 10th, 15th, 21st.
250	5	2nd, 5th, 9th, 14th, 20th.
200	4	4th, 8th, 13th, 19th.
150	3	7th, 12th, 18th.
100	2	11th, 17th.
50	1	16th.

In Wangford Hundred this distribution was elaborated by the addition of a graduated system of Fines and Premiums.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever the system of allotment and distribution evolved, absolute fairness in the allocation of apprentices depended almost entirely upon the maintenance of accurate records by the Churchwardens and Overseers in the several parishes in the incorporated

<sup>8</sup> Loes and Wilford Apprentice Register, 1791-1820.

<sup>9</sup> Kay, *loc. cit.*, p. 168.

area. Each Quarter these parochial officers were required to furnish to the Directors and Acting Guardians, details of available apprentices and of persons in their parish liable to take apprentices. Certain of Dr. Kay's informants in the Stow Hundred maintained that such parochial records were not kept by the parishes within that Hundred, where the apprentices were balloted:—

‘ . . . without reference to the amount of the assessment, or to the number allotted in previous years, but the person upon whom the burthen fell was simply selected by lot.’<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the system followed by the Stow Hundred was defective and failed to satisfy those ‘ upon whom the burthen fell ’ but it was designed to secure for each apprentice a minimum three-year servitude, and at the same time restricted the liability of a master to the maintenance of that apprentice for only one of three years.<sup>11</sup> Indeed it would appear that the chief defect in this method of allocation was that of ensuring that an apprentice continued in the same trade throughout the three years, though this defect was minimised by the fact that most occupiers were farmers.

Whilst the rules for apportioning apprentices thus provided a reasonable basis for ensuring that the occupiers were of a sufficient standing to maintain an apprentice, no such qualification seems to have been required of masters or mistresses taking apprentices outside the incorporation. Dr. Kay directed attention to the evil consequences of apprenticing outside the Hundred areas, but the extent to which this practice was followed needs first to be determined.

Unfortunately only two Registers of Apprentices have survived,<sup>12</sup> but these indicate that at any rate in the Loes and Wilford Hundreds, the intentions of the Act were being carried out. During this period of thirty-six years there was no occasion of an apprentice being bound outside the area of the incorporation, without at least one attempt to bind to a master or mistress within the Hundreds. It seems doubtful that this was due to humanitarian reasons, but rather that the policy was dictated by the economics of the matter. The premium offered in any one instance was determined only after accounting for the Fines already collected on the refusal of an occupier or occupiers to take the particular apprentice. So that,

<sup>10</sup> Kay, *loc. cit.*, p. 166. Quotes the evidence of two Directors of the Stow Hundred Messrs. Hart and Webb.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart, *loc. cit.*, p. 367. ‘ The apprentices are only articed for one year, and when it expires they are again ballotted to another master, and so on for three years, when their period of servitude expires. The parish usually gives 25s. to fit out the apprentice with clothes for the first year, 10s. for the second, and 5s. for the third ’.

<sup>12</sup> Loes and Wilford Register of Apprentices, 1791-1820 and 1821-1826.

if £10 had been collected as a Fine, then £8 was usually offered as a Premium; whereas if £20 had been collected in Fines then a Premium of £15 or £20 was offered. There were occasions when the full amount of collected Fines and more had to be offered as an inducement to take a particular apprentice. Nor was the offering of Premiums restricted to masters or mistresses outside the Loes and Wilford Hundreds taking apprentices. Indeed the graduated scale of premiums in operation in the Wangford Hundred suggests that it was generally contemplated by that Corporation that premiums would usually have to be paid. Often a profit accrued on these apprenticeship transactions, even in the Loes and Wilford Hundreds where bad management brought about the dis-incorporation of these Hundreds in 1826.<sup>13</sup> Here, between 1811 and the date of dis-incorporation some £2,760 was collected in Fines, as against £2,681 expended on Premiums.<sup>14</sup> The Fine usually imposed by the Corporations upon an occupier for refusal, without just cause, to take an allotted apprentice was Ten pounds. In Wangford Hundred a graduated amount of Fine was imposed<sup>15</sup> in accordance with the following Table.

*Wangford Hundred.*  
*Table of Fines and Premiums*

<i>Occupier assessed at</i>	<i>Fine imposed for refusal to take the apprentice</i>			<i>Premium given upon taking the allotted apprentice</i>		
	<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
£50 and upwards	10	-	-	5	5	-
£40 to £50	9	-	-	6	-	-
£30 to £40	7	-	-	8	-	-
£20 to £30	5	-	-	10	-	-
£15 to £20	3	10	-	11	-	-
£12 to £15	2	10	-	12	-	-
£10 to £12	2	-	-	12	-	-

The payment of the requisite Fine was one of two ways whereby the occupier allotted an apprentice could avoid taking the boy or girl so offered. The other method of discharging the liability to take a compulsory apprentice was to take into service or voluntary apprenticeship a boy or girl from the occupier's own parish.

