

Fashioning the Foundlings –
Education, Instruction and Apprenticeship
at the London Foundling Hospital c.1741 - 1800



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Index

Chapter One – Introduction	Pages 2 - 14
Chapter Two – Aims and objectives	Pages 14 - 23
Chapter Three - Educating the Foundlings: schooling and vocational instruction	Pages 24 - 55
Chapter Four – Apprenticeship	Pages 56 - 78
Chapter Five – Effectiveness and experience: assessing the outcomes of education and apprenticeship	Pages 79 - 97
Chapter Six – Final conclusions	Pages 98 - 103
Appendix – Prayers for the use of the foundlings	Pages 104 - 105
Bibliography	Pages 106 - 112

Chapter One: Introduction

Despite the prominence of the word 'education' in the official title of the London Foundling Hospital, that is 'The Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children', it is surprising to discover this is an under researched aspect of its history. Whilst researchers have written about this topic in a general sense, gaps and deficiencies in the literature still exist. By focusing on this single component of the Hospital's objectives, and combining primary sources in new ways, this study aims to address these shortcomings. In doing so, the thesis provides a detailed assessment of, first, the purpose and form of educational practice at the Hospital and, second, the outcomes of education as witnessed in the apprenticeship programme in which older foundlings participated. In both cases, consideration is given to key shifts in education and apprenticeship practices, and to the institutional and contextual forces that prompted these developments over the course of the eighteenth century. Education and apprenticeship were, from the outset, central and closely interrelated activities at the Foundling Hospital, and consideration is also given to the effectiveness of this programme in meeting the ambitions of the institution's governors.

The Hospital, the vision of one man, Thomas Coram (1668-1751), was founded in 1739. It opened temporarily in Hatton Garden in 1741, before moving to a permanent building in 1745, on a site between King's Cross and Bloomsbury, now the modern-day Coram's Fields park. Its stated aim was the preservation of children who otherwise might have died or lived in poverty, and to make

them into useful citizens. By the time the institution was established, Coram had spent almost twenty years in obtaining support from those with the power and influence to bring about its foundation. As the historian Roy Porter argues, ideas of society in the eighteenth century were changing. More people were able to participate in activities such as consumption and leisure that had traditionally been a preserve of the élite. At the same time there was a growing interest in 'paternalistic' philanthropy, by which those in authority sought to assist the less fortunate.¹ Such influences are evident in the foundation and early years of the London Foundling Hospital which saw a coming together of members of the landed gentry and a growing metropolitan middle-class to establish an enterprise in support of destitute children, the most vulnerable in society.

Between 1741 and 1756, and reliant on private benefaction, fewer than 1,500 children were admitted to the Hospital via a lottery system. With government funding, admissions were unrestricted and the numbers rose rapidly. Over a four year period (known as 'General Reception'), over 17,000 children were admitted. General Reception ended in 1760, and admissions almost ceased. From 1763 admission levels returned once again to that of the early years, using a system of petitioning. Well known during the eighteenth century, the institution continues today as both a children's charity and museum. Longevity and connections to a number of influential and well known individuals, many of whom were Hospital governors, has added to the institution's fame. Additional to its importance in history of early modern childcare is its contribution to the history of eighteenth-century art and music.

¹ Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2000), pp.18-19

This study takes as its starting point an exploration of the aims of the Hospital governors in relation to the education of foundlings. These are compared with a contemporary review of the institution's history over its first sixty years. An examination is then made as to the changing practices of education at the Hospital. This is followed by a review of the challenges posed by apprenticeship - a principal purpose of foundlings' education; here particular attention is paid to the consequences of the General Reception years and its aftermath when many more thousands of children remained under the Hospital's care. An assessment is then made of the connections between education and apprenticeship. Finally, the thesis considers the effectiveness of the Hospital's educational and training programme policy, and examines the theme of achievement and success from a variety of institutional and personal viewpoints.

Historiography

Much has been written about the London Foundling Hospital from a range of perspectives. Particular attention has been paid to the Hospital as an institution, and what an appreciation of this institution contributes to our understanding of broader themes of eighteenth-century culture and society. Such was the impact of the Hospital that general surveys of London inevitably include some analysis of the institution and its influence – among them Dorothy George's *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*,² Christopher Hibbert's *London: The Biography of a City*³ and Jerry White's

² M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979)

³ Christopher Hibbert, *London: The Biography of a City*, Revised edition, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1980)

London in the Eighteenth Century.⁴ The first major published history of the Hospital, *Memoranda* (1847), was written by John Brownlow⁵ and was followed almost a century later by Reginald Nichols and Francis Wray's *History of the Foundling Hospital* (1935).⁶ 1981 saw the publication of *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century*, a major and still valuable study of the Hospital's origins written by Ruth McClure.⁷ David Allin's *The Early Years of the Foundling Hospital 1739/41-1773* (2010)⁸ is another important assessment of the Hospital's early years. Both Brownlow and Nichols were Hospital Secretaries and, not surprisingly, they focus on the positive aspects of the institution and its foundation, especially its art collection and musical heritage. McClure provides a much more comprehensive general history of the Hospital up to the end of the eighteenth century, but her account predates much newer work on Hanoverian welfare and social provision. Allin too includes a general chronological history of the Hospital's first thirty-two years, and is particularly useful as a statistical assessment of the Hospital governors' attendance records.

As a charitable institution, the London Foundling Hospital also features prominently in historical accounts of eighteenth-century welfare provision, among them Hitchcock and Shoemaker's *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of the Modern City, 1690-1800*⁹ and Donna Andrew's

⁴ Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing*, (London: Bodley Head, 2012)

⁵ John Brownlow, *Memoranda; Or, Chronicles of the Foundling Hospital*, (S. Low, 1847)

⁶ Reginald Hugh Nichols and Francis Aslett Wray, *The History of the Foundling Hospital*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1935)

⁷ Ruth K. McClure, *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981)

⁸ David Allin, 'The Early Years of the Foundling Hospital 1739/41 - 1773', (privately published, 2010)

⁹ Tim Hitchcock and Robert Brink Shoemaker, *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of a Modern City, 1690-1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Philanthropy and Police,¹⁰ and in numerous articles and monographs by Alys Levene. Amongst general themes of poverty and welfare, Levene considers evidence from Hospital records in her studies of illegitimacy rates¹¹, child health and mortality¹² and the relationship between poverty and apprenticeship.¹³ Apprenticeship is central also to Helen Berry's forthcoming book which looks at the types of trades to which eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century foundlings were sent, and what this tells us about wider social and economic needs within Britain and overseas.¹⁴ Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*¹⁵ similarly assesses the role of the Foundling Hospital in a wider societal context, placing particular emphasis on its use in the fashioning of a post-1707 British national identity.

The Hospital used a unique admission process in the eighteenth century. Identifiable objects (tokens) left when infants entered the establishment were preserved within annotated forms (billets) recording details of their admission. This created a unique collection of material culture and is another major area of research. Gillian Clark and Janette Bright have researched these token identifiers, not only as cultural artefacts¹⁶ but as a practical system to reclaim children.¹⁷

¹⁰ Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1989)

¹¹ Alys Levene, 'The Origins of the Children of the London Foundling Hospital, 1741–1760: A Reconsideration', *Continuity and Change*, 18.2 (2003), pp.201–35.

¹² Alys Levene, *Childcare, Health and Mortality at the London Foundling Hospital, 1741 - 1800: 'Left to the Mercy of the World'*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)

¹³ Alys Levene, 'Parish Apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London', *The Economic History Review*, 63.4 (2010), 915–41

¹⁴ Helen Berry, *Orphans of Empire: the Fate of London's Foundlings*, (Oxford University Press, forthcoming)

¹⁵ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)

¹⁶ Janette Bright and Gillian Clark, *An Introduction to the Tokens at the Foundling Museum*, (London: The Foundling Museum, 2011)

¹⁷ Gillian Clark and Janette Bright, 'The Foundling Hospital and Its Token System', *Family & Community History*, 18.1 (2015), pp.53–68.

John Styles' *Dress of the People*¹⁸ examines specifically the fabric swatches left as identifiers, as evidence of everyday clothing.

Many researchers have incorporated the Hospital in to historical biographies, particularly of major figures in its foundation and early development. The most important are Gillian Wagner's biography of its founder, Thomas Coram¹⁹, Jenny Uglow's study of the artist and Hospital benefactor, William Hogarth²⁰, and Wendy Moore's account of Thomas Day, a follower of John-Jacques Rousseau.²¹ Wagner's biography of Coram includes an in depth look at the foundation of the Hospital including Coram's exclusion from some of its early development. Uglow's study of Hogarth charts his major role in the Hospital's foundation with particular emphasis on its growing art collection. Moore's account of Thomas Day relates specifically to his failed 'experiment' to create a perfect wife, inspired by the writings of Rousseau. In addition Donald Burrows study of Handel²² includes this governor's musical contribution to the Hospital's history. A U3A/Foundling Museum project provides mini-biographies of children apprenticed up until 1760, including studies of their eventual trades.²³

What appears striking is the absence of any in depth study of the Hospital in relation to education.

¹⁸ John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007)

¹⁹ Gillian Wagner, *Thomas Coram, Gent: 1668-1751*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015)

²⁰ Jennifer S Uglow, *Hogarth: A Life and a World*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2002)

²¹ Wendy Moore, *How to Create the Perfect Wife*, (London: Phoenix, 2014)

²² David Burrows, *Handel (Master Musicians Series)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)

²³ Alison Duke (Ed) and U3A, *Where Have All the Foundlings Gone?*, (privately published, 2007)

Wagner's review of Coram records both his interest in the Charity School Movement, and the growing differences in opinion among the founding governors. This meant Coram was excluded from establishing an initial policy on education.²⁴ McClure's single chapter on education, whilst referring to Coram's exclusion, is mainly a chronological overview highlighting religious and musical instruction.²⁵ Allin too gives a brief account of education in the Hospital's early years, with a particular focus on the branch hospitals²⁶ and infants at nurse.²⁷ The educational historian, M.G. Jones, whilst comprehensive in her assessment of education relating to contemporary charitable institutions, only briefly mentions the Hospital.²⁸ Victor Neuburg's *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England* offers an in depth study of Hanoverian philanthropic and public education, but omits any mention of the London Foundling Hospital.²⁹ It seems therefore that whilst the Hospital has been studied from a number of perspectives, and while charitable education is also a theme of eighteenth-century research, studies that link these topics are surprisingly limited.

Research design

This thesis offers the first systematic, focused look at the education of children admitted to the Foundling Hospital between the early 1740s and the late 1790s. It builds on the work of other historians in using the Hospital's own archives as a core resource, while also taking into account

²⁴ Wagner, *Thomas Coram, Gent*, p. 146

²⁵ McClure, *Coram's Children*, pp.219–35

²⁶ Allin, *The Early Years*, pp.299-310

²⁷ *ibid* pp.151-152

²⁸ M.G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement. a Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1964)

²⁹ Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England*, (London: Woburn Press, 1971)

eighteenth-century commentaries of a contemporary institution. Beginning in the early 1740s, this study traces the foundlings' education, and their later moves into apprenticeships, allowing us to assess the governors' initial aims and objectives in these areas. The subsequent survey covers six decades, during which time significant changes in Hospital admissions and funding, coupled with wider socio-economic changes, led to important developments in ambitions and practices. An end date of 1800 is considered appropriate to allow a significant time span to assess change, but also because it was at this point that the Hospital – in the person of its treasurer Sir Thomas Bernard – provided its own detailed review of its methods of education. From 1800 significant reforms were also introduced which changed the nature of the Hospital's education provision; these included the formal teaching of girls to write and the introduction of the so-called Madras system whereby younger children were taught by older foundlings.³⁰ To include such major post-1800 developments would have increased the scope of the necessary research in a study limited by time and length.

Four major questions underpin the archival research undertaken for this thesis. First, how and why were the children of the Hospital educated during the eighteenth century? Second, how did this education relate to apprenticeship? Third, were there noticeable changes in educational provision over this time period, and if so why? And finally how successfully did education prepare foundlings for apprenticeship; and how might 'success' be evaluated and understood from a variety of viewpoints available in the archive?

³⁰ LMA:A/FH/M/01/020(JB33)

The starting point of this examination begins with a set of three documents. Two date from c.1740 when the Hospital's education practices were established. The third document, dating from 1799 and written by Sir Thomas Bernard, provides both an early history of the Hospital's formative decades, and an assessment of future development plans. Together these provide us with a framework from which to assess the ambitions of selected Hospital governors alongside the actual practices of the Hospital.

Using the Hospital's own extensive archive, an exploration was made of the institution's education and apprenticeship practices. This made it possible to assess changes and differences chronologically as well as according to gender. In addition a database was compiled from the apprenticeship register, establishing to which trades children were apprenticed and how these compared with the Hospital's initial aims. This information also made it possible to identify changes in the types of apprenticeship over the course of six decades. This leads in turn to consideration of the possible causes for shifts in education and apprenticeship practices. The General Reception and its aftermath created substantial impact on all the Hospital's activities, logistically and economically. Other important factors include responses to external criticisms, national and international events, ideas of national identity and, in particular, competition from new London charities.

The Hospital's detailed institutional records offer insights both at the level of the institution and of the individuals who shaped and experienced these changes, as governors, teachers, Hospital staff, apprenticeship masters and foundlings. Typically these institutional records take the form of commentaries of leading governors or impersonal accounts of lesser-known figures; however on occasions the voices of individual foundlings, as pupils and apprentices, can also be found in the archive.

Sources

The archives of the London Foundling Hospital, held at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), begin with the planning and establishment of an organisation that continues to this day as the children's charity Coram.³¹ The completeness of the Hospital archives includes a rich source of information documenting its history and development. These archives provided the core primary source material for research, particularly the committee records which are largely accessible and readable, though some gaps do exist in the sequence for the eighteenth century. The committee records are divided into court³², general³³ and sub-committee accounts³⁴, relating to different meetings and with frequent cross-referencing. They include discussions and resolutions by the Hospital governors which provide information on individual children, the hiring and firing of staff, debates on policy reviews, and replies to criticisms and commentaries from external sources.

Importantly discussions relevant to education, training, discipline and apprenticeship were

³¹ As the children's charity - Coram < <http://www.coram.org.uk/> > [accessed 24.9. 2017]

³² LMA:A/FH/K01/001-004 (X041/010)

³³ LMA:A/FH/K02/001-023 (1739-1800) (X041/014-020)

³⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/03/004 and A/FH/A/03/005/001-023 (1741-1800)

frequent and are well documented.

The Hospital's apprenticeship records are equally complete. The apprentice register lists children chronologically, stating to whom each foundling was apprenticed, their trade and geographical location.³⁵ Records of applications made by masters³⁶ include character references of applicants both successful and unsuccessful. Each foundling had a unique identifying number (acquired at the time of admission) which made (and makes) it possible to cross reference documentation across the archive, at the level of the individual child.

Contemporary printed publications produced by the Hospital and its critics are another important primary source. Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO)³⁷ and the Burney Newspaper Collection³⁸, give access to a wide range of material including printed regulations for the Hospital (1759),³⁹ an account of the Hospital by Treasurer, Sir Thomas Bernard, (1799),⁴⁰ and external criticisms of the Hospital's education regime carried in contemporary newspapers.

Due to conservation issues some sub-committee minute books from the 1760s were inaccessible

³⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/12/003/001-2 (1751-1851) (X041/005A)

³⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/12/001/001-046 and 104 (1758-1800)

³⁷ ECCO:<http://www.gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online>

³⁸ Burney Newspaper Collection: <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/product-highlights/history/17th--18th-century-burney-collection-newspapers-.aspx>

³⁹ Foundling Hospital, *Regulations for Managing the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children* (London: 1759)

⁴⁰ Sir Thomas Bernard, *An Account of the Foundling Hospital in London* (London: 1799)

during the research phase of this thesis. If necessary, secondary sources were used to supplement records that were unavailable. These include transcripts of primary records incorporated into the library of a later Hospital Secretary, John Brownlow (1800-1873). Brownlow transcribed and collected a wide range of documents, and used primary sources for his own review of the Hospital's history. Other miscellaneous records were accessed, when indicated, through searching the online catalogue of the LMA website.⁴¹

Methodology

A systematic review of the committee records made it possible not only to identify education and training regimes instigated by the Hospital, but also governors' discussions leading up to their final decisions. The published accounts relating to Hospital procedures further clarify how policies were made. As these records are extensive, secondary sources such as McClure⁴² and Allin⁴³ were used to locate major discussions on education within the archive. At least one volume of the sub-committee records from each decade between 1740 and 1800 was reviewed. General committee records were particularly used for the 1790s where the sub-committee records are mostly unavailable.

Some comparison was made of education provision at the Foundling Hospital with other

⁴¹ City of London, London Metropolitan Archives website, 2017 <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/london-metropolitan-archives/Pages/search.aspx> [accessed 24.9.2017].

⁴² McClure, *Coram's Children*

⁴³ Allin, *The Early Years*

contemporary institutions. Here the Hospital's own reports alongside information from secondary sources such as Jones' review of the Charity School Movement⁴⁴ and Neuburg's review of popular education⁴⁵ provided general information as to differences between institutions. A keyword search for words such as 'foundling hospital' and 'education' through online resources such as ECCO⁴⁶ and the Burney Newspaper Collection⁴⁷, made it possible to access contemporary opinions, criticisms and responses, including that published by the Hospital itself. Keyword searches on ECCO were equally useful for any necessary explanations relating to historic use of language.

To identify changes in apprenticeship trades it was necessary to create a database of individual foundlings. Sampling three years per decade (1750s to 1790s) from the apprenticeship register allowed sufficient data to establish not only the types of work children were destined for, but also changes over the period under review. Assessing apprenticeship applications by masters provided information regarding attitudes to employers and their trades. Petitions for financial reward at the end of apprenticeship (known as 'gratuity petitions') provided information on individuals' characters and attitudes

Conclusion

Given the considerable scholarly attention paid by historians to the London Foundling Hospital of

⁴⁴ Jones, *The Charity School Movement*

⁴⁵ Neuburg, *Popular Education*

⁴⁶ ECCO:<http://www.gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online>

⁴⁷ Burney Newspaper Collection: <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/product-highlights/history/17th--18th-century-burney-collection-newspapers-.aspx>

the eighteenth century, it seems surprising that education of the children has not previously been explored in greater detail. With its rich resource of archives, its prominence in London's history and its connections to both high and low culture, the institution was, and continues to be, the subject of great interest. It is therefore important to understand all aspects of its history but in particular those set out in its defining title: to maintain and educate exposed and deserted young children.

This study of the London Foundling Hospital begins in chapter two with an assessment of the ambitions for the Hospital revealed by two contemporary documents dating from the early 1740s. These are in turn compared with a late 1790s account by the Hospital's then treasurer, Sir Thomas Bernard, which looked back at the institution's first sixty years. In chapter three an assessment is made of the education provision of the Hospital, using the institution's extensive archive. This reveals how the initial aims of the Hospital governors were in practice difficult to maintain. Many of these problems arose with the General Reception, which saw an enlargement of a charity that had until then been reasonably successful in fulfilling its aims. Apprenticeship is the theme of chapter four. Again General Reception and its aftermath were particularly significant with regard to the changing nature of apprenticeships. The late 1750s and 1760s was the period when the Hospital governors lost control of policy making decisions, which were instead shaped by decisions taken by central government. This study however also shows that whilst General Reception may have had the largest influence on change, it was not the only one. Indeed by late century it was a rise in philanthropy that posed a new and considerable challenge to the Foundling Hospital. As

new societies were created to assist more charitable enterprises, competition for funding was increased. In chapter five, an evaluation is made as to assessing the effectiveness of outcomes of education and apprenticeship. In the final chapter, this thesis argues that despite the many challenges, internal and external, faced by the Hospital governors of the London Foundling Hospital, they continued to adapt. Although this is often in response to events on a national or local level –it can also be at the level of the individual foundling.

