

## **The Education of Children in London's Foundling Hospital, c. 1800-1825**

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# **The Education of Children in London's Foundling Hospital, c. 1800-1825**

This article examines the education provided to the children in the London Foundling Hospital in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. These children were abandoned children, paying for the immorality of their parents. However, the Foundling Hospital provided them with an opportunity to escape their hereditary poverty. This research utilises the education records of the London Foundling Hospital as well as its records of apprenticeship, to examine the education received by Foundling children, and the various career paths the children took during the early part of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: childhood, Foundling Hospital, education, poverty, apprenticeship, nineteenth century

## **Introduction**

In 1805 Bridget Edwards petitioned the Foundling Hospital to have her infant child, aged eight months, accepted into the Foundling Hospital. Edwards' petition was supported by a reference from her employer, a Mrs Perkins, for whom Edwards had been in service. Perkins agreed that Edwards was of worthy character and would retain her employment—or she would provide Edwards with a reference—should the child be admitted (LMA A/FH/A/08/001/002/014/1, Petitions: Admitted, 1805). The child was to be raised by the governors of the Foundling Hospital, to be treated when sick, educated, and provided with an apprenticeship; a pathway that was hoped would permit this abandoned child to become a valuable member of society. The pathways for those children who were not admitted to the Foundling Hospital potentially involved abandonment, being raised by another family member, or infanticide (Evans, 2005: 5). As records on infanticide were not made even at a basic level until 1838 (Sauer, 1978: 81), and women and children often disappear from the records, it is unclear what happened to the women whose children were not admitted. A woman could abandon her

child to the Foundling Hospital under certain guidelines: the woman could only have one illegitimate child, have been under the promise of marriage when the act of ‘falling’ occurred, and had to be of previous—and future—good character (A/FH/A/08/001/002/022, Petitions: Admitted, 1813). Only upon the fulfilment of these criteria did the Foundling Hospital undertake the care, and education, of an abandoned child.

This article examines the education received by children in the London Foundling Hospital in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The Foundling Hospital aimed to provide abandoned children with the opportunity to become prepared for adult lives outside the walls of the institution, and education played a fundamental role in their development. The curriculum delivered by teaching staff at the Foundling Hospital mirrored that recommended by the Church of England, and provided children considered to be the products of sin with moral and religious instruction. In addition, children in the Foundling Hospital were taught to read and write, undertook instruction in mathematics, and provided with valuable opportunities to acquire vocational skills with recognisable applications in the industrialising economy. The education delivered at the Foundling Hospital was of a standard that ensured that the Foundling children, unwanted and abandoned at the start of their lives, possessed talents and abilities that made them sought after apprentices in a range of professions.

### **The abandonment of children to the London Foundling Hospital**

Middle-class attempts to reclaim ‘fallen women’ (Frost, 2003:293) were important to the Foundling Hospital during the nineteenth century. Focus was less concentrated upon the mothers during the eighteenth century, where the aims of the Hospital centred predominantly upon the nurturing, education, and putting to work of the children abandoned to its care. The abandonment of children was by no means a

new phenomenon in the eighteenth century (Boswell, 1988: 20). However, the establishment of specific provisions for foundlings arrived in London at a comparatively late stage by European standards. Hospitals for abandoned children opened in cities such as Florence, Paris, Nuremburg, and Bologna across the medieval and early modern periods (Gavitt, 1990; Gerber, 2012; Harrington, 2009; Terpstra, 2005; Terpstra, 2010), and Christ's Hospital (established in London in 1552) refused to turn away abandoned children (Manziona, 1995). The London Foundling Hospital, opened by the retired sea captain Thomas Coram in 1741, represented the first attempt to co-ordinate measures to ensure that abandoned children were provided with the opportunity to become valuable citizens of the British Empire.