<sup>13</sup> 7 *Geo. IV. c. 1.*

<sup>14</sup> Loes and Wilford Account Book of Apprentice Penalties, 1811-1820 and 1821-1826.

<sup>15</sup> Kay *loc. cit.*, p. 168.

This might be preferable to taking an apprentice allotted from the House of Industry, whose character might possibly be tainted from a period of residence within the House. But only occupiers of some wealth could use either of these means of avoiding taking the compulsory allottee, so that in some instances less wealthy occupiers within the incorporation areas took apprentices into their service, though they had not the means of supporting the apprentice. Indeed they might have been encouraged into signing the Indentures by the offer of a Premium. Thus the system of Fines and Premiums worked, but the full implications of the evil effects of apprenticing to people who could not afford to maintain the apprentice or teach him a trade can best be seen in the apprenticing out of the Hundreds, particularly in the town of Ipswich.

These were the evils which Dr. Kay stressed in his Report. Pauper children apprenticed to a trade but not learning any, compelled to live out their apprenticeships in squalor and misery, and with few prospects of employment thereafter. Then, becoming chargeable to the poor-rates of the parish where their bogus apprenticeship had secured them a Settlement. Dr. Kay reported the opinions of three overseers of the poor for the Ipswich parishes of St. Clement, St. Margaret and St. Matthew, to the effect that pauperism had been increased in these parishes as a result of the binding of apprentices to Ipswich masters and mistresses in this manner.<sup>16</sup> John Glyde, the local writer and moralist, enlarged upon the evils of poverty and crime which existed in the town.<sup>17</sup> The existence of such conditions cannot be denied, but the extent to which this was due to the farming-out of pauper apprentices from the incorporated areas is questionable. The statistical evidence which Dr. Kay provided for certain of the incorporations covering the period 1820—1835 suggests that he over-emphasised in his Report the extent to which apprenticeship outside the areas of the incorporations was practised.<sup>18</sup>

Additional evidence of the extent of this practice is needed, but the limited survival of Registers of Apprentices, and bundles of Indentures, increase the difficulties in making such an assessment. Only incomplete evidence can be collected from the Quarterly Minute Books, and as, in some cases, the responsibility of binding apprentices was illegally assumed by the Weekly Committee of the House of Industry, fullest information can only be obtained by extracting the relevant information from the Weekly Committee Minute Books. A sample has, however, been taken for the Loes and Wilford Hundreds for a period prior to that covered by the

<sup>16</sup> Kay *loc. cit.*, pp. 176 and 177.

<sup>17</sup> John Glyde Jr., *The Moral, Social and Religious Condition of Ipswich*, 1850.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 'A'.

surviving Registers of Apprentices. This evidence has been compiled from the Quarterly Minute Books and analysed in Appendix 'B'; and a further analysis made from the Register of Apprentices, 1821-1826 and the information summarised in Appendix 'C.' The information thus collected for the same incorporation area, from two different sources, indicates the possibilities of calculations based upon the incomplete information in the Quarterly Minute Books. The sample taken from the Minute Books for the Loes and Wilford Hundreds could not be extended beyond the year 1782, as thereafter the parish and occupation of the occupier was not stated; and a further deficiency is that the information derived from this source is of apprentices allotted, and not necessarily bound. The analysis from the Register of Apprentices on the other hand, is, however, of apprentices bound. Both these analyses show that the percentage of apprentices bound outside the Hundreds was small; and the evidence of this single sample, together with the statistics provided by Dr. Kay, suggests that caution must be applied when considering the extent and evils of this out-Hundreds apprenticing.

These analyses of the Loes and Wilford Hundreds call for further interpretation regarding the manner in which the Directors and Acting Guardians dealt with the problems of apprenticing pauper children. It will be seen that in 1778 and again in 1782 that there were instances of certain apprentices being bound within the House of Industry.<sup>19</sup> This policy of binding within the House, usually to the Governor of the House, was designed not only to teach the apprentice a trade, but also to ensure that the industry carried on in the House was operative and making a profit. It was, for instance, the declared policy of the board of management in the Colneis and Carlford Hundreds that:—

' . . . no poor boy that is in the House of Industry (and fit for apprentice to the House) be bound out apprentice or put to service until there be sufficient apprentices bound to the House to fill the vacant looms.'<sup>20</sup>

All the Corporations had power to apprentice within the House of Industry.<sup>21</sup>

The reference in this Minute of the Directors and Acting Guardians of the Colneis and Carlford Hundreds to 'poor boys within the House of Industry' has reference to another practice followed by most of the incorporations, namely, that boys and girls ready to be bound-out, must first spend a period (usually of not less than

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 'B'.