Chapter Two: Aims and objectives

As an institution, the London Foundling Hospital is inextricably linked to its founder Thomas Coram. It was Coram whose determination and hard work raised the support to obtain the Royal Charter that made the opening of the Hospital possible in 1741. As early as 1759 Coram's determination to create a Hospital for foundlings was considered the result of his 'unwearied diligence and assiduity'.¹ But although Coram was seen as the embodiment of the charity - a symbol of hard work, humanitarianism and vision, the institution was actually managed by a group of men, the Hospital governors, who made the decisions and shaped the way it was organised and run on a daily basis. Importantly it is through the minutes kept of their various committees, and discussed in detail below, that we are able to trace the history of education and apprenticeship at the Foundling Hospital. In addition the governors left us 'policy statements' – published accounts of what they hoped education at the Hospital should achieve and what form it would take. Three of these documents provide a 'framework' for the following chapters, covering as they do the beginning and end of the period under scrutiny. The first of these statements was an account published in 1740 setting out the governors' plan to enact the purpose of the Royal Charter. The second document, of 1739, presented this ambition in visual form and was used for the Hospital's initial fund-raising campaign. The final document was written by the then Hospital Treasurer, Sir Thomas Bernard (1750-1818) who looked back at the Hospital's history and commented on changes made over the intervening years, before reviewing its current situation.

¹ Foundling Hospital, *An Account of the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of exposed and deserted Young Children*, (London: Publisher not identified, 1759), p.v

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of who the Hospital governors were and how the system of governance functioned.

The Hospital's founding statements

The London Foundling Hospital was officially established on 17 October 1739 by the signing of a Royal Charter, in which 376 men were named as the original 'governors and guardians' of the Hospital. Other men,² drawn from a range of backgrounds, applied to join this group by paying a fee or subscription. By July 1773 there were 942 names on the list of current Hospital governors.³ All were eligible to attend the annual and quarterly court meetings, set up to discuss the formal matters of the Hospital. From the original group, of which a third were from the aristocracy, alongside merchants, physicians, financiers and men of the church and law, 62 were annually elected to form a general committee. This committee was responsible for the management of the Hospital, and from 1748, was assisted by the sub-committee; either meeting weekly or fortnightly. It is in these three committees that discussions regarding education and apprenticeship of foundlings were recorded. Attendance varied at all these meetings and they were sometimes cancelled for lack of a quorum. The court meetings attendance rarely reached 100, and averaged at fewer than 50. In the 1740s and 50s, attendance of the general committee averaged between

² There were no women governors until 1921

³ Allin, *The Early Years*, p.44

20 and 30 but by the 1760s was more frequently eight or nine. At its lowest attendance the sub-committee consisted of just two or three governors.⁴

One of the first tasks of the general committee was to decide how the institution would be organised. The Foundling Hospital was a unique institution in Britain though similar establishments had existed in continental Europe for centuries. The London members therefore sought advice on Hospital procedures from British ambassadors and ministers abroad.⁵ Before the London Hospital opened on 25 March 1741, the governors published their aims for the institution and how they believed these could be achieved. It is this report that is the first to be considered.

The Report of the General Committee for Directing, Managing and Transacting the Business, Affairs, Estate and Effects of the Corporation (c.October 1740),⁶ opens with a 'Plan for executing the Purposes of the Royal Charter'. The governors' aim was to maintain and provide 'proper Education' to 'poor miserable Infants' whose parents might either abandon them to die or train them in 'Idleness, Beggary, and Theft'.⁷ The *Report* states that after a period of maintenance by country nurses, infants would return to the London Hospital at three years of age. From that time the children would 'be taught to read, and instructed in the Principles of the Christian Religion,

⁴ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.168

⁵ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.37

⁶ Foundling Hospital, *The Report of the General Committee for Directing, Managing and Transacting the Business, Affairs, Estate and Effects of the Corporation ...* (1740), London, John Baskett

⁷ Anon, *A Copy of the Royal Charter ...*, (1739), London, printed for J Osborn, pp.1-2

and brought up to Labour, fit for their Age and Sex'.⁸ When the children 'attain proper Ages' the plan is for the children to be 'put out' (that is, apprenticed) - the boys in husbandry, labour or sea service; the girls either in domestic service or employed 'in the House'.⁹ Beyond these generalities, the governors provide no specific detail as to the precise age at which foundlings would leave the Hospital or the exact nature of the work they were expected to undertake.



None of these objectives could be achieved without finance and the second document under consideration in this chapter was created as an aid to fund-raising. Correspondence to would-be benefactors included an impressive letterhead image, the *Study for the Foundlings* (1739)¹⁰ (see above), designed by the artist and Hospital Governor, William Hogarth.¹¹ There are two scenes. In the background, beneath a church, a woman appears to be leaving a child on the ground.

⁸ Foundling Hospital, *Report (1740)*, pp.8-9

⁹ *Ibid* pp.9-10

¹⁰ Hogarth, William, *Study for the Foundlings* (1739), Online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Hogarth_-_Study_for_the_Foundlings_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg [accessed 19.7.2017]

¹¹ Uglow, *Hogarth*, p.331

Another lone infant is in the foreground. More prominently and between these two, is a weeping woman looking towards two robed men. This cross-like weapon on the ground also points towards the figures and the sea beyond. Of the two central figures one holds the *Royal Charter*, and gestures towards a group of children on the other side of the picture. Prominent in the image, the second figure, mace in hand, is carrying an infant towards the group of children pouring out of a secular building – over the door of which is the royal coat of arms. Many of these children hold occupational implements and tools – girls with brooms for cleaning, boys with rakes for working on the land. There is also a reference to reading – a boy on the steps with his hornbook (an aid to learning the alphabet), and a girl with a scroll of paper. Importantly the prominent focus of the boys' attention is the ships. These would have particular resonance for viewers in 1739 when Britain entered war with Spain to gain trade routes at sea.¹² It can also be said that by representing trade and religion in his sketch Hogarth is highlighting what, as Linda Colley argues, were the essential aspects of Britishness at that time.¹³ In one image Hogarth has consolidated the aims and ambitions of the Hospital governors, as set out in their *Report*, as a combination of Christian duty through philanthropy with Britain's success through trade and naval power.

Assessing the first six decades

Writing almost sixty years later, Bernard as treasurer of the Hospital, also considered the subject of the foundlings' education and training in his *An Account of the Foundling Hospital in London for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children*. He began by reviewing

¹² *War of Jenkins Ear, 1739-1748*

¹³ Colley, *Britons*, p.59

the Hospital's history from its planning and establishment in 1739, its opening in 1741, and its development until March 1796. An attached supplement brought the institution's history up to date in 1799.

In the opening section of Bernard's *Account* readers are reminded that the Hospital was to be a charity of benefit to 'a great and extended kingdom'.¹⁴ The initial purpose, it stated, was for the Hospital 'to supply the Government plentifully with useful hands on many occasions', to make 'useful servants' from 'miserable cast-off children or foundlings, now a pest to the public' and to provide 'maintenance and proper education ... acceptable to God Almighty.'¹⁵ The emphasis here is the national utility of the charity, as well as the saving and training of children as a religious duty.

Bernard then referred to the period when the governors petitioned the House of Commons to extend the charity in 1756, having until then 'educated the children ... with the utmost frugality'.¹⁶ Prior to this period, admission numbers were limited by what funds were available, and the governors sought to create a national service. Parliament granted the Hospital £10,000 in 1756¹⁷ with the proviso that any child within a certain age limit would be admitted and began the period of 'General Reception' (between 1 June 1756 until 25 March 1760) when Bernard states the

¹⁴ Bernard, *Account*, (1799) pp.v-viii

¹⁵ *Ibid* p.5

¹⁶ *Ibid* p.26

¹⁷ Between 1756-1773 Parliament granted £549,797 – see Allin, *The Early Years*, p.6

Hospital took in 5,510 children.¹⁸ In fact 14,934 infants were admitted, but about 10,000 died. Bernard appears to be quoting the number of children who survived infancy during this period, which was closer to the number calculated by David Allin in his account of the Hospital's early years.¹⁹

Despite new problems, many caused by the logistics of dealing with so many children, Bernard reported how the governors had continued to run the charity through 'the purposes for which they were incorporated', (that is, to continue to make them useful citizens).²⁰ Particularly difficult and unexpected problems included large numbers of children with 'imbecility of body or mind' who could not be apprenticed out.²¹ The Hospital also became an asylum for aged servants many of whom were children from the early days of the institution, and who could not be humanely discharged given their advanced years.²²

Bernard considered several methods used by the governors to reduce their expenditure. Since 1757 the work of the London governors had been supplemented by a network of six branch hospitals, built in Yorkshire, Kent, Shropshire, Chester, Aylesbury and Barnet, to increase the capacity of children maintained. With the end of Parliamentary finance and the reduction of children supported by the institution, these branches were closed – the last one being Ackworth,

¹⁸ Bernard, *Account* (1799), p.28

¹⁹ David Allin calculates 67.3% of the 14,934 children admitted during the General Reception period; approximately 10,050 deaths leaving 4,883 living. See Allin, *The Early Years*, p.143

²⁰ *Ibid* p.32

²¹ *Ibid* p.35

²² *Ibid* p.43

Yorkshire in 1773. The governors also complied with Parliament's insistence on the prompt apprenticeship of those children for whom they had provided financial support, (that is, those taken in during the General Reception era) so they were no longer the responsibility of the Hospital.²³ Other savings included the cessation of a financial reward previously given to those children completing apprenticeships with a testimonial of good behaviour. This was a policy Bernard hoped could be reinstated for its positive effects of encouragement on the children.²⁴

Consideration was then given as to how extra income could be generated for the Hospital. Bernard referred to the case of several blind children who, as an act of benevolence, were taught music. Music performances by these children could, he noted, be used for financial gain.²⁵ In 1774 an enlarged music school was contemplated, but at that time the teaching of music to children generally was considered against the founding objectives which were to bring the children up to either 'labour or manufacture'. Music being neither, the plan was initially abandoned. However, partly because of its economic value, but also as a charitable act giving 'comfort and independence to any of the hospital children, whose sight might fail' Bernard explains that music was eventually taught and performed at the Hospital.²⁶ Bernard provides no date in his *Account* but music performances were discussed in the Hospital committee minutes by at least 1777.

²³ Ibid p.37

²⁴ Ibid pp.36-7

²⁵ Ibid p.39 and p.41

²⁶ Ibid p.46

As Bernard explained, through reduced expenditure, improved efficiency and income generation, the Hospital not only became financially sound but its remit could once again be expanded. The Hospital could support those who had served the nation - by taking in orphaned children of soldiers and sailors the governors feared might otherwise be exposed to vice.²⁷ Bernard saw this as an expansion of the Hospital's aims by increasing the range of children the Hospital could now assist. He saw it as of equal national importance to train these orphans 'in the habits of industry, virtue and religion' as it was for the foundling children.²⁸

After these generalities Bernard turned in his supplement of 1799 to a more detailed account of the children's daily routine - a combination of schooling, religious and vocational training from the time they returned from their country nurses at four years old until they were apprenticed. The current policy of the Hospital with regard to the education of the boys was to prioritise reading, writing and basic accounts. Bernard claimed that manufacturing skills (of which several types had been tried), were no longer of use as the majority of boys were now wanted by London shopkeepers. These masters needed apprentices with skills in writing and accounts.²⁹ The girls were taught reading and needlework - this latter skill not only saved the Hospital money through the making of its own linen and children's clothing, but also generated income.³⁰ Housework and the maintenance of the Hospital grounds were also undertaken by the children.³¹ Again, this

²⁷ Ibid p.57

²⁸ Ibid p.54

²⁹ Ibid p.67

³⁰ Ibid p.68

³¹ Ibid p.66

activity had the economical benefit of reducing the need for servants, but also encouraged the children to work hard.

Bernard also believed that with fewer children in the Hospital, greater care could be made with regard to apprenticeship; he listed several conditions of apprenticeship, such as no girls to unmarried men.³² Bernard reported that in 1758, of 252 children only 15 had 'turned out ill'. He accepted problems could be down to children's 'bad dispositions', but felt most were caused by the 'impatience or caprice of their masters'.³³ He also addressed past criticisms regarding the children's health highlighting a programme of improved personal hygiene, better diet and 'more unrestricted liberty during time of play and recreation'.³⁴

This chapter shows the vision set out by the London Foundling Hospital governors of 1740 – that philanthropy was not only a Christian duty but was important for the success of the nation. They believed that by educating otherwise neglected children they could fashion useful members of society. These early records gave no specific detail on how their education programme would be executed. In contrast Bernard, looking back sixty years later, reviewed this early history and the challenges of its development. He does give some information on the pedagogical process.

Bernard saw how an attempt to satisfy national needs, brought unexpected problems and challenges. It might be considered that the Hospital became a victim of its own success – General

³² Ibid p.69

³³ Ibid p.70

³⁴ Ibid p.72

Reception was seen as the cause of failed apprenticeships and a need to maintain some foundlings into adulthood. In order to survive, the institution needed to scale back to a more manageable size. Bernard also identified more general changes in economy and the types of trades requiring apprentices – the occupations might be different but Bernard believed that the Hospital was still turning those in its care into citizens of use to society. By adapting according to need, Bernard felt the institution would now be in a position from which it could improve. Although the early documents tend to be aspirational, all stress the links between education and apprenticeship and all emphasise the importance of apprenticeship as an ultimate goal. They all highlight the need for a combination of practical education and moral instruction. Equally they all stress the ethical dimension to the teaching and creation of good citizens.

These documents were of course written on behalf of the Hospital, seeking public support to continue their work. In the following chapters a systematic review of the committee records and other associated documentation make it possible to consider the accuracy of these statements, and whether Bernard's *Account* omitted anything significant from the Hospital's history. It will also provide a better understanding of how and why changes were made and if the story is more complicated than Bernard's *Account* suggests. Finally, it should be possible to consider what further questions need to be explored in order to better understand how foundlings were educated and prepared for apprenticeship in eighteenth-century London.

Chapter Three: Educating the Foundlings: schooling and vocational instruction

Education was central to the life experience of those foundlings who survived beyond infancy. As discussed in chapter two, it was also central to the aims and ambitions of the original Hospital governors. It was a subject to which the governors constantly returned and commented on. In the regular meetings of the general and sub-committees, detailed reports were made as to the nature of the foundlings' education regarding its content, development and evaluation. Such detail provides us with a rich source with which to trace both the ambition and practice of educational provision at the Hospital from the outset. This also allows us to gain a greater understanding of the ways in which the ideals of education set up in the 1740s were adapted and changed; partly because of changes in the ambitions and hopes of the Hospital governors, but particularly because of external pressures and criticisms.

In this chapter, the foundlings' education will be considered thematically from four perspectives - of schooling, religious and moral instruction, and vocational training. Reviewing this provision over a 60 year period, was undertaken in a systematic way and to a level of detail not undertaken previously by authors such as McClure¹ or Nichols and Wray² in their general histories of the Hospital. The effect of General Reception (between 1 June 1756 and 25 March 1760) when 14,934 children were admitted was particularly relevant in this respect. In order to make these assessments, the main documents reviewed are the regular (weekly or fortnightly) general and

¹ McClure, *Coram's Children*

² Nichols and Wray, *History of the Foundling Hospital*

sub-committee records – at least one for each decade – and regulations published by the Foundling Hospital. Conservation issues have meant that some sub-committee records are currently inaccessible. This includes periods in the 1750s and 1760s when schooling was known to have been discussed. Evidence for this period comes from secondary sources, including minutes transcribed in the mid-1800s. The aims of the Hospital governors for the education of the foundlings were published in *The Report of the General Committee for Directing, Managing and Transacting the Business, Affairs, Estate and Effects of the Corporation* (September 1740). This document gave no detail as to how this educational practice would be provided. In 1746, and again in 1759, more precise regulations were agreed by the General Committee, setting out the daily routine of the children.³ These allow us to assess how the governors wished to present their pedagogical policies to the public. Consideration will also be made of *An Account of the Foundling Hospital in London for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children*, published by Sir Thomas Bernard – the Hospital treasurer – in 1799. Here Bernard looked back sixty years at the history of the institution to make his own assessment of changes in education that had been made. In addition other public statements from contemporary newspaper reports provide evidence of external criticism of the Hospital. Personal statements by some Hospital governors, either in official Hospital documentation or through personal public statements, offer evidence of some internal differences of opinions.

³ Foundling Hospital, *The Royal Charter Establishing an Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children ... and Regulations for Managing the Said Hospital...*, Printed by Thomas Osborne (1746) p.36

In particular, attention will be paid to the nature and content of the children's tuition. With regard to schooling this will consider skills in reading, writing and basic arithmetic. Religious instruction will be assessed; not only that provided formally in chapel but also in the everyday lives of the children. Here close attention is paid to how music became part of the foundlings' curriculum, despite initial controversy surrounding its introduction.

Consideration is also given as to what the Hospital governors regarded as 'good' and 'bad' behaviour and how the conduct of the foundlings could be influenced through reward and punishment. An assessment of vocational training will look at why the governors thought this so important. Initiated to instil in the foundlings an ethic for good work and to prepare them for apprenticeship, vocational instruction also brought economic benefits to the Hospital. The financial implications of 'competition' from other London charities, especially evident in the later part of the century will also be reviewed.

Finally, some of the individuals who taught the foundlings will be considered; these include the nurses and specialist instructors from the first decades of the Hospital, the schoolmistresses and schoolmasters who were employed from 1757 and beyond. Consideration will be given as to what was recorded of their experience and social backgrounds as shown in the sub-committee minutes - and what that can tell us about the education regime in the Hospital over its opening decades. Running through this chapter (and indeed those that follow) are two key themes that did much to shape the development of education provision from the late 1750s onwards. The first relates to the impact of the aftermath of the General Reception; the second considers the

differences and divergences, (as well as convergences), in the substance and means of schooling provided for male and female children.

Schooling: reading, writing and arithmetic

Formal schooling was a low priority for the foundlings in the early years of the Hospital, at least until 1757. The majority of children admitted to the Foundling Hospital from 1741 were returned from their country nurses to start their education when they were about three to four years old. The 1746 and 1749 *Regulations* both included a timetable for the foundlings' day. These *Regulations* show that reading, rest and play were the main occupations for children under six.⁴ However at six and over schooling only took place after a day's labour, which will be discussed below. It was the duty of the Hospital nurses to teach these older foundlings reading 'at times appointed for that purpose' and at times also set aside for 'play in the open Air, or School-Rooms'. According to the 1749 *Regulations* this was between 6pm in summer or when dark in winter, and supertime (8pm in summer, 7pm in winter).⁵ Therefore reading was frequently after the hours of darkness, and presumably by candlelight.

The committee records give some detail on what the foundlings were given to read. The first known book provided for the children was the *Child's First Lesson*, sixty copies of which were presented by a Mr Osborne in February 1747 for 'the use of the Instructing the Children'.⁶ Most

⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.24

⁵ Foundling Hospital, *Regulations*, 1746, p.36

⁶ LMA: A/FH/K/02/002(X041/014), p.161

likely, this was the same Thomas Osborne (c.1704-1767), a wealthy bookseller, who was elected a Hospital governor that same year⁷; if so it is perhaps not surprising he was the first person to consider the children's reading material. Whether the book was used has not been recorded but the minutes for 1749 did note seven boys and ten girls reading their hornbooks.⁸ This type of primer, which dates back to at least the fifteenth century, consisted of a wooden board on which was pasted a printed alphabet. It was then covered with a thin sheet of horn in order to keep the paper clean.⁹ Initially the children were taught to recognise and speak aloud letters, then syllables and finally words.¹⁰ Moving on from these lessons the texts chosen for the children who were learning to read consisted chiefly of the Bible and the catechism. The schoolmaster also used books containing Aesop's fables such as the 'Fox and the Crow' - which warned against flattery - as well as other moral tales.¹¹ Such stories, along with children's version of Bible tales such as the story of Joseph with his coat of many colours, were illustrated in *The Infant Tutor, or an Easy Spelling Book for Little Masters and Misses*.¹² Though the pictures were simple wood cuts, they would make the stories easier to remember.