The fear that a Foundling Hospital would encourage pre-marital sex and provide mothers with an easy way to dispose of their illegitimate offspring was prevalent among the upper classes (Levene, 2007: 5), whose financial and moral support was crucial to the Hospital's creation. In contrast, the threat of the workhouse provided a deterrent to unmarried mothers. Therefore, it took many years for Coram to realise his vision and establish the Hospital at Lamb's Conduit Field in Bloomsbury. As Alysa Levene has argued (2007: 6), a combination of new charitable forms, the exigencies of war and its increased demands for manpower, and Coram's determination provided the melting pot required for the Foundling Hospital to be granted a Charter 'for the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children' (Administrators, *An Account of the Foundling Hospital in London, for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children*, 1799).

By the start of the nineteenth century, reception practices at the Foundling Hospital had undergone a series of changes. Initially, mothers were able to place their children into the Hospital's care via a ballot. Between 1756 and 1760 all children left at

the Hospital were admitted, during a period referred to as the ‘General Reception’. Following the ‘General Reception’, not all children were accepted into the Hospital, regardless of the mother’s needs. The rejected petitions do not consistently provide reasons for a petition’s rejection, but one example suggests that abandonment by individuals who were not one of the child’s parents was grounds for an automatic rejection of the petition. In such cases where the mother’s identity could not be ascertained, her respectability could not be assured, thus demonstrating the influence of a woman’s future in the Hospital’s decision-making process (A/FH/A/08/001/003/025, Petitions: Rejected, 1818). By 1801, the rules for abandonment required mothers like Bridget Edwards both to be present and to provide references (Sheetz-Nguyen, 2012: 57-8). Only women who provided proof that the acceptance of their child by the Hospital would lead to their employment and the restoration of their respectability had their child accepted into the Foundling Hospital’s care.

## **Education in nineteenth-century England**

### ***Education outside of institutions:***

Prior to the Education Acts of the later nineteenth century there was little agreement among the middle classes as to whether poor children were entitled to an education and, if so, what level of education could be considered sufficient (Hopkins, 1994: 128). It has been widely assumed that standards of education available to the children of the poor were low, and that—combined with high demands for child labour among masters and parents—poorer children did not acquire a high-quality education in early nineteenth-century England. Sandin (2004: 110) argues that it was only in the latter part of the century that children were forced into education, and that education provided a platform for the development of other aspects of childhood such as work,

diet, disease, and crime. He states that ‘a history of childhood and education needs to take into account the fact that schooling was forced on children and their families—and was in turn influenced by them’ (Sandin, 2014: 110). Yet whilst education was influenced by poorer children and their families, debate continues among historians over whether education itself was ‘forced on’ them during the earlier part of the century.

Education in the later nineteenth century built upon practises drawn from a range of established providers, including Sunday schools, workhouse schools, dame schools and day schools (Stephens, 1998: 1). These schools often taught children basic lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and provided children with some form of manual training designed to help them gain employment or an apprenticeship (Stephens, 1998: 2). Sunday schools existed prior to the nineteenth century, and taught children to read and receive religious instruction in a manner that did not jeopardise their weekly working patterns (Stephens, 1998: 4). In addition, Sunday schools offered opportunities for children to be socialised and to receive spiritual guidance to assist their development into adulthood.

Education in the workhouses had somewhat less lofty goals, and was arranged to ensure children became useful adults who were able to keep themselves out of the workhouse. In his examination of the education offered to children in the Durham workhouse, Ray Pallister (1968: 279) found that children were provided an education similar to that offered in the elementary schools of the period. The children’s lessons centred around reading, writing, and religious instruction, and were designed to permit workhouse children to make their own way in the world. Frank Crompton, examining events in Worcestershire, notes that in 1839 inspectors found that children in the Worcestershire Poor Law Union received a higher standard of education than those in the Parish elementary schools (Crompton, 1997: 150). However, focus upon education

in the workhouse only became pronounced following the passage of the New Poor Law in 1834, and before this time Crompton states (1997: 147) that provision in Worcestershire was patchy and education was not routinely offered to children in the workhouses.

Both Crompton and Pallister's examinations also raise important points about the educational outcomes for children in the workhouses. Crompton's study found that the children were taught by copying and not subjected to examinations. Therefore, there was little impetus for children to engage with their lessons and in many cases they did not understand what they were learning (Crompton, 1997: 180). It is unclear from Crompton's study whether the workhouse guardians felt it unnecessary to teach the children in their care to anything higher than an educational standard sufficient for them to function outside of the workhouse. For Pallister, the choice to provide a basic education to children in the workhouses was deliberate and designed to ensure that the children were not 'discontent with the station in life in which God had been pleased to place him' (Pallister, 1968: 279).