<sup>20</sup> Colneis and Carlford Hundreds Quarterly Minute Book. (Quarterly Meeting, January 1770).

<sup>21</sup> *Acts of Incorporation*, see Note 2 above.

six months) within the House of Industry. An exception to this general practice seems to have been operative in the Stow Hundred where the children were not sent into the House before they were bound out.<sup>22</sup> The intention of this practice of spending a period in the House was to make the apprentice-designate the more industrious by a training in 'religion and industry', but these youngsters seem mostly to have acquired the bad habits of the older inmates, rather than to have acquired the requisite virtues.

And youngsters they were, the majority of them being bound-out between the ages of twelve and fourteen.<sup>23</sup> The Acts of incorporation did not specify the age at which they might be bound. The statutory regulations merely restricted the period of servitude to a maximum of seven years, and provided that in any case, apprenticeships must cease at the age of twenty-one for a male, and at the age of eighteen for a female. Within these limits the Directors and Acting Guardians had absolute freedom, although there must be magisterial consent to any Indenture. In the main the period of apprenticeship seems to have been of a short duration, principally to ensure that a master or mistress would be willing to take the apprentice. Often this was for one year only, the child being let-out on service. Particularly this practice had to be adopted in the case of girls, there generally being an unwillingness on the part of occupiers to take girls. This practice of short-term apprenticeships and service meant also that the Directors and Acting Guardians were obliged, if only at recurrent intervals, to exercise an interest in the welfare of the pauper children, if only to bind them elsewhere. Otherwise their concern seems to have ceased once the terms of the Indenture had been agreed upon, and the child bound.

In the main the apprentice activity of the Suffolk incorporated Hundreds was determined by the changing vicissitudes of an agrarian county, and by a limited scope of occupational opportunity. The Directors and Acting Guardians generally appear to have pursued policies dictated by these circumstances, and not with such disastrous results as Dr. Kay would have the Poor Law Commissioners believe. Indeed the consequences could hardly have been so devastating as those which emanated from the newly elected Poor Law Guardians under the guidance of Dr. Kay and the Commissioners in London.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Stuart, *loc. cit.*, p. 367.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendices 'B' and 'C'.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Oastler in a speech at the Southwark Election in 1840, accused Dr. Kay of falsely encouraging migration from Suffolk (and other agricultural areas) to the North, by giving such glowing accounts of the factories there that 'the poor children were transported by their own consent, thus obtained by threat and delusion from their native fields, into the horrors of the pestilential factories'. G. R. Wythen-Baxter, *The Book of the Bastilles*, 1841.



APPENDIX 'A'.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION WITH REFERENCE TO APPRENTICING BY THE SUFFOLK INCORPORATIONS. (*Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1836. Appendix "B".*)

BLYTHING HUNDRED (*p. 172*)

Year	Fines Imposed			Number of Apprentices Bound		
	No.	Amount		From House	From Parishes by Magistrates	
		£	s.	d.		
1821	2	20	-	-	25	-
1822	4	40	-	-	42	-
1823	-	-	-	-	47	-
1824	2	40	-	-	19	-
1825	3	30	-	-	58	-
1826	-	-	-	-	31	-
1827	2	20	-	-	25	-
1828	-	-	-	-	14	-
1829	-	-	-	-	22	-
1830	5	50	-	-	41	20
1831	13	130	-	-	67	13
1832	14	140	-	-	72	20
1833	13	125	16	6	85	17
1834	15	150	-	-	62	12
1835	8	80	-	-	20	-

BOSMERE AND CLAYDON HUNDRED (*p. 171*)

Year	Money collected as Fines			Children Bound		Total
	£			Within the Hundred	Outside the Hundred	
1821	110	-	-	38	2	40
1822	110	-	-	29	1	30
1823	160	-	-	18	1	19
1824	70	-	-	16	5	21
1825	90	-	-	14	3	17
1826	50	-	-	10	5	15
1827	90	-	-	15	2	17
1828	170	-	-	11	5	16
1829	90	-	-	6	-	6
1830	100	-	-	22	5	27
1831	60	-	-	13	2	15
1832	190	-	-	7	3	10
1833	70	-	-	17	4	21
1834	60	-	-	11	1	12
1835	10	-	-	1	-	1