Whilst teaching the foundlings to read was agreed by the Hospital governors from the outset, the subject of teaching children to write was more controversial. The evidence suggests that although writing did become part of the curriculum for the boys in 1757, it is likely that by the 1760s such

⁷ Nichols and Wray, *History of the Foundling Hospital*, p.358

⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.24

⁹ Andrew W Tuer, *History of the Horn Book*, (New York: Arno Press,1979), p.2

¹⁰ Martyn Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing in the Western World*, (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.95

¹¹ LMA:A/FH/M/01/067

¹² T Carnan and J Newbery jnr, *The Infant Tutor, or an Easy Spelling Book for Little Masters and Misses*, London, 1776

lessons were discontinued. This change seems to have been the result of the economic and logistical challenges of the General Reception. By 1777 there is evidence once again that the boys were being taught writing and basic numeracy. There is no such evidence of the girls learning to write until 1800, although the topic was often discussed.

The evidence for boys' instruction in writing in the 1750s comes from a variety of sources. These include discussions of the Hospital governors, evidence of writing materials being purchased, updated Hospital regulations and a report from the schoolmaster on the teaching manuals he used. The sub-committee suggested in July 1754 that all the foundlings should be taught writing skills.¹³ In the same month the general committee stated 'none of the children be instructed to write'¹⁴ thus overturning the sub-committee decision. However, by 1757 such lessons were part of the duties of the new Schoolmaster of the boys, Mr Redpath. By 1759 new *Regulations* listed writing as part of the boys' activities stating it had to be done 'at least once every day'¹⁵ and certainly by this date copy paper and quills 'for the use of the children' had become regular orders in the sub-committee records.¹⁶ In 1760, when questioned about his teaching materials, Redpath refers to preferring the *Infant Tutor* because of 'its points used in writing and of numerals and figures digested in tables'.¹⁷ These comments suggest he may have also taught basic numeracy at this time.

¹³ LMA:A/FH/M/01/067

¹⁴ LMA:A/FH/K/02/004(X041/014), p.196

¹⁵ Foundling Hospital, *Regulations* (1759), p.45

¹⁶ LMA: A/FH/A/03/005/003, p.123

¹⁷ LMA:A/FH/M/01/067

There is less certain evidence that girls were routinely taught to write although the subject was discussed in committee minutes throughout the century. In 1757 it was agreed that for every 50 girls, aged six or over, a tutor should be appointed to teach reading and 'writing when required';¹⁸ however such lessons were not mentioned when the post was advertised.¹⁹ When the 1759 *Regulations* were published, they again recorded that the Schoolmistress was to teach writing 'when required'.²⁰ A decade later, in May 1769 the governors commented that girls outnumbered boys as they were more difficult to apprentice. Though no specific reason is given as to why it was more difficult to find placements for girls, it was suggested that girls be taught to write. Comments of this kind indicate that writing was not yet a routine activity among female foundlings and that such skills were increasingly seen as beneficial.²¹ It is for this period that sub-committee records are currently inaccessible and the opportunities for further research limited. However it is important to note that it was during the 1760s that large numbers of children admitted during the General Reception returned to the Hospital for education.

The period of General Reception, which ran between 1756 and 1760, had a significant impact on the schooling of every foundling. This was the period when parliamentary funding meant any child, within a certain age range, was taken in to the Hospital.²² Even though many of the General Reception children died, those who survived infancy needed clothing before they were sent to

¹⁸ LMA:A/FH/K/02/005(X041/015), p.197

¹⁹ LMA:A/FH/K/02/005(X041/015), pp.252-3

²⁰ Foundling Hospital, *Regulations* (1759), p.31

²¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/008, p.40

²² McClure, *Coram's Children*, pp.79-80

nurses in the country; those who later returned – a total of about 5,000, from 1760 onwards - required some degree of education – all of which created pressure in terms of time and money. The logistical and economic challenges of this period not only meant there were more children to process but also prompted the introduction of new vocational skills as will be discussed below. From this time until the 1770s there is significant evidence that writing lessons were discontinued for *all* children.

Although there is no direct evidence that writing lessons were discontinued at this time, public commentary and the Hospital's response suggests this was likely. By May 1765 the Hospital already found it necessary to defend itself against Parliament's claim that education of foundlings made them less fit for 'laborious and useful employment'. As many of these debates between the governors and Parliament relate to apprenticeship they will be explored further in the next chapter.²³ Needless to say, in April²⁴ and May²⁵ 1765 the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* falsely reported that the children were learning French. It was claimed that this was to make the girls capable of 'serving fine ladies' and the boys to become 'clerks to merchants in foreign parts'. Further public criticism, came in the form of an ironic letter, published in the *Lloyd's Evening Post* of May 1765, suggesting the children received dancing lessons to 'perfect their education'.²⁶ The Hospital published a strong reply, refuting the claims that they taught the children French, gave

²³ Anonymous, *The Case of the Governors and Guardians of the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children*, undated, c.1765 - in LMA:A/FH/M/01/004/016

²⁴ *Gazetteer & New Daily Advertiser*, 30 April 1765, London (issue 11272)

²⁵ *Gazetteer & New Daily Advertiser*, 3 May 1765, London (issue 11275)

²⁶ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 3-6 May 1765, London (issue 1220)

lessons in drawing, 'or even to write'.²⁷ Similarly, two years later, one of the Hospital's most prominent governors, Jonas Hanway provides further evidence that writing lessons had been stopped. He wrote in his *Letters on the Importance of the Rising Generation* that, 'Among the poor *Foundlings* I do not know of one of them taught to *write*, in the hospital, except by accident, or that a *boy* is forward and impatient to learn; though it is certain that many of them go to employments where writing is necessary.'²⁸

In the wake of the Seven Years' War (1756-63) it is perhaps not surprising that Parliament was eager to reduce public spending; public criticism of the children's education may well have strengthened its case for removing its financial support. However, the children taken in during the General Reception had left by 1771 and the governors once again were free to make their own decisions about the management of the children. By August 1777, the Hospital records provide clear evidence that writing was again being taught to the boys only. This was when the schoolmaster, Thomas Snow, was asked by the governors to comment on the boys' progress. Snow reported that ten boys had begun to write but 'cannot at present be said to know how to shape a letter'; a further eight could read a Psalter, another twenty-eight knew their letters but were 'obliged to spell out words before they can read them', while a final ten had no writing skills.²⁹ Snow offered no remarks on teaching arithmetic or on the progress of the girls.

²⁷ LMA:A/FH/K/01/001(X041/010), pp.278-9

²⁸ Jonas Hanway, *Letters on the Importance of the Rising Generation, Vol. II* (London: 1767), p.38

²⁹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/013, p.94

By the final two decades of the century there was evidence that – at least for the boys - schooling had become a higher priority than other duties. In August 1777, when the Hospital gardener requested help in the grounds, the committee agreed that only twelve boys (of 66 in the class)³⁰ be taken from lessons. The schoolmaster was to keep an account of how long the boys were out of the schoolroom, and ensure they returned regularly to his care.³¹ Similarly in 1784, the general committee noted that boys constantly employed in the garden were ‘prevented from learning to knit, read and write’.³² The evidence appears to substantiate Bernard’s report of 1799 that as the century progressed, the needs of those who sought to apprentice the children were changing. As a result, Bernard had argued, the boys ability to ‘write and keep accounts is especially important’.³³

At the turn of the century formal schooling of boys and girls was again reviewed. This allows us to see how the gender differences of the eighteenth century would now be revised and plans put in place to bring equality in schooling for all the foundlings. In February 1800 another of the Hospital’s schoolmasters, Mr Aitchison, reported that of the current 95 boys under his care (between 5 and 14 years of age), ten wrote legibly and could read the Bible; all but two were learning arithmetic. It was Aitchison’s opinion that ‘in respect of Education five of them are fully qualified to go out from the Hospital with Credit as apprentices.’ At the same time, all of the other boys were learning to read. By contrast the girls were described as being in a ‘state of

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/013, p.106

³² LMA:A/FH/K/02/018(X041/018), (11.8.1784) page number obscured

³³ Bernard, *Account of the Foundling Hospital, (1799)*, p.66

improvement'. Of those placed out recently all but a few could read the Bible and 'worked well with their needles'. Once again it was recommended by the governors of the general committee that 'consideration be made as to the usefulness in girls writing.'³⁴ On this occasion a plan was put into action and a week later twelve 'older' girls were given space in the dining room not only to learn to write but also to cast accounts.³⁵ There is no indication in the records as to the ages of these girls.

Religious and musical instruction

As seen in Chapter Two, the 1740 *Report*, shows how the Hospital governors expected and anticipated the instruction of 'Principles of Religion' as being a key element of the foundlings' education. The Hospital committee records provide evidence of how the children received their religious instruction, what they learned and also how music became part of this aspect of their training. Though initially controversial, instruction in music was of particular importance to certain foundlings unable to partake in other forms of education; in time it came to be recognised as significant for its economic benefit to the Hospital more widely.

The Foundling Hospital had no chapel of its own until 1749 though the founding governors clearly considered it an important feature of their new institution. In April 1746 a subscription fund was established to build a chapel which the governors claimed would ensure the children were taught

³⁴ LMA:A/FH/K/02/023(X041/020), pp.202-3

³⁵ LMA:A/FH/K/02/023(X041/020), p.212

the principles of religion from an early age.³⁶ The laying of the chapel cornerstone on 1 May 1747 was celebrated with a public breakfast that subsequently became an annual event.³⁷

Religious and moral instruction was part of the foundlings' formal schooling from the 1740s onwards, not least through the selection of reading material given to the children. It was also an aspect of education that could be presented for public scrutiny. The *Regulations* of 1746 stated that Sundays were set aside purely for public worship when the children were to be 'instructed in the Principles of Religion and Morality, to attend at Chapel, to be taught the Catechism used by the Church of *England*, or heard to read such Parts of the Holy Scripture, as is most suitable to their Understanding.'³⁸ The catechism is a method of teaching religious doctrine by a series of questions and answers. From August 1754 the catechism was arranged to be performed publicly by the Hospital Chaplin every Sunday afternoon – with the boys providing the responses for one week and the girls those for the next.³⁹

It was also important that the foundlings understood religious teaching as a private act, particularly in the form of prayers as central to religious doctrine. The committee records make frequent reference not only to the wording of the prayers, but also how they were to be performed. This demonstrates how important the governors believed daily religion should be to the lives of the foundlings. At a sub-committee meeting on 19 December 1753, the governors

³⁶ LMA:A/FH/K/02/002(X041/014), pp.97-8

³⁷ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.66

³⁸ Foundling Hospital, *Regulations* (1746), p.36

³⁹ LMA:A/FH/K/02/004(X041/014), p.203

agreed on a series of specially written prayers for morning and evening services. These instructed the children to be thankful (to God as well as their governors and benefactors), well behaved, and to ask for help in leading a 'holy and useful life'.⁴⁰ In December 1762, the sub-committee minutes record those children who were deemed to say their prayers well, before recommending to the nurses on how they should be taught. Divided into two groups of twenty-five, one at each end of the ward - six boys in turn were to say their prayers 'softly and lowly' whilst the others listened carefully until they could recite them without mistakes. The girls were to follow the same rule.⁴¹ Prayer books were also given as prizes as a reward for reading well, as another way of encouraging religious faith.⁴²

Foundlings were also expected to continue their religious observance having left the Hospital, and were presented by the governors with Bibles and prayer books prior to their apprenticeship. Departing foundlings were told to be constant in 'your Prayers, and going to Church'.⁴³ A document written in 1757 by the then Hospital Secretary Taylor White headed 'list of small books to be printed for use of children' suggests other texts the foundlings should learn: the Apostles' Creed (a statement of Christian faith), the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments.⁴⁴ The inference is that these were individual copies for private reflection. The singing of religious works could have been another means by which to reinforce the Christian message but this was not considered appropriate by governors, at least during the early years of the Hospital.

⁴⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.207-8 – see Appendix

⁴¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.109

⁴² LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/006, p.73

⁴³ LMA:A/FH/K/02/004(X041/014), pp.164-5

⁴⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/06/001/10/04

Though musical instruction was considered generally unsuitable for charity children throughout the 1740s, it was taught to blind foundlings from 1753. The sources indicate that the giving of musical performances remained controversial well into the final quarter of the eighteenth century. However competition from other London charities meant not only a change of attitude regarding this practice but that it became an economic necessity. As the historian of education M.G. Jones reports, around the second decade of the eighteenth century country clergyman, who were also members of the Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), were keen to emulate the practice of London charity schools in the setting up of children's choirs. Though some spoke of their 'uncommon delight' in such music, others believed 'fine singing' undermined social discipline. In his address to the London charity schools in 1724, the bishop of London, Edmund Gibson (1669-1748), was outspoken in his opinion that fine singing, like fine writing and fine needlework, was inappropriate for those destined to become good Christian servants.⁴⁵ As Gibson was also one of the original governors, and a signatory of the Royal Charter, it is not surprising that musical training for the foundlings was not initially pursued.

However, music was one of the few profitable options available for some blind children, whose opportunities for employment were limited. From 1753, Tom Grenville (1746-1827) was the first of several such children taught to play the harpsichord.⁴⁶ Since 1749, the Hospital had staged annual fund-raising concerts conducted by the German composer George Frederic Handel (1685-

⁴⁵ Jones, *Charity School Movement*, pp.80-81

⁴⁶ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.229

1759). The governors must have hoped a musical foundling would also be financially beneficial. Grenville's musical education served him well as in 1766 he became organist at Ross, Herefordshire and between 1773 and 1796 he was organist at the Foundling Hospital.⁴⁷ It is perhaps through this instruction for the blind foundlings that the governors came to appreciate the value of musical education. According to McClure it was in the 1760s, that one of the governors, William Harrison (1728-1815) provided unofficial musical instruction to other children 'suitable to their capacities and situations'.⁴⁸ Harrison's own musical background is not clear but it is known that his father, the horologist John Harrison (c.1693-1776), had a passion for music. John Harrison wrote extensively on music theory at the end of his life,⁴⁹ and had been the choirmaster at Barrow-upon-Humber before coming to London.⁵⁰ By 1773 the Hospital governors agreed that twenty musically gifted children should be taught music and singing because of the financial benefits it was expected to bring to the Hospital.⁵¹ Ambitious plans for a music school were discussed, though these were subsequently abandoned in 1774, for reasons not fully documented.⁵² Nonetheless by June 1777 the foundlings had begun to sing in public on a regular basis. The sub-committee minutes show that proper anthems were being transposed for the children to sing, and the foundlings were taught to chant the *Te Deum* during morning service and the *Magnificat* in the evening. A comment was made that services should begin at 6pm, whereas at the Lock and Magdalen Hospitals their services began at 5pm. The minutes of 7 July 1777 also

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.238

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.229

⁴⁹ Andrew King, 'Harrison, John (*bap.* 1693, *d.* 1776)' Andrew King In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Online ed., edited by David Cannadine, January 2008. <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/article/12438> [accessed September 21, 2017]

⁵⁰ Dava Sobel, *Longitude*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2011), pp.62-3

⁵¹ McClure, *Coram's Children*, pp.229-30

⁵² Ibid, pp.231-32

noted that 'well dressed strangers' should be permitted to the chapel without a fee, and that, 'as at the Magdalen, the plate be held out when they left.'⁵³ By June 1790, singing had become a regular part of the children's curriculum. From this date it was agreed that the subject should be taught two days in the week, an hour at a time, plus for one hour on Saturdays when the girls and boys sang together.⁵⁴ This indicates that the Foundling Hospital was not the only London institution offering musical entertainment. Indeed the social commentator Horace Walpole (1717-1797) writes of his visit to the Magdalen in January 1760 where he praises the inmates' singing.⁵⁵ This is around the same period when Harrison began his unofficial musical instruction of the foundlings.

Moral instruction

In addition to literacy, numeracy and religious teaching, equal importance was attached to broader forms of moral instruction. Although the early Hospital governors were keen to remind foundlings of the lowness of their status, later concerns regarding moral instruction centred around ideas of personal hygiene and how defects in this regard reflected badly on the Hospital. What the governors considered good behaviour was encouraged while bad behaviour was punished; this included contact with people outside the Hospital. For the boys in particular, some games were introduced which were also designed to promote strength and health. A desire for

⁵³ LMA: A/FH/A/03/05/13, pp.64-5

⁵⁴ LMA: A/FH/K/02/019(X041/019), pp.240-1

⁵⁵ Horace Walpole "To Montagu, Monday 28 January 1760" in *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, Vol.9 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p.273

cleanliness and neatness by the children also led to practices that became part of vocational training.

The Hospital governors' discussions on foundlings play provide us with insights into their understanding of good and bad behaviour. According to the *Regulations* of 1749, the children's 'diversions should be innocent and active'. In particular bad language, indecent behaviour and games of chance were strictly forbidden and punishable.⁵⁶ On 18 June 1755 it was noted that children should not be in the courtyard at improper hours, must not misbehave or beg and must not converse with servants or improper persons.⁵⁷ In August 1759 considerable concern was raised about foundlings talking to 'those of the town' and how this could be prevented.⁵⁸ That these concerns were raised suggests this may have been a defined problem at this time. It also shows how the governors were keen to shield the children from the morals of the world outside the Hospital walls.