The desire to prevent poor or abandoned children from becoming discontented with their station in life also influenced debates over their education outside the workhouses. Ginger Frost (2008: 128-9) has charted the discussions between those who advocated on behalf of the education and those who warned of the dangers involved in such an undertaking. The latter group argued that if the lower classes were provided with an education they were more likely to realise their place in the world and agitate for change—causing general unrest. Sandin (2014: 93) agreed, writing that those who opposed the education of the poor feared that 'instruction would lead the poor to feel able to change their social station and would indeed endanger the stability of society'. Control of education, and of access to education, thus became a valuable means of

maintaining class relations and social harmony in England in the years following the turmoil of the French Revolution.

However, reformers such as John Locke were arguing for the benefits of education as a preparation for adulthood of value to children of all stations as early as the late-seventeenth century (Mathisen, 2011: 128). As Francis Duke argued (1976: 67), education was viewed by some—including the Poor Law Guardians—as a route out of a cycle of hereditary pauperism. Generational poverty was perceived as a type of disease, which rendered its sufferers valueless as citizens of the Empire, and education was prescribed as a potential cure to the poverty cycle. Deborah Simonton (2000: 185) has summarised the conflict between philanthropy and preservation amongst late-eighteenth-century educationalists. On the one hand, education for the poor was largely provided by philanthropists, who believed in the social benefits that derived from the provision of education to the children of the poor. Such education potentially offered the children of the poor a pathway to social advancement, which conflicted with middle and upper-class fears of working-class dissatisfaction and unrest. On the other hand, Jane Humphries (2011: 306) has identified a relationship between education, children's work, and early industrialisation. Using the memoirs of children educated in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Humphries argues that forms of schooling that could be combined with early employment for children paid off relatively cheaply in the early-industrial period and contributed to local economic growth. Alysa Levene (2012: 4) concurred, suggesting that the primary motivations behind the increased interest in children and childhood during the eighteenth century was 'arguably for the roughly hewed raw material [children] which would build the nation's strength, and which could be moulded accordingly by inculcating moral probity and self-reliance'. An



education that provided children with a recognition of authority and inculcated a work ethic was a sound financial investment in the nation's economic future.

In addition to class, gender played a prominent role in the educational experiences of children during this period. Meg Gomersall (1997: 46) argued that children were educated within the home by their parents, regardless of the presence or absence of traditional schooling in their upbringing. The education children received depended both on the economic needs of the family and the gender of the child. Girls in rural areas were taught husbandry, spinning, and housework by their mothers to prepare them for their expected adult roles as housekeepers. In addition, middle-class girls were often provided with skills that could be deployed if they failed to marry and had to 'fall back on a career as a teacher or a governess' (Simonton, 2000: 183). In more industrial areas, girls learned to sew and cook, whilst boys undertook heavier labours such as chopping wood and fetching water (Higginbotham, 2017: 250). Outside the towns, boys were also taught husbandry and weaving by their fathers, to provide them with the skills required to become breadwinners for their own family homes. The history of girls' educational experiences, Simonton has argued (2000: 183), has frequently been treated as an 'adjunct' to that provided to boys. The records of the London Foundling Hospital are heavily weighted towards boys, although evidence does show that girls were not an afterthought in their actual education. The imbalance in records could be due to general survival, however, the weekly reports were written by the schoolmaster, and this master may not have been the main teacher of the girls, thus leading to an uneven distribution of surviving records. This article addresses this imbalance, and demonstrates that girls' education in the Foundling Hospital was not merely restricted to the preparation of girls for domestic roles as adults.

An education of some sort was available to children in institutions such as the Foundling Hospital and the workhouses by the second half of the nineteenth century, designed to provide the British Empire with useful citizens. Whilst Simon Fowler (2014: 118) acknowledges that some children were provided with the skills required to offer basic tuition to younger children within the workhouses, the majority were trained with a view to their eventual employment in agriculture, industry, and domestic service.