## COLNEIS AND CARLFORD HUNDREDS (p. 172)

Year	Apprentices bound within the Hundreds	Fines paid £	Apprentices bound outside the Hundreds	Premiums given		
				£	s.	d.
1821	75	230	2	30	—	—
1822	70	170	2	23	—	—
1823	59	140	7	95	16	—
1824	47	120	—	—	—	—
1825	30	100	4	55	—	—
1826	38	90	3	45	—	—
1827	44	70	9	103	10	—
1828	27	70	2	24	—	—
1829	41	200	1	16	—	—
1830	41	170	6	79	—	—
1831	50	250	10	137	—	—
1832	21	70	3	38	—	—
1833	23	110	1	10	—	—
1834	21	40	2	22	—	—

## SAMFORD HUNDRED. (p. 172)

*Apprentices bound outside the Samford Hundred*

Year	Into Large Towns		Into Rural Areas	
	Number	Premiums £	Number	Premiums £
1820	7	63	3	15
1821	9	90	4	30
1822	10	92	7	45
1823	23	281	7	67
1824	28	278	12	123
1825	32	375	5	65
1826	22	222	5	58
1827	24	259	6	57
1828	21	234	7	76
1829	44	476	13	132
1830	23	256	8	94
1831	22	229	4	44
1832	34	383	4	42
1833	19	201	3	41
1834	13	162	—	—
1835	15	164	7	55

STOW HUNDRED (p. 170)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Children allotted to Occupiers</i>
1826	6
1827	6
1828	12
1829	40
1830	26
1831	49
1832	67
1833	59
1834	35.

WANGFORD HUNDRED (p. 171)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Children Bound</i>	<i>Premiums Given</i>			<i>Penalties Paid</i>		
		<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1824	85	320	-	-	230	-	-
1825	63	340	-	-	220	-	-
1826	73	340	-	-	230	-	-
1827	74	360	-	-	260	-	-
1828	74	350	-	-	230	-	-
1829	45	210	-	-	160	-	-
1830	70	-	-	-	200	-	-
1831	93	-	-	-	340	-	-
1832	59	379	15	-	313	10	-

## APPENDIX 'B'.

APPRENTICES ALLOCATED AT THE QUARTERLY MEETINGS OF THE DIRECTORS AND ACTING GUARDIANS OF THE LOES AND WILFORD HUNDREDS. (*Quarterly Minute Books, 1765-1784*).

<i>Apprentices allotted</i>	1770	1778	1779	1780	1781	1782	1783
Boys	1	6	4	1	3	12	4
Girls		3			2	6	5
Total	1	9	4	1	5	18	9

<i>Ages</i>							
11							4
12						6	2
13		1				4	2
14		1				3	1
15						3	
16		1				2	
Not stated	1	6	4	1	5		

*Apprenticed in:*

Home parish		3	1		5	15	
Within incp. area				1		2	
Ipswich	1		2				
Framlingham		1					
Suffolk, elsewhere			1				
Harwich		1					
Chelsea		2					
House of Industry		2					1

*Occupation of  
Master or Mistress*

Mariner	1	3	2				
Cordwainer		1				1*	
Farmer		3			5	15	
Governor of House		2					
Carpenter			1	1			
Clergyman			1				
Gentry							2

\* the Cordwainer to which this apprentice was bound, was the Cordwainer at the House of Industry at Melton.

APPENDIX 'C'.

APPRENTICES ALLOCATED AT THE QUARTERLY MEETINGS OF THE DIRECTORS AND ACTING GUARDIANS OF THE LOES AND WILFORD HUNDREDS. (*Register of Apprentices, 1821-1826*).

	1821	1822	1823	1824	1825	1826
<i>Apprentices allotted</i>						
Boys	13	10	20	18	8	1
Girls	13	5	11	10	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Ages</i>						
12	12	5	13	14	7	
13	8	7	10	8	4	
14	2	2	7	3	1	2
15	4	1	1	3		
<i>Apprenticed in :</i>						
Home parish	16	7	18	17	5	1
Within incp. area	10	7	10	9	5	
Ipswich		1	1	1	1	
Saxmundham			1			1
Woodbridge			1	1		
Suffolk, elsewhere					1	
<i>Occupation of Master or Mistress</i>						
Farmer	24	12	24	22	7	1
Brickmaker	1					
Butcher	1	1	1			
Pipe-maker		1				
Gentry		1	1	2	1	
Clergyman			1			
Inn-keeper			1			
Apothecary			1			
Basket-maker			2			1
Cooper				1		
Haberdasher				1		
Miller				1		
Schoolmistress				1		
Widow					1	
Shoemaker					1	
Blacksmith					1	
Not stated					1	