One solution when problems did arise was a regimen of discipline. As early as 1743 the sub-committee noted that children could only be corrected by 'Order of the Matron, or in her presence.'⁵⁹ In 1773 threats of severe punishment were made following an incident during which a boy slid down the banister of a Hospital staircase and subsequently died. However McClure dates a sudden change in discipline to the publication in 1776 of a tract by governor Jonas Hanway

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp.27-9

⁵⁷ LMA:A/FH/K/02/004(X041/014), p.285

⁵⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/003, p.197

⁵⁹ LMA:A/FH/K/02/001(X041/014), p.288

on the benefits of solitary confinement, *Solitude in Imprisonment*. According to McClure the severest punishments date from 1777 onwards.⁶⁰ Punishment typically consisted of confinement in darkness with a diet of bread and water for several days.⁶¹ Corrective practices for older children could be yet more severe, particularly so in the closing decades of the century. However as these mainly relate to those children who returned to the Hospital following problems during apprenticeship, these will be discussed in the next chapter. Another common form of discipline appears to have been the removal of treats from foundlings found guilty of rule breaking. On 23 October 1779, for example, the schoolmaster was ordered to purchase some toys for the children ‘by way of encouragement’ but for these items to be ‘taken away on ill behaviour.’⁶²

Committee minutes and Hospital regulations also show evidence that games and diversions frequently had the additional purpose of promoting good health or useful skills. The 1746 *Regulations* state that on Saturday afternoons (and on some public holidays) the children be ‘allowed to divert themselves with such Exercises, as will increase their Strength, Activity, and Hardiness.’ In this the boys and girls were to be kept ‘entirely separate’.⁶³ There was little indication as to the types of sports played until a suggestion was made for javelins or darts to be purchased for the boys in February 1754. Pursuits of this kind, it was maintained, would not only

⁶⁰ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.234

⁶¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/14, p.94

⁶² LMA: A/FH/A/03/005/14, p.227

⁶³ Foundling Hospital, *Regulations*, 1746, p.37

improve their health through physical exertion, but also their dexterity; suitable for occupations such as the 'Greenland fishery' (that is, whaling).⁶⁴

Gender differences in play are also revealed when in March 1756 it was argued that the area previously known as the 'physic garden' was to be put to grass as an area where the boys could play, on committee days and 'all evenings of the year';⁶⁵ the only place reserved for the girls was at the south end of the east colonnade, that is open but under cover.⁶⁶ Distinctions between boys and girls were also evident when in December 1777 the Hospital schoolmaster was told to purchase some toys 'as encouragement' (for the boys), and report back to the committee.⁶⁷ Nothing specific is said of the girls' play until May 1785 when some balls were ordered; at the same time cricket traps, and kite twine were requested for the boys.⁶⁸ Food was another means to provide treats and was one enjoyed equally by all the children, who were used to a plain diet.⁶⁹ In June 1783 the minutes reported 'that it being usual at this season to treat the Children with a dinner of Gooseberry pye' the Hospital Matron was ordered to 'provide ... Gooseberry's for their entertainment.'⁷⁰

⁶⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.216

⁶⁵ LMA:A/FH/K/02/005(X041/015), p.45

⁶⁶ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.225

⁶⁷ LMA:A/FH/A/03/05/13, p.154

⁶⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/03/05/18, p.90

⁶⁹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.29

⁷⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/05/17, p.27

From the outset the governors acknowledged a moral imperative in tidiness and cleanliness. Indeed as early as the 1740 *Report*, the governors stressed the importance of the children being kept 'clean and neat',⁷¹ and as early as September 1746, it was agreed that the boys should learn, as soon as they were able, 'to mend their own stockings'.⁷² The difficulties of maintaining standards of cleanliness seem to have been particularly acute in the early 1760s when the youngest of the General Reception children returned from their country nurses. On 16 January 1762 the sub-committee recorded that matron should remind the boys' nurses that particular care be taken of their stockings and pin cloths (a type of overall), as torn or ragged clothes would lead to a 'habit of idleness' and that would be 'very pernicious to young minds'.⁷³ In September 1763 the destruction of clothes worn by infectious children reportedly led to a shortage of items. The governors argued that high standards of cleaning were sufficient to combat the problem of clothing shortages, and insisted that old clothing should be mended. Such untidiness, the governors made clear, reflected 'shame on the Hospital'.⁷⁴ As those governors present at the sub-committee for 22 October 1763 put it: 'nothing will tend more to support in the minds of the Children a sense of decency and virtuous Industry than being always whole and right in their Clothing when they come into the World.' Fridays at the Hospital were set aside for mending - boys their coats and breeches, girls their gowns and petticoats.⁷⁵ Continuous mending therefore became part of the children's vocational training as boys and girls learned how to repair their own clothes.

⁷¹ Foundling Hospital, *Report*, 1740, p.11

⁷² LMA:A/FH/K/02/002(X041/014), p.127

⁷³ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.14

⁷⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.186

⁷⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.193

Vocational training

According to the governors' published reports, apprenticeship was considered the end point of the foundlings' schooling at the Hospital. Broadly defined, education was intended to ensure the foundlings had sufficient skills to enable them to undertake and sustain an apprenticeship. In line with this, emphasis was placed on practical training in preparation for work, partly for its moral benefits but also to instil habits of industry, essential for whatever employment the foundlings later obtained. Practical skills were particularly important for the girls, for whom accomplishment in textile manufacture and domestic tasks was especially beneficial. As we shall see, the vocational training undertaken by the foundlings - particularly in the aftermath of General Reception - was also essential for the running of the Hospital.

The governors' 1740 *Report*⁷⁶ and Hogarth's letterhead sketch⁷⁷ both emphasised how labour was the central aspect of the foundlings' education from the outset. Mending had a moral purpose but it also taught children technical skills. The practical application of vocational training as a benefit for the Hospital was also appreciated from the very beginning. In June 1746, when the eldest children of the Hospital's first admissions were aged five, the matron asked for assistance in making up the seventy-four suits of clothing for the next in-take of infants. In an attempt to prevent the 'hurry' that this admission period usually created, she recommended 'imploying some

⁷⁶ Foundling Hospital, *Report* (1740), pp.8-9

⁷⁷ Hogarth, *Study for the Foundlings*

of the children in making such parts of them as they can.’ Her request was agreed.⁷⁸ For the girls in particular, needlework was from the outset central to their education along with knitting and spinning.⁷⁹

Some work was also considered an important means to improve health. For the boys, who were – at least in the opening decades - expected to enter sea service or husbandry (and where they needed to be strong and work in all weathers), much of their employment was in the Hospital garden. The 1746 *Regulations* record the boys as needing to undertake ‘Digging, Houghing, Plowing ... without Horses, Hedging, Cleaving Wood, Carrying Burthens [sic].’⁸⁰ Other physical tasks such as pumping water and mangling laundry were also part of the boys’ chores.⁸¹ In the same document it was noted that girls should be employed in ‘all sorts of Household Work, in Kitchen, Laundry and Chambers, to make them fitt for Service’.⁸² Girls needed to be strong for domestic service too.

As well as tasks that were of benefit to health and morals, the *Regulations* of 1746 also specified the children should perform tasks that were ‘simple and laborious’. These were not for their practical application but to get the foundlings used to working in the lowliest and most laborious

⁷⁸ LMA:A/FH/K/02/002(X041/014), p.114

⁷⁹ Foundling Hospital, *Regulations* (1746), p.37

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.36

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.37

⁸² LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, pp.7310-14

of professions.⁸³ These discussions provide evidence of a gender divide in terms of where work could be performed. The minutes of the general committee of February 1747, for example, suggested that for the girls, the infirm boys and all male children 'during bad weather'⁸⁴, a person was required to provide instruction in silk winding. As one of the early processes to prepare raw silk for weaving, silk winding was an unskilled task that had long been undertaken by children.⁸⁵ Writing in January 1748, however, the governors considered this work 'too effeminate ... for the boys as they grow older.'⁸⁶ In the following November it was agreed that the governors invite members of the public to propose work for the boys that 'requires Activity and may be performed in the open Air; that they be early inured to Labour and the changes of the weather'.⁸⁷ It was decided the Hospital would not accept ideas for employment 'interfering with any now subsisting in England.'⁸⁸ After lengthy discussion, the governors agreed to employ the boys in winding hemp and making nets. The process of winding hemp and silk is not dissimilar. However silk cannot be wound outside in all weathers whereas hemp can. This gender difference of outside and inside activities might also explain why no uncovered area of play was set aside for the girls.⁸⁹

These discussions not only reveal governors' attitudes to suitable employment for the foundlings, as determined by gender and age, but also identify other factors important to the vocational training of children. The first related to their not undertaking activities that would harm British

⁸³ Foundling Hospital, *Regulations* (1746), p.36

⁸⁴ LMA:A/FH/K/02/002(X041/014), p.160

⁸⁵ Bush, Sarah, *The Silk Industry*, Princes Risborough, Shire Publications Ltd, (2000)

⁸⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.11

⁸⁷ LMA:A/FH/K/02/002(X041/014), p.313

⁸⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.3

⁸⁹ Thanks to Mary Schoeser, textile historian, whose advice on fibre manufacture made this definition apparent

industry while the second concerned the logistical and economic needs of the Hospital. The governors' choice of winding hemp and making nets fulfilled both. In January 1751 the Society of Free British Fishery⁹⁰ agreed to set up a rope yard and employ an instructor to teach the 16 children they then thought capable of such employment.⁹¹ This newly incorporated society had been established by an Act of Parliament (1750) to promote the British 'white fish' (cod and herring) industry. This was partly to increase the country's supply of trained seamen and so reduce their need to impress at times of war. In its promotion of the fishing industry the government also sought to rebuild the economy in depressed areas of the Highlands and provide work for the unemployed and charity schools. One of the Society's council members, Lord Charles Cavendish (1704-1783) was a Whig politician and governor of the Foundling Hospital.⁹² By working together the Society and the Hospital sought not only to support British interests nationally but also to derive economic benefit for the latter institution.

By mid-century, logistical and economic considerations had become ever more important to the Hospital as the number of children in its care increased. As of 1751 only one child had been apprenticed out and in January 1752 the governors compiled an inventory of the children currently in the Hospital. The report listed 77 boys and 71 girls, aged between four and eleven years of age. Of these 148 children, 66 were judged either too young for employment or too infirm or disabled to undertake work. This appears to be the first time the governors considered that not every foundling would be able to leave the Hospital or provide useful service. At the

⁹⁰ The Hospital use the term "Council of Free British Fishery"

⁹¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.70

⁹² Christa Jungnickel and Russell McCormach, *Cavendish*, (1996), Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, p.86

same meeting the committee accepted the Revd Thomas Trant's idea of setting up a nursery in Yorkshire as a less expensive way of caring for some of the younger children.⁹³ Thomas Trant (1700-1758) was curate of Boulton-on-Deerne, rector of Holdenby, Northamptonshire, as well as headmaster at Archbishop Holgate's School in Hemsworth, Yorkshire. He became involved with the Foundling Hospital as early as 1741 when he was asked to find country nurses to care for infant arrivals and remained involved until his death in 1758.⁹⁴ By 1756, and with parliamentary finance to increase the size of the charity, other branch hospitals were planned. Between 1757 and 1773, six provincial sites were set up across the country in Ackworth in Yorkshire, Shrewsbury, Chester, Westerham in Kent, Aylesbury and Barnet to accommodate the growing number of children admitted during the General Reception.

The economical and logistical challenges of General Reception and its aftermath had considerable impact on vocational training. In order to reduce expenditure, increase income and provide the foundlings with employment, one solution was to turn the branch hospitals into manufactories of woollen and linen textiles. Whilst most of the cloth was made at Ackworth and Shrewsbury, linen was also spun and woven at the London Hospital. By 1763 all children were engaged in spinning while certain boys took part in weaving; there is no evidence of girls weaving at the Hospital.⁹⁵ Though the manufacture of cloth provided children with work that was simple, laborious, and profitable, it was not profitable enough to sustain the institution. By 1765 this and other issues

⁹³ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, pp.114-5

⁹⁴ Beatrice Scott, "Ackworth Hospital 1757-1773" in *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol.61 (1989) p.157 online - https://archive.org/stream/YAJ0611989/YAJ0611989_djvu.txt [accessed 3.9.2017]

⁹⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.148

led the government to insist on the closure of the branch hospitals and the charity to dispose of the 'parliamentary children' – that is those of the General Reception period - as quickly as possible.⁹⁶

In addition to manufacturing, the foundlings were involved in other occupations that helped the running of the central Hospital and its six branch institutions. While some children were trained in specialist occupations such as baking and brewing to reduce expenses, others were engaged in the manufacture of saleable commodities. Specialised tasks also included training for the girls to assist the London Hospital's coatmaker⁹⁷ - a partnership which began in 1752 when the eldest children were ten.⁹⁸ By February 1763 boys were employed by the tailor to make breeches and boys' jackets.⁹⁹ Since 1753 a public area (complete with counter and till) had been set up at the London Hospital so the children could be observed by visitors making such saleable items as nets. The presence of visitors at the Hospital also led to the making of 'fancy goods' which could be sold as mementoes of time spent with the foundlings.¹⁰⁰ On 10 April 1762 for example, the Hospital matron reported a shortage of green silk purses made by the children which 'are often asked for by people of distinction'.¹⁰¹ As is the way with fashionable goods, this line in purchasable items meant regular changes in the types of goods made for sale.¹⁰² In 1771 the governors suggested

⁹⁶ LMA:A/FH/M/01/004/016 (c.1765)

⁹⁷ A children's coatmaker made stays and bodices, considered essential to prevent crookedness - see Lynn Sorge-English, *Stays and Body Image in London*, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), p.27

⁹⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.114

⁹⁹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.128-130

¹⁰⁰ LMA:A/FH/K/02/004(X041/014), p.103

¹⁰¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.45

¹⁰² LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/009, p.249

that the boys make wig caul¹⁰³ and netted night caps but no further purses and garters 'until further notice'.¹⁰⁴ Since 1771, and with the Hospital no longer in receipt of government funding, the income generated from the children's labour was increasingly important. In March 1773 the matron was asked to make a table of prices for needlework, including shirts, shifts and marking¹⁰⁵ linen, that could be undertaken by the girls.¹⁰⁶ A list from this time shows that the matron's proposals were based on the prices asked at the Magdalen Hospital. It is notable that these were then undercut so the original £3 price for a fine shirt - fully trimmed (the same as was charged at the Magdalen) - was 'now £2-6s' at the Foundling Hospital.¹⁰⁷

The items made for the Hospital's own use were also expected by governors to be of a high standard. This might have been to instil qualities of good workmanship in the children but also related to governors' belief that neatness reflected good morals. In September 1752 they requested that the foundlings 'darn to exactness' and provided financial bonuses to the teachers when the children worked well.¹⁰⁸ In January 1760 the 'nurses of the grown children' were 'directed that every child who can work, produce something as a specimen every Saturday'¹⁰⁹ so that the governors could inspect their efforts. Minutes from that April reveal the governors' wish that children be monitored as to their spinning, knitting and darning, and that this be checked

¹⁰³ A wig caul is the foundation on which the hair is attached - see John Ash, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Dilly, 1775)

¹⁰⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/009, p.253

¹⁰⁵ Marking would be the embroidering of initials and dates to make clothing identifiable

¹⁰⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/03/05/010, p.242

¹⁰⁷ LMA:A/FH/A/06/07/02

¹⁰⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.153

¹⁰⁹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/004, p.16

every fourteen days.¹¹⁰ The governors' regular notes on the children's abilities also reflect those skills deemed important for each sex. For the boys these records related mostly to their ability in spelling, reading or writing well; while for the girls a record was kept of their skills in spinning, knitting, darning or sewing.¹¹¹ In April 1762 the girls learning to knit gloves were encouraged to undertake good work by being allowed to keep the first pair they made.¹¹² Three years later the nine-year old Thomas Strode (number 1,367) was offered a choice between a silver three-penny piece and some gingerbread as reward for his excellent darning skills. Thomas took the money, and from this date a table of rewards was made on each occasion that the children's work was inspected. Girls were given prizes for sewing and spinning; boys for weaving, and for darning, knitting and purse-making. As noted earlier, all children also received prayer books as a reward for competency in reading.¹¹³

The report of a 1790 visiting committee provided evidence of what work was considered suitable for boys and girls, and how economic considerations were still prioritised. John Holliday (c.1730-1801) was a Hospital governor, a barrister and one of the members of this special committee. Holliday reported visiting a single room where 50 or 60 boys were knitting stockings and a few were spinning. He was surprised that only the boys were involved in these activities. His reports note that he was at a 'loss to discover' why the girls were not taught spinning and knitting in

¹¹⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/004, p.47

¹¹¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/004, p.65

¹¹² LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.45

¹¹³ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/006, p.73

addition to their needlework, stating ‘The Distaff¹¹⁴ and the Knitting Needle are surely fitter employment for the Girls.’ Holliday accepted that any activity was better than none to avoid ‘early habits of idleness’, but still believed the girls ‘use of the Distaff may be profitable and useful thro’ life.’ He was not in favour of stopping the boys working though considered ‘the loom, the business of a shoemaker, Taylor etc ... of greater utility to the Charity and of more solid advantage to the Boys, and the Community’.¹¹⁵ However an unidentified governor who annotated the visiting committee’s report questioned Holliday’s assessment. In his opinion it was better for the girls to continue with their sewing since they ‘can earn more by their needlework than by spinning ... [and] it will fit them better for service.’¹¹⁶

Teaching staff at the Foundling Hospital

Having considered the breadth and nature of the educational provision at the Hospital, we turn now to a brief review of the identity and backgrounds of some of those employed to teach the foundlings. The children’s very earliest teachers were the nurses at the Hospital who taught them to read, to keep clean and tidy and to say their prayers.¹¹⁷ Women were also employed to provide vocational training and basic schooling – among them the nurse Deborah Westley who in 1747 taught sewing, knitting and reading.¹¹⁸ For most of these nurses the committee records provide little more than a name. As already noted Hospital staff such as gardeners, bakers, coatmakers, tailors and others, also provided specialist training and even a Hospital governor, such

¹¹⁴ A distaff is a spindle for winding wool

¹¹⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/04/002/002

¹¹⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/04/002/002

¹¹⁷ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001

¹¹⁸ LMA:A/FH/K/02/002(X041/014), p.198

as William Harrison, instructed the children in music. It seems reasonable to conclude that staff in the laundry and kitchen would have instructed the children in household chores.

By contrast, some specialist training was thought to require more expert tutors. Having decided to teach the boys net-making, the governors agreed they needed a master who could not only instruct, but could also keep the children in order and ensure an early start.¹¹⁹ On 30 January 1751 a Mrs Greaves (who had been recommended by the Society of Free British Fishery), and her daughter Margaret,¹²⁰ agreed to live at the Hospital and teach the boys net-making. When the sub-committee met on the 14 February 1751 the governors made the comment that they thought it 'necessary to have a man to inspect the children and keep them at their work.' Initially there were difficulties finding a person who had both the necessary skills and was able to live at the Hospital.¹²¹ John Powers, a 31-year old single man from Great Yarmouth¹²² appeared suitable, until it was discovered he could not make the twine or head the nets. Eventually a compromise was reached with Powers and Margaret Greaves both employed. Powers was to live in, ensuring that the older boys rose at the appropriate hour, while Greaves looked after the smaller boys and oversaw the finishing of the nets.¹²³

¹¹⁹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.56

¹²⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.71

¹²¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.73

¹²² LMA:A/FH/K/02/003(X041/014), p.175

¹²³ LMA:A/FH/K/02/003(X041/014), pp.182-3

When the post of schoolmistress was advertised in October 1762, three women presented their petitions for the job. With regard to schooling, anyone who was literate and numerate might consider themselves suitable. Elizabeth Parke aged about 50 and of a 'lively disposition' could read the psalms, but 'confesses she does not understand the meaning of the several stops.' Mary Mooke was a milliner who 'spells correctly and pretends to have been a Teacher of English for these 14 years past.' The third petitioner was Jane Middleton, who 'spells incorrectly and is known to Mr Wyche';¹²⁴ - the latter being a Hospital governor. The general committee chose Jane Middleton,¹²⁵ though she stayed less than a month. Perhaps because of this, when the next schoolmistress was appointed in April 1763, the governors chose someone with experience as well as good references. Sarah Howard was 40 years old and housekeeper to a Mr Malin, a brandy merchant. It was said that she 'has kept a little school by the Custom House and can read, spin and sew. She also had a good testimonial.'¹²⁶

According to McClure, no schoolmaster was engaged at the Hospital until February 1757, when a Joseph Redpath was appointed.¹²⁷ The relative importance of a schoolmaster's role at this time - and thus the education of the boys - might be inferred by the fact that he was not only paid more than the schoolmistress, but was given a gown 'as a mark of distinction to create the greater reverence from the boys.'¹²⁸ Despite this prior importance attached to the teaching of boys, when Robert Aitchison applied for the schoolmaster's post in 1780, there was nothing to suggest he had

¹²⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.98

¹²⁵ LMA:A/FH/K/02/008(X041/015), pp.181-2

¹²⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.147

¹²⁷ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.221

¹²⁸ LMA:A/FH/K/02/005(X041/015), p.197

any experience in education. In his petition Aitchison stated that despite his being by trade a mechanic, and having failing eyesight, he felt himself suitable on account of his moral character, which could by 'Strickt [sic] Enquiry ... be well attested.' The governors must have agreed and he remained in the post for forty years.

The committee minutes show clearly that while the Hospital did seek and employ a small number of formal teaching staff, much of the instruction came from employees working across the institution. Where such information is provided, good character and personal recommendation were most important when considering someone for a role. However as shown in the appointment of the teachers Sarah Howard and Robert Aitchison, experience while valued, was not deemed essential. It might even be suggested that the Hospital governors avoided anyone of too high standing as a schoolmaster after the public criticisms of 1765 - in order to avoid charges that they were over-educating the foundlings.