Important recent work by Steven Taylor and Lesley Hulonce has illustrated that institutional education was not restricted to healthy children. Hulonce (2014: 311) demonstrates that deaf and blind children, although supported by the Poor Law, were expected to be educated and trained into roles of some economic value. Although not always from the poorer classes, these children were generally considered to be a drain on society. The opportunities for deaf girls were largely restricted to needlework and domestic work. However, boys with the same disabilities were encouraged to acquire a range of skills which allowed them to take on apprenticeships as tailors, shoemakers, carpenters and solicitor's clerk, amongst other professions (Hulonce, 2014: 324). Similarly, children placed in asylums were broadly considered to be 'uneducable'. However, Taylor argues (2017: 142-4), a form of education that led to the development of special education was provided for such children who were unable to access traditional education within a school. Clearly then, education played at least some role in the lives of most children in England during the nineteenth century.

### ***Education in the Foundling Hospital:***

The historical study of English institutions, including the Foundling Hospital, reflects this incidence of education within the lives of children. Whilst not at the forefront of such studies, education is regularly acknowledged as a component of the Foundlings' lives. In her examination of the London Foundling Hospital in the

eighteenth century, Ruth McClure (1981: 219-35; see also Fuchs, 1984) described in detail the governors' treatment of new arrivals to the Hospital. Following the French model, children were kept out of the institution during their early years and placed with nurses until the age of five. At five years old, the children returned to London to begin their education towards an eventual apprenticeship. Until that day arrived, the lives of the Foundling children were strictly regimented and overseen by schoolmasters and mistresses appointed by the Hospital's governors. Their role was to provide the Foundlings with an education that ensured they were capable of securing an apprenticeship and a route into an adult life away from dependence on the Hospital (c.f. A/FH/D/004/001-003, Applications for School Masters, Mistresses, and Reading Masters, 1761-1762).

From the age of five onwards, both boys and girls were provided with a set number of hours' schooling each week. The children were placed into classes, where they were 'gradually accustomed to regular and early habits of order and attention' (Administrators, 1799: 65). The quality of education within the Foundling Hospital was broadly the same, regardless of whether the class being taught consisted of boys or girls. However, the majority of the surviving records detail the education provided to boys rather than girls. It is unclear whether this is a historical quirk, or whether the education of boys was considered more important a subject for documentary record by the governors and masters.

The children in the Foundling Hospital, as they were not liable to be called away from their studies to support the family economically or socially (Taylor, 2017: 140), did not experience unpredictable breaks in their education. Therefore, the children quickly became familiar with the routines of Hospital life. Children rose at six in the morning during the summer and at day break during the winter months. Breakfast was

served at half-past seven, and between rising and breakfast the older children were expected to assist the younger children, clean the house, or work the water pump (Administrators, 1799: 65). The school day began with Morning Prayer, and then ‘the upper classes [proceeded] respectively in spelling, reading, writing and cyphering [mathematics] till twelve o’clock’ (A/FH/A/03/014/001/016 Committee to Enquire into Education, 1808-1814). Lessons resumed at two o’clock in the afternoon, and the children studied until five p.m. in the summer and until dusk during the winter (Administrators, 1799: 65). The regimented schedule exposed the children to the routines of a working life outside the Foundling Hospital from a young age.

As with children taught elsewhere, religion played a prominent role in the lives and educations of the Foundling children. Both boys and girls were frequently paraded in church for fashionable society to see, and to encourage future donations to the Hospital. Much of the reading undertaken in lessons at the Hospital school involved the Bible, which reinforced the spiritual and moral elements of the students’ education. Instruction at the Foundling Hospital utilised the books provided by the National Society Central School. The books were to be ‘read in the same order and method’ as they were at the National Society Central School, ensuring that the Foundling children benefited from a similar educational experience to children at other schools within the society’s national network of schools. The children were also taught the Catechism, which was to be ‘broken into short questions to be read and learnt by heart, and explained until it is well understood’ (A/FH/A/03/014/001/016 Committee to Enquire into Education, 1808-1814). The importance of the Catechism, and religion more generally, to the students’ education is emphasised by the fact that the schoolmaster regularly reported to the governors upon the amount of work undertaken on the subject

by the boys in the Hospital school (see A/FH/A/23/001/001-4 Schoolmaster's Weekly Reports, 1819-1822).