Conclusion

It can be seen that against the ideals of 1740, the governors' initial vision of an education comprising only reading, religious instruction and labour was soon and consistently challenged during the eighteenth century. These challenges took many forms and owed much to external pressures not envisaged by the founding governors. In particular this included external criticism carried in newspapers and other published works, the economic and logistical challenges of General Reception, and the later 'competition' by other London charities. This said, it can be

argued that despite changes to the way foundlings were educated, the broad ambitions of the founding governors continued to be upheld. These objectives were a running theme throughout the first six decades of the Hospital's existence and despite important developments, they were central to the 'useful servants' whom Sir Thomas Bernard saw leaving the institution in 1799.¹²⁹

This chapter has focused on the nature and content of the foundlings' education, with particular reference to schooling, religious and moral instruction and vocational training. Religious and moral instruction was central to the children's education. In almost every aspect of their lives there was an ethical dimension: from the texts the foundlings read, to their ways of working and high standards of dress and appearance. This was also the aspect of education that the governors were particularly keen to present to the public. In doing so, the chapel, established in 1749, became a key location for foundlings' religious instruction. From the mid-1750s musical performances by the blind musicians were attended by visitors to the Hospital. By the 1770s these concerts were performed by other talented foundlings. This moral dimension was not only a reflection on the children as individuals but on the Hospital in general. What the governors identified and sought was to encourage as 'good' behaviour was rewarded and encouraged with treats while unacceptable conduct was controlled through punishment.

Foundlings' ability to take on work on leaving the Hospital owed much to the practical skills they acquired during their vocational training. This was, from the outset, a key element of the

¹²⁹ Bernard, *Account* (1799), p.5

Hospital's educational regime given the importance of apprenticeships as a measure of the institution's success. Vocational training was also the aspect of education most significantly shaped by the changes brought by the period of General Reception and its aftermath. This involved the return of about 5,000 children from their country nurses in the mid-1760s. Not all of these came to the London Hospital; but were spread amongst the six branch hospitals. The production of small items for sale had been a feature of Hospital life from the early 1740s. However a greater focus on activities of manufacture from the 1760s not only reduced economic pressures but provided new activities considered essential preparation for apprenticeships. With extra admissions finance was required for nurses' wages and the transport costs of delivering foundlings into the country. The nature of the goods made was determined by the needs of the Hospital, (that is the provision of clothing for new foundlings, and hospital linen), the national interest (such as the fishing nets for the Society of British Fisheries) and governors' growing appreciation of the commercial return to be had from their engagement with fashionable London society. This latter focus led to the manufacture of 'fancy goods' as souvenirs in the 1750s, and in the final quarter of the century, the provision of needlework services, all of which had an economic dimension.

This chapter has also shown the divergences and convergences regarding the different nature of education according to gender. Disparities in boys' and girls' formal schooling, and especially writing, have been noted. Activities of play and vocational training were frequently different for boys and girls. In particular girls were given mainly indoor tasks such as housework, silk winding

and needlework. Boys, at least in the first fifteen years of the Hospital, spent much of their day outside – at work and at play. In part this was to improve their health and strength, and prepare them for future work at sea or on the land. With the greater focus on manufacturing activities that followed the General Reception, male foundlings were increasingly directed towards indoor work such as spinning and weaving. The 1770s was also the decade in which an increasing number of toys were purchased to encourage the boys in outdoor play. It seems reasonable to suggest that governors' renewed focus on outdoor play at this time may reflect a wish to compensate for boys' indoor work, and to ensure the robustness of male foundlings as the nature of vocational training shifted.

This assessment of the nature and content of the foundlings' education was made possible by the documentation made by the Hospital governors in their committee minutes; supported by published accounts. Due to their extensive nature, and with some records unavailable for conservation issues, even this systematic decade-by-decade review is only able to reveal a limited picture of Hospital practices. This said, the committee records do confirm Thomas Bernard's assertion that by late century boys' educational priorities were reading, writing and arithmetic, while girls were employed mainly in vocational training. Bernard explained this shift in terms of broader economic developments, principally a demand for newer kinds of apprenticeship requested by London manufacturers of goods, as well as tradesmen and shopkeepers. Bernard's observation came at the end of the eighteenth century, though – and as we have seen – the importance of work, and in particular the notion of education as a route to apprenticeship was a

key concern of Hospital governors from the early 1740s onwards. It therefore seems appropriate that we turn to the outcomes of education, specifically in the form of apprenticeship, in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship for the foundlings meant the end of life in the Hospital; ultimately it prepared them for adulthood. As with education, it was a subject to which the Hospital governors paid particular attention, making detailed records of procedures and outcomes in their regular (weekly or fortnightly) committee minutes. Here they discussed the process of apprenticeship including which trades were considered appropriate, the suitability of potential masters¹ and how to rectify situations when problems occurred. These committee records also include information about those foundlings who never left the Hospital and those who returned when apprenticeship failed; in particular those foundlings with disabilities.

Meanwhile apprentice registers kept by the Hospital governors, and dating from the early 1750s, provided chronological documentation on where and to whom children were sent, and make it possible to assess changes in occupation type and age of apprenticeship. In addition the Hospital archives contain applications from would-be masters for apprentices, annotated with comments as to whether or not these petitions were successful, and often stating the reasons for a decision.

This chapter reviews the original aims and objectives of the Hospital governors, laid down in their Report of 1740; particular attention is paid to the purpose and intended value of apprenticeships for foundling children, and when and how these altered. Changes to apprenticeships between

¹ The term 'master' will be used its contemporary generic form to include master and mistresses, unless otherwise specified

1740 and 1799 when the Hospital treasurer, Sir Thomas Bernard also commented on the apprenticeship scheme, were indeed significant and far reaching. They took many forms – different ages when apprenticeships began, types of profession, time taken to allocate a master, place of apprenticeship, and differences according to gender. A systematic sampling of records from the apprenticeship registers between 1751 and 1800, will take into account all apprenticeships up until 1757 and then sampling three years from each of the following decades. This will provide detailed information on changes in occupation and age of apprenticeship making it possible to establish when changes occurred in order to establish why.

The forces that prompted changes in the apprenticeship regime were varied although often similar to those shaping the developments in educational experience. As for the provision of education none was more important than the impact of General Reception and its aftermath. General Reception (1756-1760), with its significant increase in admissions (14,934 foundlings compared with 1,384 in the previous fifteen years),² created logistical challenges with regard to apprenticeship, in particular how masters were assessed. However, it was Parliament's subsequent request to withdraw funding in 1765 that was particularly challenging for the Hospital governors, and led to changes in apprenticeship practice, for the next six years. In the wake of this withdrawal of funding, and with a need to discharge as many foundlings as quickly as possible, Parliament insisted on the introduction of fees to would-be masters from 1765. For two years governors fought against this policy. However between 1767 and 1771, Parliament provided funding only on the understanding that such fees were paid. The subsequent rapid dispersal of

² Allin, *The Early Years*, p.400

over 5,000 children was hampered by many unsuccessful apprenticeships; the governors saw the apprentice fees as part of the problem. When all the General Reception children were dispersed the governors insisted no further financial incentives be made.

The chapter will then look at reasons behind 'failed' apprenticeships and how the governors dealt with these. This is followed by consideration of two groups of foundlings who were not apprenticed; first those who remained as servants of the Hospital - and how, without apprenticeship, their transition into adulthood was established – and second, foundlings with disabilities who, where possible, were encouraged to be useful within the limitations of their conditions. What stands out from reading the committee minutes over five decades is the number of challenges governors faced in sustaining and adapting the apprenticeship programme. There were many reasons for these challenges. Some were structural and wide-ranging, such as the impact of General Reception and the withdrawal of Parliamentary funding. Others were contextual including transitions in the economy which saw apprenticeships in laborious trades give way to more skilled activities. Others still were personal and occurred at the level of the unruly apprentice or the abusive master- both of whom required surveillance and sometimes corrective action. Of course, not all apprenticeships posed challenges and many required no such interventions. These positive outcomes will be considered in greater detail - from the differing perspectives of apprentices, masters, and Hospital governors - in chapter five. This said, the successful apprenticeship of foundlings required modification and assessment over time. It remains the case that by the later eighteenth century the majority of placements often differed

considerably from the model envisioned by the Hospital's founders. This chapter considers how and why the expectations of the 1740s shifted to create the programme described by Bernard in 1799, and how closely his account captured experiences of late-century foundling apprentices.

Eighteenth-century apprenticeship

To set the following discussion in context, this chapter will begin with a brief assessment of why apprenticeship was necessary for poor children in particular, in eighteenth-century England. If, as Roy Porter asserts, apprentices were often little more than 'galley-slaves'³ why was it valued at all? In fact apprenticeship was particularly important for foundlings, who had no family to support them when sick or old, as it offered them an opportunity to gain future security.

The law in England governing the apprenticing of children (Statute of Artificers) had first been enacted in 1562, and had changed little by the time the Foundling Hospital opened in 1741.⁴ Traditionally individual parishes looked after those persons within their community who became destitute from poverty or infirmity. However, for a parish to consider someone their responsibility they needed to be certain of that individual's place of settlement. This could be established by place of birth, husband's birthplace after marriage, location of apprenticeship (after 40 days) or place of employment (after a year). Settlement could be a particular problem for parishes where foundlings were concerned, because unless their place of birth could be proved, they became the

³ Porter, *English Society in the 18th Century*, revised edition, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982), p.85

⁴ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.125

responsibility of the parish in which they were found.⁵ The Charter Act of Parliament of 1739, had ensured that no child (or employee) would gain settlement through his or her admission to, or employment at, the Foundling Hospital, thus avoiding the burdening of the parish where the Hospital was situated (that is, St Andrew Holborn).⁶ It was only through apprenticeship that children could gain settlement and so become the responsibility of a parish when they were no longer in the Hospital's care.

In addition to providing settlement, masters were bound to provide food, accommodation, clothing and other requirements to the children while under their care.⁷ This was agreed in the apprenticeship indenture, a copy of which was documented in the Hospital's general committee minutes of July 1751.⁸

Original aims and objectives of apprenticeship for the foundling children

The Hospital's 1740 *Report of the General Committee for Directing, Managing and Transacting the Business, Affairs, Estate and Effects of the Corporation* stated that the original aim for the boys was that they be employed in husbandry, 'other labour' or sea service. The girls were to become domestic servants either in the Hospital or elsewhere.⁹ However in October 1751, when the eldest children were ten, a note was made that consideration could also be given 'if need be, and

⁵ George, *London Life*, pp.220-1

⁶ Foundling Hospital, *The Charter, Act of Parliament, By-laws and Regulations*, (London: 1796), pp.29-30

⁷ McClure, *Coram's Children* *ibid*, p.262

⁸ LMA:A/FH/K/02/003(X041/014), pp.234-5

⁹ Foundling Hospital, *Report* (1740), p.9

occasion offers' of other employments for the boys. It was also agreed at that time that children would be assessed on the grounds of their health, strength and abilities for the suitability for a particular form of employment. Boys were also to be assessed for their 'genius and disposition'.¹⁰ That 'other' employments were now under consideration suggests that the governors had become aware that certain children were not capable of physical labour. It may also indicate governors' willingness to respond to changing circumstances within the labour market and broader economy. Writing on the period immediately after the Seven Years' War (1763) for example, McClure notes how demands for merchant seamen were now met from those discharged from the Royal Navy.¹¹ However such factors do not explain the initial diversification of apprenticeships during the 1750s when Britain was, of course, at war with France.¹²

In order to assess what 'other' apprenticeships were considered throughout the eighteenth century, a database was created using the Hospital's apprenticeship registers.¹³ Children were recorded chronologically according to date of apprenticeship. For each year analysed a record was made of the name and number of every child apprenticed, their date of admission, master's name, address and occupation. Up until 1757, only 65 children were apprenticed so all the years between 1751 and 1757 were included; after 1759 sampling of data was undertaken for three years in each decade to 1800.

¹⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.106-7

¹¹ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.127

¹² Second Carnatic War (1749-1754)

¹³ LMA:A/FH/A/12/003/001-002(X041/05A)

The first child was apprenticed in 1751. John Bowles (number 5), was ten years old when he was put into the care of Hospital governor, Stephen Beckingham, of Bourn Place, Kent on 7 August of that year. No record is made as to what work John undertook; however in 1752 the governors agreed that 'Gentleman' could take children as servants or gardeners, and it seems likely this was the role also taken by John Bowles.¹⁴ Over the next three years, a further 27 children were apprenticed and although no trades were identified it is most likely that girls went into domestic service and boys apprenticed to mariners went into sea service. From 1754 specific trades for boys were recorded with the majority apprenticed either into sea service or husbandry. The occupations of foundlings apprenticed in the early 1750s reflect those illustrated in Hogarth's letterhead *Study for the Foundlings* (1739)¹⁵. However, if the ambitions of the early governors appear to have been realised in these first four years, the move to greater diversification was soon apparent. Henry Gilbert (number 236) became the first boy recorded as not taking up a laborious trade, when in 1755 he was sent to learn the art of bookbinding. In 1757 boys were apprenticed to a growing range of London masters employed in a series of trades: two as peruke makers,¹⁶ and one cheesemonger, watchmaker, watch case maker, stationer, baker and apothecary. Two years later, twelve children (out of 29) were apprenticed in Yorkshire, a development that followed the opening in 1757, of the Ackworth branch hospital, near Pontefract. These foundlings duly went to West Yorkshire masters.

¹⁴ LMA:A/FH/M/01/067

¹⁵ Hogarth, *Study for the Foundlings*, 1739

¹⁶ A maker of wigs (periwigs)

One difficulty of interpretation is that it is not possible, from the information provided to know the specific nature of work the children were undertaking. Many trades were simply recorded as 'household business'. This is a term particularly used for the girl apprentices, and might be equivalent to 'domestic service'. The term 'business of', was typically reserved for boys, suggesting apprenticeship in the trade or craft of the master. However this criterion implies that John Collyer (number 484), apprenticed to William Buchan¹⁷, a doctor of physic was to learn to become a physician, while Susan Green (number 695) was trained in her master's business of salesman. Records were sometimes more specific: one master applied for a boy to train as a perfumer (1796), and stated his wish for an apprentice to grind hair powder, carry parcels and undertake housework.¹⁸ Writing at the end of the century, Bernard noted that boys might also be employed in writing and casting accounts. It may well be that all apprentices could combine trade skills with menial work.

In the 1760s, of the 395 children sampled over a third were placed with London tradesmen (136) and close to another third (126) went to Ackworth which remained open until 1773.¹⁹ Sixteen boys were apprenticed into sea service and 78 into husbandry or gardening (44 of these were in Yorkshire). Nineteen children went to Shropshire masters - Shrewsbury Hospital did not close until 1771. Other foundlings were sent across the country from Cornwall to the Midlands but usually only one or two per county. In the 1760s seven boys were apprenticed to tailors/staymakers, three to shoemakers, six went to weavers and six to peruke makers - one was

¹⁷ William Buchan (1729-1805) was the Foundling Hospital physician at the Ackworth branch from 1759

¹⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/12/001/043 (1796)

¹⁹ Including Middlesex and Westminster

to learn the 'business of portrait painting'. Six girls were apprenticed as embroiderers, two went to milliners and three to mantua makers.²⁰ In 1760 there is the first record of a group of children apprenticed as a group, when thirteen girls were sent to work for a calico printer in Ravensbury, Surrey. It is significant that within two decades of the Hospital's creation, almost a third (32%) of the foundlings, of both sexes, went into a much wider variety of 'other trades' distinct from those identified by the founding governors.

In the 1770s and 1780s the majority of girls were apprenticed into household work, though thirteen (of 195) were listed with mantua makers, milliners, and embroiderers. The boys (186) continued to be apprenticed in a large variety of trades for the rest of the century but more were apprenticed with masters of what appear to be more skilled crafts or luxury industries: for example a perfumer, goldsmith, silver smith, confectioner, copper plate engraver, musical instrument maker. In these two decades, only four boys went to sea and seven into husbandry. From 1774, with all six of the branch hospitals closed, almost all the children were apprenticed in London.

²⁰ A milliner made female clothing accessories; a mantua maker was a maker of female dress

Changes to age of apprenticeship

According to Alys Levene, the average age when parish apprenticeship commenced varied significantly but was generally between 12 and 14 years.²¹ Apprenticeship traditionally ended when boys were 24 and girls 21 (earlier if they married). After 1760 the Hospital's Solicitor General advised that boys too could be released at 21.²² The minimum age of apprentices at the Foundling Hospital was first discussed in 1749, when a Mrs Rich requested a child. At that time it was agreed that as no child was aged ten or more, none was available for apprenticeship.²³ In 1751, and with the eldest foundlings now ten years old, it was agreed that apprenticeship should begin at 11 or 12, though 'if a reputable person should care to take them' this could occur at an earlier age as a means to reduce expenditure on individual foundlings. By 1755 eight of the eighteen children apprenticed were aged nine or ten, while the records for 1759 list apprenticed children as young as one or two years old. As will be discussed below, although listed as apprenticed, these very young children were invariably 'adopted' by their country nurses - a policy that was encouraged in the aftermath of General Reception. In 1766 children were often as young as eight when apprenticed and it was not until 1789 that the average age rose to between 11 and 15 years. There were always exceptions and the reasons behind these can only be discovered by looking at records on a case by case basis.

²¹ Levene, 'Parish apprenticeship', p.925

²² McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.125

²³ LMA:A/FH/K/02/003(X041/014), p.68

General Reception and its aftermath

The difficulties of General Reception were not simply caused by the logistical challenge of 14,934 admissions over a four-year period. In 1765 Parliament also sought to withdraw its financial support of the Hospital and asked governors to dispose of all the children (around 5,000) admitted between 1756 and 1760 as quickly as possible. The governors in return resisted these plans and presented their argument in a petition: *The Case of the Governors and Guardians of the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education for Exposed and Deserted Young Children* (c.1765). Here the governors made clear how the children were well looked after with plain food, excellent medical attention, and an 'education system' that brought up the foundlings to be 'strong and hardy'.²⁴ In response the government insisted that foundlings now be apprenticed at seven years old.²⁵ The governors in turn considered children of 'very tender years' as too young to leave the Hospital, with boys being deemed unfit for sea service or manufacturing trades until at least ten or twelve. Early apprenticeship, the governors insisted, would lead to children becoming chargeable to the parishes. It would injure communities and 'justly incur the censure of the publick [sic],' since their current practices meant that most foundlings were successfully settled.²⁶ Faced with these objections, the government reluctantly agreed to support the children for a little longer while the governors sought alternative ways to reduce the overall numbers of foundlings at the Hospital. In May 1765, when the oldest of the 'parliamentary children'²⁷ were aged nine, the governors wrote to their network of inspectors encouraging them to search for good masters. Another proposal

²⁴ LMA:A/FH/M/01/004/016

²⁵ LMA:A/FH/K/01/002(X041/010), p.255

²⁶ Anonymous, *The Case of the Governors and Guardians of the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children*, undated, c.1765-in LMA:A/FH/M/01/004/016

²⁷ This was the term used by the Hospital governor to differentiate those children admitted through General Reception and those admitted by petition after 1760.

saw governors appeal to the husbands of the women who provided the initial phase of the foundlings' care, and to apprentice children to individuals of whom they had existing knowledge.

On their first admission to the Hospital, children were initially placed under the care of nurses, away from the city and under a system of inspectors – men and women typically drawn from the ranks of the minor gentry, as well as clergymen and substantial tradesman.²⁸ The inspectors managed the country nurses, paid their wages and dealt with local issues. Typically at age four or five, children left these nurses and returned to the Hospital. One consequence of the General Reception was that children now began to spend longer in the care of their country nurses. The general registers show that in 1761 the average age of a child returned was 4½ years, in 1766 it was 5½ and by 1771 it was seven to eight, though in the last decades it had fallen to between five and six years.²⁹ It is perhaps not surprising that many nurses developed a deep emotional bond with these infants and were frequently reluctant to give them up when requested.

In October 1760, shortly after the end of the General Reception, Mary Englefield was one of two nurses from Wasing, Berkshire who applied to apprentice the child she was currently nursing. It was stated that she and her husband 'have the greatest tenderness and affection for the child, as if their own'. Mary was a mantua maker, the family income was about 15-16 shillings a week and she was assessed as a 'decent, reputable person'; the child was legally apprenticed to her

²⁸ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.88

²⁹ Data obtained from sampled general registers-LMA:A/FH/A/09/002/001-002

husband. In effect, it was an adoption, and the formal apprenticeship obliged the nurse and her husband to care for the child, and in turn to provide a place of settlement.³⁰ In 1765, in an attempt to encourage more such 'adoptions', the governors agreed to pay 1s. 6d. to those nurses who were able to retain their children until they were old enough to be formally apprenticed. So it was that the nurse Elizabeth Grubb continued to care for Ann Coleman (number 8,509) for a further two years at 18d weekly.³¹ According to the terms of this arrangement, Ann was expected to be formally apprenticed to Mr Grubb when she reached the age of 8 or 9 in 1767; however, for reasons so far undiscovered, she was instead apprenticed to a Francis Moore in household business.³²

Apprenticeship fees

In seeking ways to increase the rate of apprenticeship from the London Hospital, the government also proposed to offer financial incentives to would-be masters. In doing so, the authorities reiterated that it was then the common practice for masters to receive an apprentice fee for taking on parish children. It was, however, a proposal that met with firm resistance. As early as 1749, the Hospital governors had insisted that no fee should be paid to masters taking apprentices from their institution. In May 1764, and with governors facing difficulties in placing some children, the proposal was raised again, though within a month the idea was once more abandoned.³³

³⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/04, p.33

³¹ LMA:A/FH/K/02/009(X041/016), p.241

³² LMA:A/FH/A/12/003/001-002(X041/005A)

³³ Nichols and Wray, *History of the Foundling Hospital*, p.184

In the following year, the government sought to enforce payment of apprentice fees (of between £5 and £10) to masters willing to take children as a means to speed up their departure. Again the measure was strongly resisted with Jonas Hanway the only governor in favour. Hanway argued both that fees were common practice in parishes, and that reductions in the number of children in care it would save public funds.³⁴ In response, his fellow governors insisted that such a policy would encourage people of 'very indigent characters' to apply for children. Rather than save money, many of the governors maintained that a policy of paying people to take children 'whom they can neither properly educate or employ' would result in these foundlings becoming chargeable to their parish.

For a while the governors' arguments won over, and the Hospital continued to receive government funding, though at diminishing annual levels. In 1767 the government made it clear that a portion of its financial support was for apprentice fees only;³⁵ if the Hospital still wished to receive this funding, it would have to comply. The apprenticeship registers for the following years show how quickly the children were subsequently discharged. Between 1751 and 1765, the Hospital had apprenticed 425 children. In 1765 alone, 251 children were apprenticed, with this figure rising to 1,411 in 1769. Between 1765 and 1770, 4,123 children were apprenticed before the number reduced to 542 in 1770 and just 82 in 1771.³⁶ Originally the government had envisaged that apprenticeship fees would be funded by the sale of branch hospitals. However, as the governors made clear, the six hospitals had been built using private donations and their sale

³⁴ McClure, *Coram's Children*, pp.116-7

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.119

³⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/12/003/001-002(X041/05A)

could not be demanded. Nevertheless with dwindling funds, the smaller branch hospitals did begin to close from 1767. The London governors may ultimately have had no choice but to offer apprentice fees from 1767 but they stopped the practice at the earliest opportunity.

In 1771, with the last of the parliamentary children apprenticed, the governors cited a well documented case of one Jemima Dixon who had been murdered by her master, as the reason why apprentice fees were no longer to be paid.³⁷ The general committee minutes record how, despite governors' best efforts, poorer people did take children 'for the sake of a little money'.³⁸ As McClure argues, with so many apprenticeships to administer from the later 1760s it proved impossible for governors to assess each master thoroughly and with sufficient care.³⁹ However, the tragic case of Jemima Dixon proved a turning point: faced with the fact of her murder, few chose to resist the governors' decision to remove the fee. From the 1770s onwards, as the number of foundlings became more manageable, and the remit of apprenticeships was again limited mainly to London, it once more became possible to assess the masters with greater care, as in the early years of the Hospital.

Choosing masters and mistresses

As noted above, the first child apprenticed (John Bowles) was to the lawyer Stephen Beckingham (c.1697-1756) in 1751. It is unlikely that Beckingham, as a Hospital governor and an associate of

³⁷ McClure, *Coram's Children*, pp.134-5

³⁸ LMA:A/FH/K/02/013, p.237

³⁹ McClure, *Coram's Children*, pp.135-6

William Hogarth,⁴⁰ would have gone through any formal process to confirm his fitness to take an apprentice from the Hospital. However, for those applicants who were not known personally, enquiries were made. In July 1752 the sub-committee reported on the character of one John Ormond, a silk-dyer in Leadenhall Street. One of the governors, a Mr Childs, made enquiries in the neighbourhood. Ormond was found to be married, with two married daughters, had served as a parish and a ward officer, paid all his rates and was generally considered 'esteemed and reckon'd humane'.⁴¹ In November 1753 it was resolved that no girl should be apprenticed to an unmarried man and, over time, other conditions of apprenticeship were applied. The governors preferred that children, and especially girls, were not apprenticed to owners of public houses, and (in 1752) that boys should not be placed out as livery servants.⁴² Unfortunately the committee minutes do not always reveal why such decisions were made. Interestingly on 12 May 1756, at a quarterly court meeting, it was made a standing rule that Hospital children should only be apprenticed to Protestants.⁴³ The ruling came just five days before Britain declared war on Catholic France⁴⁴ and nine days after the government's agreement to provide financial support for the General Reception. Notwithstanding the pressure later placed on the governors by this development, assessment of would-be masters continued – not least because of the known risks associated with the offer of fees. In 1769, for example, one Henry Bloomfield and his wife were rejected despite being described as honest and industrious. Bloomfield's work was to cry 'oranges and lemons

⁴⁰ Uglow, *Hogarth*, p.156

⁴¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.148

⁴² LMA:A/FH/K/01/001-004(X041/010), p.244

⁴³ Nichols and Wray, *History of the Foundling Hospital*, p.183

⁴⁴ Seven Years War (1756-1763)

about the streets' and to make paper bags. The couple were assessed as being very poor and it was decided they sought an apprentice only for the money they stood to receive.⁴⁵

In the case of potential masters beyond London, alternative means of selection were sought. In April 1769 it was agreed that if a local church minister or warden provided a certificate confirming the suitability of a husbandman or industrious labourer that would be sufficient. The certificate was required to confirm that the petitioner had legal settlement in his parish, and that his financial situation was sufficient so that taking on an apprentice would not burden the parish.⁴⁶ One example of a common petition, also from 1769, described the applicant as 'industrious in ... business, sober and a proper person'; other petitions stated only that the local parishioners had no objection to a foundling child.⁴⁷ The approval of church and regional community leaders appears to have been enough for the London governors to judge the applicant of good character. Local communities were unlikely to allow an irresponsible master to take a foundling apprentice, as once settled, and if the master got into financial difficulties, the responsibility for the child's upkeep would fall to the parish.

From 1776 the London Hospital was no longer restricted by government influence. By this year apprenticeship numbers had been reduced to between 20 and 50 a year. Petitions from would-be masters for the later eighteenth century indicate that the majority either lived in London or had

⁴⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/12/001/009 (1769)

⁴⁶ LMA:A/FH/K/02/012(X041/17), p.26

⁴⁷ LMA:A/FH/A/12/002/002

contacts with people resident in the capital. This, for example, seems to have been the case for several children apprenticed to masters in Jersey in about 1784, many of whom had a reference via 'Madame Le Quesne and Sons' of St Martin-in-the-Field.⁴⁸ By now the governors were keen to accept only the best masters for their foundlings. Characteristics of successful applicants included comments on respectability, industriousness and sobriety. Testimonies frequently praised potential masters for their excellent workmanship, business acumen, or stated they were well respected in their neighbourhood. Typical examples of successful applicants include John Cowper, a 'china man'⁴⁹ - described as a man of 'character and property', who had been in his neighbourhood many years and was a Methodist. The comment that his clients included George III and the Prince of Wales may have strengthened his application.⁵⁰ Good character alone was never sufficient, while anyone taking in lodgers was automatically refused, as was the case of the noted cabinet maker George Hepplewhite, in 1781.⁵¹ Equally anyone whose work was deemed to be an 'unhealthy trade'⁵² was rejected; this included a petitioner employed as a watch gilder.⁵³ However, not every reason for rejection was documented. In 1796 a William McCready⁵⁴ applied for a girl to help his wife with needlework, attend to the children and assist the maid servant. Though both were said to be of good character the petition was refused with no reason given.⁵⁵ In

⁴⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/12/001/031 (1784)

⁴⁹ A dealer in porcelain

⁵⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/12/001/031-(1784-petition of John Cowper)

⁵¹ LMA:A/FH/A/12/001/029-(1781-petition of George Hepplewhite) This was when Hepplewhite was living in Clerkenwell and before he received his freedom in 1784.

⁵² LMA:A/FH/A/12/001/029-(1781-petition of Thomas Booker)

⁵³ Water gilding involved the use of mercury giving rise to toxicity after prolonged use - see Andrew Oddy, 'Gilding through the ages', in *Gold Bulletin*, 1981 (14), 2, p.75

⁵⁴ Possibly William McCready (1755-1829), Dublin born actor and theatre manager

⁵⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/12/001/043-(1796-petition of William McCready)

his application McCready had described his profession as ‘comedian’; perhaps the governors felt this was a trade that was neither respectable nor secure.

Mass apprenticeships

Whilst most masters took on one or two apprentices there were some requests for large groups of children. Martin Brown, a Yorkshire clothier took 74 female apprentices in 1765 at a time when demand for girls was low.⁵⁶ Brown’s business was involved in the manufacturer of a new type of woollen cloth; its exact type is not recorded. Production of the cloth was described as being particularly suitable for girls, although again this is not explained in the minutes. The undefined textile was reportedly produced successfully by the French for markets in Turkey and East India. The governors believed that this venture would not only reduce their foundling numbers but be of national benefit.⁵⁷ Unfortunately Brown’s success did not continue. By 1768 his working conditions were so poor that 22 of the girls had died, and Brown alerted the Hospital. The previous diligence of the London governors in checking their apprentices seems to have lapsed on this occasion. The Hospital did however assist the parish, where the surviving girls had gained settlement, in finding new placements.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ LMA:A/F/M/01/004/016, p.3

⁵⁷ Allin, *The Early Years*, pp.366-367

⁵⁸ McClure, *Coram’s Children*, pp.128-9

'Failed' apprenticeships?

The decade-by-decade sampling of registers undertaken for this research also reveals several children, whose apprenticeships were transferred from one master to another, suggesting the apprenticeship had failed in some way. Common causes of apprentice transfers included business closures or the illness or death of a master. By contrast, instances of cruel or neglectful masters were less common. Sometimes it was the children's behaviour that was the problem. Governors tried to address minor grievances, and often a change of master was sufficient to resolve these difficulties.⁵⁹ When such measures failed, it was sometimes considered necessary to discipline the child.

Occasionally children were found guilty of stealing and other serious crimes, but running away from a master was also considered a punishable offence. The records for 1770 include the case of an 11-year-old boy, John Oldfield (number 14,939), who ran back to his nurse several times.⁶⁰ The committee minutes note that, as he had pleaded forgiveness, he would not be 'had at the halberds'⁶¹ (that is, whipped). On no occasion do the governors appear to have considered why children ran away, only that it was a fault in need of correction. As McClure notes, the number of children recorded as deemed to require punishments increased from January 1777 when the committee discussed the need for a place of confinement.⁶² It may be significant that many of the children who had been admitted during General Reception, were now in their late teens. The

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.133

⁶⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/009, p.9

⁶¹ The halberds were a military punishment

⁶² McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.234

governors recognised this as a time when foundlings were tempted to challenge the authority of governors and masters. One such example was 18-year-old Marthe Bell (number 12373), whose master (in August 1777) had complained of her many 'bad and dishonest actions' and whom Hospital officials described as being at a 'critical age'. The governors went so far as to suggest that the master had been too kind and indulgent and that Marthe sought only to assert herself 'to satisfy her passions'.⁶³

From 1777 and throughout the rest of the century, there are several records of children being put into a 'dark place' with bread and water. However, it is in 1778 when a Revd. Dr John Watson wrote to the Hospital asking how a Dr Harrington should discipline his apprentice - John Coventry (number 16,677) - that we have detailed evidence of Hospital discipline. The governors replied that their normal method for punishing boys began with shutting them up in a dark place with bread and water. If children continued to show impertinence, the governors' next action was to have the child stripped, tied to the halberds and 'severely Whipt on the Back and Shoulders 'til the blood run freely.' The London governors stated they would be happy to perform the punishment if Dr Harrington wanted to send the boy back to the Hospital. When Watson wrote to the governors he had asked for a reply that could be read out to the boy. A second note (presumably not to be read out), 'on another piece of paper', stated that if the boy continued to cause problems, the governor could arrange for him to be sent to sea.⁶⁴

⁶³ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/013, p.88

⁶⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/013, p.232

Punishment for girls could be just as severe, as was the case of Judith Wardley who was returned from her second apprenticeship of seven months, due to her extreme short sightedness. Judith was 18 when first apprenticed in 1774, which was significantly older than other foundlings. She was 20 when she returned in 1776.⁶⁵ In 1778, after repeated admonishments for 'most unruly behaviour', she too was threatened with being whipped at the halberds.⁶⁶ No mention was made in the committee minutes as to what this unruly behaviour was or if the punishment was carried out. Perhaps because of an unwillingness to carry out such punishments, the Hospital matron was asked in 1779 to make a straight-jacket for the 'great girls' to be used either before or after they were locked up with bread and water.⁶⁷ Judith Wardley was evidently a particularly challenging foundling for whom repeated attempts at chastisement and reform failed. By March 1784 a new master, John Evans, had taken Judith on with a fee. His own attempts at 'correction or fair words or promises of reward' also proved unsuccessful and within months Evans sought to send Judith back to the Hospital. In August 1784, the minutes record how enquiries were being made to see if Judith had gained legal settlement through apprenticeship with her previous mistress, Sarah Stokes in 1775. The governor hoped that if she had, she could be sent to Stokes' parish workhouse.⁶⁸ To pass a foundling on to another authority was considered a last resort. However, by the 1770s and 80s, it was one the governors faced as the Hospital came to deal with a growing number of adult foundlings.

⁶⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/014, p.131

⁶⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/014, p.34

⁶⁷ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/014, p.162

⁶⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/03/05/017, p.242

Adult foundlings

It had always been the intention of the Hospital to keep some of the children as servants, in particular the girls.⁶⁹ As Bernard stated in his 1799 *Report*, what had not been expected was the *number* of children who could not be apprenticed because of disability or deformity.⁷⁰

Although some foundlings never left the institution, the committee records show how their transition to adulthood was marked. Hester Yardgrove (number 40), suffered from severe and chronic scrofula⁷¹ which may have left her facially scarred. In 1758 now a laundress and aged 18, she was given a box with a lock and key.⁷² Brought up in an institution this was probably the first time she had access to personal possessions and privacy.⁷³ Clothing too distinguished adult foundlings as different from the children of the Hospital. Hester in 1762, aged 21 received coloured aprons with her new clothes, and wages for work in the laundry.⁷⁴ Previously dressed in a standard uniform, this would have been a visual marker that she was no longer a foundling child.

Not all disabled children were able to work profitably. In 1768 the governor debated if all the blind girls could be either instructed in music or assessed for their abilities in sewing, knitting or spinning.⁷⁵ By December of that year it was agreed these girls should prioritise knitting.⁷⁶

Employment of the Hospital's disabled children was again discussed by the governors in 1771.

⁶⁹ Foundling Hospital, *Report*, 1740, pp.9-10

⁷⁰ Bernard, *Account* (1799), p.35

⁷¹ Tuberculosis of the neck

⁷² LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/002, p.169

⁷³ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2009, p.39

⁷⁴ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/005, p.40

⁷⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/007, p.97

⁷⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/007, p.216

Wherever possible the governors tried to find masters to take over the children's care, even if it meant offering the apprenticeship fees otherwise opposed.⁷⁷ This said, and as the historian of disability Ashley Mathisen has argued, such fees were often to pay for medical care and treatment, and with masters who were chosen with care.⁷⁸ However it should also be noted that the act of Parliament enacted in 1739 to protect the Hospital's parish also meant that these disabled individuals - as well as the Hospital's staff and its adult foundlings - were without settlement. Therefore with no parish to provide for their care the governors had little choice but to provide for them as best they could.

Some children proved impossible to apprentice. These included Mary Bingley (number 4,018) who in 1779, aged 22, was described as 'very willing but capable of little'.⁷⁹ As Mathisen's research shows, the governors' focus was on what these children could do rather than what they could not, and this was evident in the minutes.⁸⁰ The committee minutes reveal how governors thought all the children, whatever his or her physical or mental impairment, should undertake activities 'so that they may be usefull to themselves and the community'.⁸¹ The implication was that some work, however limited, was better than none. It might be implied that activity could be of personal benefit – perhaps reflecting the Christian belief that idleness was sinful. Equally it may just have been a way to keep them occupied. One additional insight into the governors' attitude

⁷⁷ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/009, pp.212-3

⁷⁸ Ashley Mathisen, "'So that they may be usefull to themselves and the community": charting childhood disability in an eighteenth-century institution', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 8.2 (2015), p.200

⁷⁹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/014, p.132

⁸⁰ Ashley Mathieson, 'So that they ...', p.201

⁸¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/009, p.175

towards disability was revealed by a comment made in the minutes of February 1777. It was questioned of some disabled girls 'whether their Deformity may permit them to appear in Public'.⁸² What is not recorded is why the governors wanted them hidden from view – presumably they were either disruptive or vulnerable.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the process and purpose of apprenticeship at the London Foundling Hospital in the eighteenth century. It has looked at the trades the children were employed in and how masters were chosen. An assessment was made as to how apprenticeship changed over the second half of the century – in particular during the period of General Reception – and explored some of the reasons for these developments. Issues around why apprenticeships 'failed', and how such failures were dealt with, were also discussed. Consideration was given to issues related to those foundlings who were never apprenticed; some of whom were incapable of apprenticeship and others who became useful workers in the Hospital as adult foundlings.

As has been demonstrated, although the objectives of the founding governors were realised in the early decades – with foundlings employed in laborious and servile occupations - expectations soon began to change. As early as 1755, boys were employed in other trades, some of which might be considered craft based rather than dependent on physical labour. General Reception and its aftermath was the period in which the Hospital governors lost their previously tight control of the

⁸² LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/013, p.17

foundlings' apprenticeships. In particular they were unable to choose masters with care. By the 1770s, when the 'parliamentary children' had been dispersed, the governors might have hoped that administration of the institution would be easier. Instead the governors had to deal with greater numbers of 'problem' apprentices who were returned to the Hospital, and breakdowns in discipline. Some of these difficulties had been caused by unsuitable masters but many of the General Reception children were now young adults which even the governors considered a 'challenging age'. The 1770s saw the emergence of further considerations, in particular 'competition' from a growing number of philanthropic enterprises in London. These created new economic pressures as each charity fought for public support in the last three decades of the century.