The Church of England's influence over education throughout the country, including within the Foundling Hospital, is made clear from the National Society's first annual report (1812). The report provides an overview of the curriculum delivered in the National Society's schools, upon which the timetable followed by the Foundling Hospital's schoolmaster was based, and states that 'the national Religion should be made the Foundation of National Education' and the first thing taught to poor children (First Annual Report, 1812, 5). In addition to an education founded in the principles and messages of the State religion, the Foundling Hospital's decision to use the National Society's standardised curriculum as a blueprint indicates the Hospital's ambition to provide the Foundlings with an education of similar standard to that received by other poor children across the country. Thus, the children within the Foundling Hospital, whilst excluded from the local communities in which non-institutionalised children were educated during the early nineteenth century, were still provided with an education that emphasised the moral and spiritual aspect of their status.

The Foundling children did not merely learn from religious texts, important as this was. The schoolmaster oversaw the purchase of a range of books to develop the children's understanding of language—such as introductory texts for spelling and reading, the *London Primer*, and children's grammar and English dictionaries—and also sought to enhance the children's geographical awareness (A/FH/A/03/014/001/016 Committee to Enquire into Education, 1808-1814). The value of the latter became apparent when the children went off to apprenticeships that were, in many cases, a considerable distance from their London upbringing.

The nature of the learning undertaken by the children within the school varied according to age and gender. When older boys were attending their classes, younger boys were ‘reading, writing on slates, and learning the arithmetical tables’ and the youngest were ‘writing in sand, or on slates and [receiving instruction in] spelling’ (A/FH/A/03/014/001/016 Committee to Enquire into Education, 1808-1814). The schoolmaster’s reports indicate the work undertaken by the children each week, but did not record the master’s feelings with regard to the quantity or quality of the work that had taken place. On Thursday 7 June 1821, boys’ class one read three pages of the Bible during a ninety-minute session. Boys’ classes two and three had also read the Testament during the day, but for a longer period: class two read three pages in three hours, whilst class three read four pages in the same amount of time (A/FH/A/23/001/003, Schoolmasters Weekly Reports, 1821). Similar reading performances were reported in the boys’ History lessons, although the identity of the text used in class was not recorded. In a four-hour lesson in October 1823, the boys’ class under observation read three pages of their prescribed text (A/FH/A/23/001/005, Schoolmasters Weekly Reports, 1823).

The girls also read the Bible, but the two girls’ classes only read for one hour. The girls in class one managed to complete just one page in this time, whilst the girls in class two read two pages (A/FH/A/23/001/002, Schoolmasters Weekly Reports, 1820). The reports do not provide any detail on the teaching methods employed within these reading sessions, but the combination of duration and page length suggests that the text was read aloud either by a single child or by several children speaking in turn.

In addition to reading, the children of the Foundling Hospital received training in mathematics, a subject not taught widely within the public schools prior to the 1830s (Stephens, 1998: 46). Therefore, in one component of their education at least the

Foundling children received the opportunity to acquire skills that were absent from the upbringings of upper-class children. Following instruction in the basic arithmetic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, older children at the Foundling Hospital were taught to calculate in pounds, shillings and pence (A/FH/A/23/001/003, Schoolmasters Weekly Reports, 1821). This training presented Foundling children with the opportunity to find employment as bookkeepers or to work in environments where money changed hands, and provided potential masters with an assurance that an apprentice from the Foundling Hospital was capable of more than menial, unskilled tasks.