Despite these issues - many of which were unforeseen in 1740 - and despite the failures of certain apprenticeships, the programme also produced many successes. These will be the focus of the following chapter where an assessment is made of how far the Hospital's principal ambitions and activity were realised. In other words, to what extent did an education programme, combining practical skills and moral instruction, prepare the foundlings for work, and how we might understand success from the perspective of those involved, including governors, staff, masters and foundlings themselves.

Chapter Five: Effectiveness and experience: assessing the outcomes of education and apprenticeship

Education and apprenticeship were the two core elements of the London Foundling Hospital, both in terms of the objectives of its founding governors, and in the daily experiences of its foundlings and those who worked for the institution. Having previously considered the nature and development of education and apprenticeship from the 1740s, this chapter brings together these two key strands to assess the overall effectiveness of the Hospital as a place of rescue for infant children and a source of personal development leading to full-time employment.

The governors of the London Foundling Hospital faced numerous challenges in the first six decades of their institution. Many of these could not be foreseen when the Hospital was planned, and the governors' original statement of aims and ambitions was drafted in 1740. Yet, despite these challenges, and despite governors' needs to adapt their founding principles, the early decades of the Hospital were largely characterised by efficiency and achievement. This chapter assesses in greater detail the nature and extent of these positive outcomes in terms of foundlings' education and their preparation for apprenticeship and work. An institution as complex as the Foundling Hospital must be assessed from a range of perspectives - from the organisational to the individual level. In response this chapter will draw on evidence from Hospital governors and staff, the apprenticeship masters and selected foundlings themselves, where their comments are recorded in the committee minutes.

Alongside these committee minutes a review is also made of other records in the Hospital's archives. In particular an assessment will be made of gratuity petitions. These documents, which date from 1800, were presented to the Hospital governors following completion of successful apprenticeships. When certain criteria were fulfilled the foundling received a financial reward. Each petition provided an assessment of an apprentice - that they were honest, sober and diligent, and that they avoided bad company and profane language. To these petitions further assessments are made by the Hospital schoolmaster (for boys) or the Matron (for girls). These confirm the criteria were met, and often provide additional information on individuals and their lives. Supplementary documents, not restricted to those in the Hospital collection at the London Metropolitan Archives, also enable us to follow an individual further into adulthood. These include business accounts, census returns and burial records. From such documents we are able to build a more complete picture of the outcomes and experiences of selected foundlings between infancy and early adulthood, and to assess the contribution made by the Hospital in shaping their biographies.

This chapter uses a thematic approach to consider connections between education (schooling, religious and moral instruction and vocational training) and apprenticeship. It considers how well one aspect led to the other. We begin however, by returning to a late eighteenth-century evaluation of the Hospital – that of its treasurer Sir Thomas Bernard – to review the reasoning behind, and the accuracy of, his assessment of the Hospital in terms of education and work. What

did Sir Thomas consider the institution's achievements and successes, and – viewed from greater historical distance – how do his claims correspond to the opinions and experiences of other eighteenth-century actors?

Assessments of the Hospital

Bernard's *Account* of 1799 began with a review of how and why the Hospital was set up - in particular that it was an institution that would turn unwanted infants into 'useful servants' for employment in times of national need.¹ This reflected the aspirations of the Hospital governors in 1740 both in their report² and William Hogarth's letterhead, *Study for the Foundlings*.³ Such ambitions were realised by many of the early foundlings who went into occupations that were laborious and servile: husbandry and sea service for the boys and domestic service for the girls.

Bernard then recalled the era of General Reception between 1756 and 1760 when, with Parliamentary funding,⁴ admissions increased tenfold. He remarked that 'A charity so boundless ... and so unnecessarily varied from its original institution could not but be attended with ill consequences'⁵ and followed with an account of some of the issues faced. In particular he recorded how the Hospital became a 'burying ground' with a great increase in the number of

¹ Bernard, *Account* (1799) p.5

² Foundling Hospital, *Report* (1740), pp.1-2

³ William Hogarth, *William, Study for the Foundlings* (1739)

⁴ Bernard, *Account* (1799), p.27

⁵ *Ibid*, p.29

admissions.⁶ He also referred to the difficulties of maintaining the disabled, and ageing foundlings who were retained as members of staff.⁷ Bernard then highlighted how the Hospital had increased its charitable aims, notably with the admission of the orphaned children of British soldiers and sailors from 1761.⁸ The number of these foundlings was small – McClure lists thirty-four such individuals in total⁹ – so it is of interest that Bernard highlights these admissions. Bernard’s hope was that the admission of ‘children of the defenders of their country’¹⁰ could be extended with further funding.¹¹

The next section of Bernard’s *Account* (about half of the total pamphlet), reviewed the period post 1771. This was when the institution reduced in size and set in place a number of new schemes to save money and increase its sources of income. Noting the Hospital’s return to financial security in these later decades, Bernard stated his intention to revive the tradition of monetary rewards which had previously been given to those foundlings completing successful apprenticeships.¹² He also reviewed the chequered history of music instruction at the Hospital – and how benevolence towards blind children was of financial benefit to the Hospital.¹³ Commentary on ‘failed’ apprenticeships and ‘competition’ from other charities was not acknowledged.

⁶ Ibid, p.29

⁷ Ibid, p.35

⁸ Ibid, p.34

⁹ McClure, *Coram’s Children*, p.137

¹⁰ Ibid, p.56

¹¹ Ibid, p.59

¹² Ibid, pp.36-7

¹³ Ibid, p.39

The rest of Bernard's *Report*, dating from June 1799, was added as a supplement and included his review of the Hospital's current situation at the turn of the century. Following the charity's 'gradual restoration of finances', Bernard drew attention to significant improvements in the Hospital. Bernard then gave an account of how the children were admitted, maintained and educated. He recounted how, on return from their country nurses, all the children were 'innoculated and placed in schools [and] gradually accustomed to regular and early habits of order and attention'. Part of the children's timetable was dedicated to their instruction in singing 'Foundling hymns and anthems' and learning the catechism.¹⁴ The boys, Bernard noted, worked in the garden and cleaned the courtyard. He referred to how skills in reading, writing and arithmetic were also now more beneficial than the manufactories that the Hospital used to run.¹⁵ His assessment of the Hospital at the end of the eighteenth century corresponds to what is known from the archives.

Turning to the apprenticeship programme, Bernard reminded his readers that 'no fee is given with the children' and that male foundlings were now frequently placed 'with London shop-keepers, to whom their being able to write and keep accounts, is of considerable importance.' This, he continued, was the 'best occupation for young persons ... for their future duties in society.'¹⁶ As for the girls, their days consisted of needlework and reading, while older female foundlings assisted with housework. Bernard stressed the importance of the economic advantage of the 'considerable quantity of needlework taken in'. He then gave details of how the children were

¹⁴ Ibid, p.65

¹⁵ Ibid, p.66

¹⁶ Ibid, p.67

apprenticed: boys at age 12 to 13, girls at 14 after 'strict enquiry being previous made as to situation and character' of potential masters. He also stated how during their apprenticeships children were frequently visited by Hospital staff.¹⁷ Bernard stated that the Hospital guardians considered it their 'duty to care [for the foundlings] until discharged at 21'.¹⁸ He concluded his 1799 report with a description of a recent visit to the Hospital by George III and the delight of those children who were presented to their 'Sovereign, the Father and Friend of his Country'.¹⁹

Although acknowledging some of the challenges encountered at the Hospital, Bernard's brief review clearly highlighted the positive outcomes, particularly financial security, and focused on opportunities for the institution's future development. Written on behalf of the Foundling Hospital and published to support its continued existence, it is perhaps no surprise that Bernard emphasised achievement. Key themes to which he drew attention included the Hospital's value to the nation, as in its acceptance of war orphans, and that foundlings were encouraged to be hard-working. Of particular note is Bernard's suggestion that the General Reception and its aftermath was a period of experiment in which different procedures were tried, found to fail, and from which lessons were learned.

Bernard's review reflects a description by another Hospital governor, John Holliday. Writing in 1787, Holliday described the General Reception as a 'short, yet shocking period of time, when the

¹⁷ Ibid, p.68

¹⁸ Ibid, pp.69-70

¹⁹ Ibid, pp.72-73

experiment was made, of taking into the Hospital all such children ... as should be tendered for admission.'²⁰ Holliday's comments came as a result of the other governors' decision in 1787 to raise funds; by offering for sale land around the Hospital to prospective builders. It was Holliday's belief that, should the institution be hemmed in by extensive building, it would risk the health of the foundlings. His focus of the Hospital's early history describes how Dr Mead, a founding governor and physician, worked with Thomas Coram to find 'an airy, open, open and healthy situation' to raise a 'hardy race of children, fit for the most laborious employments, and the humble walks in life.'²¹

Holliday offered very little about the children's schooling in practice, referring only to the teaching of boys 'to weed and work with moderation' as employment that saves the 'expense of under-gardeners and labourers.'²² There was no mention of the girls. Holliday also wrote of the need to place out 'children apprentices to industrious and discreet masters ... as soon as they are fit for useful service' in order to avoid them 'becoming headstrong, and acquiring habits of indolence, not easy to be afterwards conquered.'²³ Written about a decade before Bernard's report, Holliday's assessment of boys' employment – with its emphasis on labour and hard work – proved rather more in keeping with that of the founding governors, set out in 1740.

²⁰ John Holliday, *An Appeal to the Governors of the Foundling Hospital* (London: printed by Harrison & Co, 1787), p.9

²¹ *Ibid*, p.8

²² *Ibid*, p.12

²³ *Ibid*, p.16

Assessments of education as preparation for apprenticeship

These two reports consider the Hospital's achievements in general terms. Both governors suggest that any problems of the past were due to General Reception and were now resolved. In addition, both accounts refer to the relationship between the activities of education and apprenticeship, even though the activities they describe are very different. Holliday stressed the importance of boys being able to build strength for labour, whereas Bernard considered schooling important for boys to work with London shop-keepers. Holliday's focus on labour seems surprising, considering that at the time of his report (1780s) the evidence in the committee minutes showed that schoolwork and knitting were then being prioritised for boys.

This section will now look at how well education did lead to apprenticeship before considering the achievements of the foundlings themselves. A thematic approach will be used – dividing education into three categories – schooling (that is reading, writing and arithmetic), vocational training and religious and moral instruction. Within vocational training consideration will also be given to activities of play. The focus of each category will be the relationship between categories of education and how they related to apprenticeship. The most contentious of these aspects was schooling.

As seen previously, teaching children to read was considered important by the Hospital governors. It was mentioned in the *Report of the General Committee*²⁴ of 1740 and illustrated in Hogarth's *Study for the Foundlings*.²⁵ As Porter argues, some believed teaching the poor to read led them to 'ideas above their station'²⁶ but others saw it as important for direct access to the Bible. This, it was believed, would lead to personal salvation.²⁷ M.G. Jones, the historian of education, argues that charities such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) saw teaching poor children to read scripture as a moral duty. At the same time the literature used promoted Protestantism in response to a fear of Catholic power.²⁸ However at a time when most trades were principally dependent on manual labour, few required the ability to read.²⁹ Reading therefore was taught at the Hospital for religious and moral reasons.

The teaching of writing proved more controversial. Not only was it more expensive to teach (requiring equipment to learn and time to practice)³⁰ but, as Porter argues, education was considered functional and there was no need for labourers to write.³¹ Martyn Lyons, a historian of literacy, contends that restricting education also maintained the hierarchical system of social order – a lack of writing skills making workers (and especially women) dependent on others.³² These issues might explain why writing lessons were forbidden by the Hospital's general committee in

²⁴ Foundling Hospital, *The Report of the General Committee*, 1740, p.8

²⁵ Hogarth, *Study for the Foundlings*, 1739

²⁶ Porter, *Enlightenment*, p.74

²⁷ Lyons, *History of Reading and Writing*, p.92

²⁸ Jones, *Charity School*, p.35

²⁹ Lyons, *History of Reading*, p.103

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.95

³¹ Porter, *Enlightenment*, p.346

³² Lyons, *History of Reading*, p.98

1754. However, as Jones observes, many Sunday schools did teach poor children to write and learn arithmetic.³³ Thus when London tradesmen sought apprentices with writing skills, there was a ready supply available to them. As Bernard noted, London in particular had an increasing need for apprentices with writing and arithmetic skills.³⁴ For the Hospital to compete with other charities, it needed an equivalent system of education. Though vocational skills were prioritised and writing lessons abandoned in the era of General Reception, their reintroduction may reflect this necessity. It is of interest that from a sample of twenty-one petitions dating from 1803, and presented by foundlings on completion of their apprenticeship, all but four girls (of fourteen) could sign their name.³⁵ This high rate of literacy suggests that writing was by now considered a useful skill, and that some foundlings may have learned to write after leaving the Hospital.

Vocational training had both a moral and a practical dimension. The governors considered it most valuable as a means to instil in the foundlings the habit of work, rather than to set them on a course of permanent employment in a particular trade. As the sub-committee minutes noted in April 1760: 'the employment of the Children in any Manufactory is not with a view to teach them a Trade by which they are to get a livelihood but to give them an early Turn to industry by giving them constant employment.'³⁶ Even so it does appear that certain children did learn a trade through their education. For instance, of the nine foundlings who were apprenticed as weavers in

³³ Jones, *Charity School*, p.80

³⁴ Bernard, *Account*, 1799, p.66

³⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/012/007/004/001

³⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/03/5/04, p.89, quoted in Allin, *The Early Years*, p.180

1766; four had been at the Shrewsbury branch Hospital where weaving was one of its main activities.

In addition, all children were taught the skills necessary for maintaining their clothing (that is mending and darning). Occupations such as sea service and other trades benefited from boys' knowledge of needlework and other textile skills. As sailors, apprentices were not only expected to mend their own clothes but to maintain the ship with tasks such as repairing sails or mending nets. Bookbinding, cordwaining,³⁷ tailoring and staymaking all required skills in sewing. Dexterity of hand movements developed through such tasks would also have been of benefit to craftsmen. In July 1765 Thomas Strode (number 1,367) was praised for his darning,³⁸ later he was selected to work for a clockmaker in which capacity he would have required fine motor skills. Strode, it should be noted, soon after changed master and took up a new trade in 'pump making'. John Spence (number 1,594) was another who used his sewing skills on becoming an apprentice shoemaker. In September 1777, Spence, then aged 21, had completed his apprenticeship. He returned to the Hospital stating that his master was 'willing to encourage by granting him the privilege to do business for himself'. Spence asked if he could be considered to provide shoes for the Hospital. Having assessed that his prices were reasonable, the governors agreed that Spence could have half their business, providing his work was good.³⁹ Of course, not every former foundling later employed for a specific task at the Hospital was apprenticed in an equivalent trade. George Priaulx (number 16,545), for example, was engaged by the Hospital to assist the tailor in

³⁷ A shoemaker

³⁸ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/006, p.73

³⁹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/05/13, p.109

July 1779 when he was 12 years old. It is not known if Priaulx was successful at tailoring but, when apprenticed two months later, he was assigned to John Silk, a coffee man. He worked with Silk for three years but returned to the Hospital 'having fits' and 'could not be of service to his master'.⁴⁰ It is not known what Priaulx did next but having tailoring skills may have provided more opportunities for future placements.

Forms of play and recreation, such as the javelins and darts purchased for the boys in 1754, were also regarded as useful training, specifically in this case to teach skills required in the whaling industry. This may have been in response to the comments of a Captain Liddell, who worked in the Greenland fisheries. Having taken one boy apprentice, Charles Richmond (number 17) in August 1753, he applied for a second child three months later. Addressing the sub-committee, Liddell made clear his intention to speak to several friends who would take 'as many boys of this Hospital ... Employ them in the said Fishery, as can be spared and are proper for that purpose'.⁴¹ More than ten years later, in June 1765, William Kent also applied for an apprentice having been, in his words, 'recommended by Captain Liddell who has taken several boys of this Hospital'.⁴² The number of male foundlings who went into whaling in this period remains to be calculated.

Many girls similarly went on to use their skills in needlework, knitting, spinning and housework whether in service or as mothers and housekeepers themselves. Given that employment

⁴⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/05/017, p.3

⁴¹ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, p.203

⁴² LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/006, p.63

opportunities for women were limited it is reasonable to argue that by receiving a rounded 'education' of this nature the girls of the Foundling Hospital gained most of the skills needed for their later employment.

Training in religious and moral instruction might be considered less for its relationship with work, and more as a skill for life. However, many practical skills also had a moral dimension.

Maintaining a neat and tidy appearance was essential. This is shown in the case of Dorothy Prince (number 2,002), who in September 1778, and now aged 22 years, was returned to her parish in Sheffield where she had settlement. Unable to work, the Hospital felt Prince should be supplied with new clothes afraid that if 'she were to be past [sic] as a Vagrant she might be ill treated'.⁴³

Moral training was also intended to promote traits such as honesty and sobriety, while hard work encouraged diligence. That these attributes were clearly valued by the governors is evident in their being required for and rewarded in foundlings' applications for gratuity payments. Thus it appears that those children who developed what were deemed 'good characters' were more able to obtain, and retain, work in later life.

Finally music lessons, which were part of religious instruction, led directly to the employment of some blind children, among them Blanch Thetford (number 7,538). Admitted in 1758, Blanch was paid as a singer in the Hospital chapel. Later she also taught music to another blind foundling -

⁴³ LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/014, p.20

Jane Freer.⁴⁴ Blanch remained at the Hospital until her death aged 75 in 1833. What has not yet been discovered is whether sighted children, who were taught music at the Hospital from the 1770s, were also able to use this training in later life.

Hospital staff assessments of foundlings

The early education of the foundlings was a combination of reading, receiving religious and moral instruction and partaking in manual labour. The majority of boys were initially taken as apprentices in sea service, husbandry, and manual labour, while girls went into forms of domestic service. Given that these practices changed very little over the first two decades, and given that the outcomes were consistent with the founders' aims of 1740, we might infer that - at least in the early period (that is, pre-General Reception) – the education regime was considered successful for the preparation of foundlings for adult life. Hospital governors Bernard and Holliday considered the institution's achievements in general terms. Reports made by other Hospital staff often focus on individual foundlings.

Detailed commentaries by governors and authority figures on individual foundlings remain rare; however some insight is provided in a document dated from 1762 which records visits by the Hospital Steward to a group of ten children. While the purpose of this particular document was not recorded, it provides valuable accounts of selected foundlings singled out for praise, and the nature of their commendable character as fostered at the Hospital. Frances White (now aged 21)

⁴⁴ McClure, *Coram's Children*, p.239

was described as 'a good girl ... quite honest, dutiful, modest, true, very tender hearted and dropped an amiable Tear at the praises given her.' Bridget Taylor (age 13) was described as 'a sensible, ready girl with some faults, concealed ... on promise of amendment.' The only boy listed on the document was Edward Russell (aged 12) and apprenticed to a vintner. He was described as 'now honest, but pouty and idle when sent on an errand'.⁴⁵

A system of financial awards was mentioned in Bernard's *Account* of 1799 and was known to have begun sometime in the 1760s.⁴⁶ Bernard hoped they would be reinstated because of the 'effect on the morals and conduct of the children'.⁴⁷ Esther Royston (number 16324) and Letitia Edwards (number 424) are the last two children recorded in the general committee minutes as having receiving such gratuities in 1769. Esther attended with her mistress⁴⁸, and Letitia was at that time working as a servant in the Hospital. Both girls were recorded simply as being given 'a good character' and both received one guinea as a reward.⁴⁹ Here no information was provided as to what constituted good character though later petitions did provide more information as will be seen below. It could be said that as well as recording the accomplishments of foundlings it was a system that could be advertised as proof of success.

⁴⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/03/006/001

⁴⁶ Bernard, *Account* (1799), p.36

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.36

⁴⁸ LMA:A/FH/K/02/001(X041/17), p.41

⁴⁹ LMA: A/FH/K/02/012(X041/17), p.94

Masters' viewpoints

Records of apprentice masters, during the early phase of the Hospital, are often confined to the committee records. Such accounts are often limited in detail. They do however offer some evidence of assessments made by masters about the foundlings.

The whaler Captain Liddell provides us with one instance of a master who appears to have thought sufficiently highly of the apprenticeship system to return for additional foundlings on repeated occasions in the early 1750s. Another example was John Ormond, a silk dyer, who returned for a second apprentice in 1762. His first apprentice was Mary Georgia (number 93) in 1752. Ten years later 'her time almost out' he applied for a second girl.⁵⁰ His second application was agreed and he was assigned to take Elizabeth King (number 611). It is not recorded whether Mary stayed with Ormond in paid employment or went elsewhere.

Many masters did continue to employ their foundlings beyond apprenticeship. Here too it seems reasonable to identify a system of training and placement working successfully and in line with the general principles of the Hospital founders and its subsequent governors. On a few occasions the Hospital records also provide direct evidence from masters of their experience of taking foundlings as apprentices. Such was the case of the merchant/embroiderer Felix Ehrlitzholtzer, who apprenticed thirty-one girls from the Foundling Hospital between 1766 and 1773. Ehrlitzholtzer's first apprentice in March 1766 was Sarah Osborne (number 1,374) who was to be employed in

⁵⁰ LMA:A/FH/A/03/05/05, p.11

‘household business’; girls taken subsequently were to be trained in embroidery.⁵¹ In 1771 governor Jonas Hanway visited Ehrlitzholtzer’s workshop where he found the children ‘clean and in good order’. Ehrlitzholtzer for his part made ‘no very great complaint of any of them and commended some very highly.’ Hanway also noted that Ehrlitzholtzer intended to employ some of the girls once their apprenticeship had been completed.⁵²

In March 1800 the system of gratuities was re-established, and thereafter the General Committee rewarded individual apprentices up to five guineas on successful completion of their term of service.⁵³ Although just outside the time period of this study, these early petitions relate to children educated and apprenticed in the 1790s. Again they provide rare and valuable insights into masters’ assessment and opinion of their foundlings. Ann Hall’s petition, dating from 1803, for example, was typical of these submissions; like several children assessed in the sampling,⁵⁴ she continued in the service of her master following completion of her apprenticeship. Ann had first been apprenticed in 1797 to ‘household business’ when she was 14 years of age. Although placed with Richard Rayley, ‘gentleman’, it was his wife Mary who wrote out Ann’s petition in October 1803. Here Mary Rayley described an apprentice ‘marked by honesty, sobriety, diligence and attention to the printed instructions delivered to her at the time of her being apprenticed and by

⁵¹ LMA:A/FH/A/12/003/001(X041/005A)

⁵² LMA:A/FH/K/02/014(X041/017), p.114

⁵³ Nichols & Wray, *History of the Foundling Hospital*, p.194

⁵⁴ Fourteen out of 24 children in the sample, were re-employed by their masters

an uniform avoidance of bad company and of prophan[e] [sic] and indecent conversation.’ In return, Ann was awarded a gratuity of five guineas.⁵⁵

Remaining with a single master was not in itself an indicator of a successful apprenticeship. Thus, some petitions show how the overcoming of difficulties was looked on favourably by the governors, as in the case of George Potter. According to his petition, dated November 1803, Potter was originally apprenticed to a surgeon, Mr Alberthy, in March 1793 when he was 11 years of age. For 4 ½ years there were no problems with the apprenticeship before Alberthy asked for the boy to return to the Hospital. No reason was given for this request. Potter returned to the Hospital and the institution’s long-serving schoolmaster, Richard Aitchison, described his conduct there as ‘unblamable’. In May 1798 Potter was assigned a new master, Theophilus Bowser, and again all was well until Bowser took on a new housekeeper. Potter ‘displeas[ed] her’ and Bowser sent the boy to work at an iron mill. Potter was, in Aitchison’s words ‘destitute of protection amidst a set of drinking men’. Eventually, with Aitchison’s intervention, Potter was assigned a new master – a Mr Rolfe, sawyer. Potter became ‘very useful to him [and] served out his time with approbation’ later moving to a new employer with whom he could ‘get more constant work.’ In his report, Aitchison considered Potter ‘unfortunate having being put out so young to a young single man who from being over-indulgent changed to too much severity’. With his second master Potter was likewise placed ‘with a young man whose house was ill conducted’. Aitchison felt Potter had been ‘rescued from ruin or perhaps from speedy death by the kind interposition of the

⁵⁵ LMA:A/FH/A/012/007/004/001–petition of Ann Wall

committee'. For his part, Potter having been 'exposed to many temptations', remained 'always sober and decent' and 'in his dress and manners very creditable'.⁵⁶

In the cases of Ann Wall and George Potter, and others like them, the voices we hear are those of the master, governor or a member of Hospital staff. Obtaining the perspective of a foundling him or herself proves more challenging due to the nature of the sources. However, a few examples can be found. The case of Samuel Inman (b.1783, number 17,859) is particularly notable as his petition provides his experience of an apprenticeship, as well as the assessments and opinions of others on his conduct. In addition, by using a variety of records, it is possible to follow Inman's life beyond the Hospital and into his later, adult life.

Inman applied for his gratuity in November 1804. It is a note attached to this petition - again written by the schoolmaster, Richard Aitchison - that provides the additional information relating to this young man's life. Aitchison began by noting a dispute, now settled, between Inman and the well-known publisher and print seller, Rudolph Ackermann (1764-1835). In October 1800 Inman, by then an apprentice with Ackermann for three years, informed the governors of his disappointment regarding his employment. Instead of being trained as an engraver, as he had wished, Inman was employed in his master's shop. Aitchison stated that this caused Inman 'uneasiness of mind' giving us some evidence of Inman's opinion. There is no further information about the dispute but Aitchison implies it was resolved and that Inman continued to 'behave with

⁵⁶ LMA:A/FH/A/12/007/005-petition of George Potter

propriety'. Aitchison's note also states Ackermann's intention, if Inman remained with him for a further three years, to 'give him shop goods to set him up in business. I am informed to the amount of £200.' Despite the dispute, Ackermann similarly appears to have been pleased with Inman, describing him on the petition as an 'honest, sober and industrious man' who 'is now, and may remain as long as he conducts himself properly in my service.'⁵⁷ Although it is not confirmed whether Ackermann kept his financial promise to his apprentice, census returns from 1851 identify a 'Samuel Inman' - born in 1783 - with a wife Mary Ann. He was then employed as a 'stationer'. His address - 7 Lambs Conduit Street - was situated opposite the gates of the Foundling Hospital.⁵⁸ Burial records at Kensal Green for a Samuel Inman, in 1853, record both '7 Lambs Conduit Street' with a second address in Regent Street⁵⁹; though Ackermann was deceased, the Regent Street shop was now the site of his son's business. From this it seems reasonable to conclude that Inman, a former foundling apprentice, was able to establish his own premises and remain a business contact of his late master's son.

Conclusion

This chapter has brought together the two core elements of the foundling's experience, and the governors' ambitions, which are education and apprenticeship. An assessment was made as to how well these were combined, that is what skills did the foundlings take from their education to be used in their later apprenticeships. In addition, consideration has been given as to how far

⁵⁷ LMA:A/FH/A/12/07/05/01-petition of Samuel Inman

⁵⁸ HO 107/151-1851 census

⁵⁹ Burial record for All Soul's, Kensal Green 1853-DL/T/041/021

different sources and commentaries provide eighteenth-century assessments of their success in achieving the wider goals of the Hospital.

The documents used to assess contemporary commentaries on the effectiveness of the Foundling Hospital are varied. Published reports by governors such as Bernard and Holliday have both been written with a particular purpose in mind. Importantly both expressed an opinion that the education provided for the foundlings was appropriate for the apprenticeships to which they were destined. Bernard drew readers' attention to the adaptability of the apprenticeship system. By contrast, Holliday's expressed his concern that changes to the Hospital environment might have a detrimental effect on the children's future success. Both sources are general in tone and limited in detail on the experiences and opinions of foundlings and masters.

The gratuity petitions are however particularly useful for information on individual foundlings. Written from the perspective of the Hospital steward, the schoolmaster or matron, they are in part formulaic confirming what the Hospital authorities wanted to know. However, there is often additional detail of a personal nature – about triumph over adversity, or an expression of emotion. What is interesting is how frequently these petitions were written in support of the foundlings. This is particularly so in the case of the schoolmaster, Robert Aitchison, who would have known the foundlings since infancy. In addition, they confirm a commitment to moral as well as practical instruction – by praising foundlings for honesty, sobriety and diligence.

Finally, the petitions of George Potter and Samuel Inman are particularly useful for illustrating how both embodied the traditional (1740) values of moral instruction and industry, alongside skills in a changing (trade-focused) economy. In cases like these we are able to identify a consistency of purpose and ambition – to make foundlings ‘useful’ – alongside adaptability in the face of institutional and social change. This appears to reflect the statements made by Bernard in his own account of the Hospital in 1799.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The Foundling Hospital was a unique institution in eighteenth-century London. The vision of a retired sea captain, Thomas Coram, the establishment was managed by a committee of members of the landed gentry and a growing metropolitan middle-class. Their stated aim was to save destitute children and turn them into useful members of society. First opened in 1741, the institution has served many generations of children and their parents - and continues to do so. In 1926 the London Hospital relocated to a new site in Hertfordshire. This then closed in 1954, and the establishment has since continued as a children's charity and a museum. The intention of this thesis has been to offer a systematic and detailed study one of the core aspects of the institution - namely to look into the changing practice and nature of education and training at the Hospital. This was followed by a review of the challenges of apprenticeship – a principal purpose of education. Finally, attention has been paid to the effectiveness of the Hospital's educational and training programme policy, during the eighteenth century, and to the theme of achievement and success from a variety of institutional and personal viewpoints.

The starting point for this study was the Hospital's own records, located in the London Metropolitan Archives. Held in single ownership for more than 250 years, and extending to over 800 linear feet of shelving, this collection provides an almost complete history of the institution, from the 1740s to the 1970s. The archives contain a rich source of insight regarding the individuals – governors, staff and foundlings – and the buildings that make up the Hospital. The archives single most challenging aspect is its size. In addition, some records are restricted for conservation issues while other documents available on microfiche can be difficult to read. This meant that a research project of this kind required a sampling of the archives – looking at records from selected years in each decade between 1741 and 1800. From this, this

thesis has sought to build up an institutional as well as a human history of education and apprenticeship as they were conceived, justified, adapted, championed, abused, and experienced.

In addition, although catalogued, the archive is not fully indexed. Occasionally records were only found by chance, and serendipitous searching, and from the author's existing, and extensive, knowledge of the Hospital administration. One such example was a list of prices for needlework services that showing a direct comparison between prices charged at the Magdalen Hospital, and the slightly lower charges at the Foundling Hospital.

¹ Thus providing evidence that the Hospital was responding to another institution's pricing scale.

In addition, the time constraints of this specific research project have meant that certain approaches could not be pursued. For instance, it has not been possible to fully explore foundlings' training in the context of eighteenth-century educational theory – those of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau being the most well known – in order to compare these with the ambitions and aims of the Hospital governors. It was equally difficult to explore a range of comparative institutions in any great detail – parish workhouses and charities such as the Marine Society, for example – to assess similarities and differences. There is clear potential for further research here.

Despite these necessary limitations on scope, this thesis provides a detailed and multi-dimensional account of a central preoccupation and activity of what quickly became a leading charity, both in London and nationally. It offers a number of conclusions about the Hospital's education programme as it developed

¹ LMA:A/FH/A/06/07/02

during the eighteenth century, and how, and how well, this intersected with the practice of apprenticeship. Firstly, that its education programme comprised four strands - schooling (reading, writing and arithmetic), moral and religious instruction, and vocational training – the relative importance of which were prioritised or diminished at differing points across the century. In addition, each of these educational forms was interlinked – for instance, reading was taught to gain access to the Bible, mending was taught for its moral benefits. Vocational training was a key component of the foundlings’ lives and seen at the time as essential for preparing children for apprenticeship, physically, mentally and morally. This work would be hard, but then so too was life beyond the Hospital.

The period of General Reception (1756-60) comes across clearly in the records as the most challenging era for the Hospital in the eighteenth century, and beyond. This was an event the effects of which were felt in every aspect of a foundling’s life. What is also notable is that in the 1770s, when the Hospital should have been in a phase of recovery, new challenges emerged. Not only were there increasing problems with apprentices who returned (because of illness, problems with masters or misbehaviour) but also with a group of adult foundlings, including some with physical and mental disabilities, who were never able to leave the Hospital. In addition, ‘competition’ from other philanthropic ventures such as the Lock and Magdalen Hospitals, meant a re-thinking of practices such as music instruction, once deemed inappropriate but from the 1770s thought essential for the economic survival of the institution. Throughout all these changes the Hospital governors sought solutions and responded to new ideas.

Issues relating to gender and national identity also flow through this history. Initially clear distinctions were made by governors between what was appropriate for boys and for girls. However, by the end of the

century some of these boundaries had blurred. This was noted when in 1790, governor John Holliday recalled surprise at the boys' spinning – a task he believed was more useful for girls.²

The governors were also consistently aware that this was an institution under scrutiny and exposed to public criticism via bespoke treatises, correspondence or newspaper commentaries. There remained a constant need to remind the public of the national utility of the Hospital: by improving the lives of the children, it was hoped to improve society more generally.

Finally, this thesis has uncovered the need to understand the institution in a wider context – a bringing together of individuals in an establishment affected by international, national, metropolitan and local events and practices. The Hospital cannot be fully understood without understanding the society of which it was part.

Scholars in the past have sought to understand the institution's eighteenth-century history from a variety of standpoints. Historians such as Ruth McClure and David Allin have provided general overviews to consider the Hospital's foundation and particularly the challenges faced during the period of General Reception. Within this complex history, education and preparation for apprenticeship is understandably limited to a broad consideration of practice and outcomes. Biographers such as Gillian Wagner and Jenny Uglow have looked at the Hospital from the perspective of their protagonists. Wagner's exploration of Thomas Coram's input into education practices shows how much they were limited: on account of disagreements that led to his removal from the Hospital's committee; and because his death, in 1751,

² LMA:A/FH/A/04/002/002

occurred before the major impact of General Reception. Uglow meanwhile focuses on William Hogarth's personal support for the institution, and his interest in public art, as part of a complex life of which the Hospital was just one aspect.

Other historians have studied the Hospital for what its practices tell us about broader social and economic themes. Within these accounts, relatively little mention is made of education practices, beyond general comments that the children learned to read, received religious and moral instruction and were put to work. Such works include Donna Andrews' study of eighteenth-century philanthropy, which suggested that much of the children's labour was for the benefit of the Hospital financially, and that the foundlings were destined for servile positions.³ As has been shown although labour was in part of economic value, it was also beneficial for skills learned. The evidence suggests that some foundlings did use skills such as needlework and weaving in later work. In addition, as we have seen with the case of Samuel Inman, who ran his own stationery business, not all foundlings worked in servile roles. In her study *Britons*, Linda Colley likewise confirmed the Hospital's establishment as significant for British identity.⁴ This is exemplified by Hogarth's sketch for the fund-raising letterhead of 1739.⁵ In one image Hogarth has consolidated the aims and ambitions of the founding Hospital governors as a combination of Christian duty through philanthropy with Britain's success through trade and naval power. Bernard too stressed the national importance of the charity.

The research for this thesis would have been impossible without such secondary works, which provide an overview of the Hospital and its complex history. It is hoped that the insights gained here can provide new

³ Andrews, *Philanthropy and the Police*, p.63

⁴ Colley, *Britons*, p.59

⁵ Hogarth, *Study for the Foundlings*

leads for further research. In particular, how the institution, rather than being isolated, may be situated and understood in an intellectual environment that took in developments in medicine, science, child psychology, commercial trades, celebrity and new forms of sociability. Further avenues for research suggested by this thesis include a study of the Hospital's education practices over a longer timescale: in particular, in the decades after 1800, when the system of instruction changed to provide a more equal training with regard to boys and girls. Equally important is a better understanding of the profile and work of the Hospital governors, whose decision-making process may be better informed with deeper biographical understanding of individuals and networks. Also of value would be a better understanding of the nature of 'competition' amongst the growing number of metropolitan charities in the later eighteenth century, and whether this had significant impact on the Hospital's support. Finally we need to better grasp the Hospital's broader relationship with, and contribution to, metropolitan and national life which casts the institution as more than just a philanthropic concern.

The London Foundling Hospital was, of course, famous for its charitable endeavours. During the course of the eighteenth century it underwent periods of success and upheaval, often prompted by forces unforeseen by its founders. However, the Hospital governors always strove to adapt and survive. This ability to change as challenges arose may suggest why, over 250 years later, an institution that began its work in 1741 continues to care for disadvantaged children as the charity Coram today.

30,319 words

AppendixTranscript of Prayers for the use of the Foundlings (December 1753)Morning Prayer

O Lord to whom I owe my Life and every Comfort of it, I most humbly pray, that I may live always mindful of my Dependence upon Thee and the Mercies I have received from thee. May I consider, that no Action, Word, or Thought of mine is unknown to thee, and therefore be ever careful to think, to speak, and do what is right. As I hope to be extremely happy, O let me seriously attend to what is necessary for me to do, in order to my being so. Grant that I may keep it ever uppermost in my Thoughts, that thy Favour is only to be obtained by ye Holiness of my Life, and by doing in it all the Good in my power. I beg particularly, that I may have the greatest Hatred of Falsehood and Deceit; that I may be strictly temperate & chaste, careful to govern my passions and to correct in myself every vicious Inclination; that I may be dutiful to my Governors & those who are put over me, exactly just in all my Dealings, and may do to others according to what I desire they should do to me. Keep me safe throughout this Day. Bless my Governors, Friends and Benefactors and so provide for them and me here, that we may not be tempted to any Action contrary to our Duty, and that will hinder our having the everlasting Happiness which thou hast promised to those who sincerely obey thee. Accept me, O God, for the sake of Jesus Christ who has taught me when I pray to say Our Father etc...

An Evening Prayer

O Lord who hast preserved me this Day, I bless thee for thus continuing thy Care of and Goodness to me. Grant, that I may shew my Thankfulness, by my Sincere Endeavour to perform whatever I believe to be thy Will. I most humbly beg Forgiveness of every Sin that I have committed; and it is likewise my most earnest Prayer, that I may never so dangerously deceive myself, as to think thou will forgive my sins, if I do not forsake them. Let it be my firmest Belief that nothing can recommend me to thee, if I do not lead an holy & useful Life; and that, when I allow myself in any kind of Guilt, even my Prayer must be an abomination to thee. Give me Grace so to live as always in thy Presence; and since all my Actions & Thoughts are known to thee, let me neither do nor think anything that can displease thee. Enable me to improve in Virtue; to correct in myself every wrong Inclination. May nothing disturb my Rest this Night; vouchsafe me such refreshing sleep, as may fit me for the Duties of the following Day. Thou alone knowest how near my Death may be; and as every Day brings me nearer to it grant that I may become every day fitter for it. Prosper all who have done me Good, pardon all who have design'd me Evil, and unite us in the Endeavour to secure an everlasting Happiness. Hear me, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, in whose words I further prayer, Our Father, etc ...

Ref:LMA:A/FH/A/03/005/001, (19.12.1753) p.207-8

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EEOB – Early English Books Online

LMA – London Metropolitan Archive

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