Children in the Foundling Hospital were provided with practical education as well as classroom-based lessons. The practical work undertaken by children in the Hospital provided them with technical skills, contributed to the daily operations of the Hospital, and created a revenue stream for the institution. Children in the Foundling Hospital's branch in Ackworth, to which all the Foundling Hospital's mentally and physically disabled children were sent, were put to work within the institution. Children were set to work in the kitchen and laundry, and participated in woollen manufacturing processes at Ackworth from at least the second half of the eighteenth century (A/FH/Q1/16/2, Secretary's Papers, Employment of Boys and Girls at Ackworth, 1759-1799). In London, the children's efforts were felt beyond the walls of the Hospital. In the schoolmaster's weekly report dated 5 March 1819, the girls of the Hospital were recorded as having made six night dresses, one dozen aprons, half a dozen boys' shirts, two dozen pin cloths, one dozen caps, and one dozen pocket handkerchiefs (A/FH/A/23/001/001, Weekly Reports 1819). Later that summer, in early July, the girls' output comprised six full-trimmed shirts, two plain shirts, twenty napkins, half a dozen three-quarter-length girls' shifts, one dozen day caps, and one pair of sheets

(A/FH/A/23/001/001, Weekly Reports 1819). As an advertisement placed by the Foundling Hospital's Secretary, T. Merryweather, in 1822 demonstrates, the girls' sewing skills were offered to the public. 'Plain needlework is done by the girls in this Hospital', the advertisement informed, and prices ranged from one shilling to three shillings per item sewn depending on the nature of the work required (A/FH/A/23/001/004, Weekly Reports, 1822).

Children in the Foundling Hospital were provided with a functional, rather than an elite education. As Stephens (1998: 46) documents, upper-class education in the early nineteenth century was marked by the presence of the Classics. A Foundling's education, by contrast, was characterised by its practicality. Children were taught to read and write, and provided with instruction in mathematics, geography, history, and religion. In addition, their education provided the boys and girls with gender-specific vocational skills with clear utility to the types of apprenticeships for which the children were destined. The girls acquired training in cookery and needlework, the boys in gardening and woodwork. When their structured education among their peers at the Foundling Hospital came to an end, the children were apprenticed out to their new masters.

### **The Foundlings' experiences of apprenticeship**

At around the age of twelve, most Foundling children were considered ready for an apprenticeship. As Emma Griffin's (2003) examination of pauper biographies provided an average of ten for when its subjects were apprenticed, many of the children of the Foundling Hospital clearly acquired an extended education in comparison to other children from less wealthy backgrounds. However, as the surviving Apprenticeship Indentures for the Foundling Hospital demonstrate, a child's age was



one of the least important factors involved in the decision to send them out to a particular apprentice.

The age at which a Foundling was apprenticed depended largely upon the work available and the requirements of particular masters. Children destined for the cotton mills were invariably apprenticed at relatively young ages, but some children were seventeen before they were recorded as having been apprenticed (A/FH/A/12/004/095, Apprenticeship Indentures 1802-1805). Few children, however, were like John Elden who was apprenticed at the age of six (A/FH/A/12/004/97/1, Apprenticeship Indentures, 1806-1807). Given Elden's very young age it is highly likely that his new masters were the family that had cared for him whilst he was out at nurse who, rather than send him back to the Foundling Hospital, requested to keep the child officially as an apprentice.

In June 1814, Elizabeth Livesley and Jane Good, were recorded by the Committee to Enquire into Education as being 'of a proper age to be placed out and having for some months past been employed in the laundry and kitchen' (A/FH/A/03/014/001/016). On 3 January 1815 a list of girls employed in the Foundling Hospital's kitchen and laundry was compiled, suggesting that the girls had reached the age of fifteen and therefore needed to be sent out to apprentice. Domestic service, the principle destination for female apprentices from the Foundling Hospital, was an occupation with a high turnover of staff and strong demand for new recruits from among the Hospital's pool of suitably trained labour. However, the fact that the girls were not simply sent away once they reached a mandated age. Instead, careful consideration was given to the merits of individual placements to ensure that both apprentice and master were satisfied with the match.

Boys and girls from the Foundling Hospital undertook apprenticeships in a variety of occupations across England, and many employers apprenticed multiple

Foundlings during the early nineteenth century. Several boys from the Foundling Hospital undertook apprenticeships with Hussey Fleet during the period under investigation. Fleet, the owner of a brewery in Dartford, hired twelve-year-old Robert Davies as an apprentice enameller and dial-plate printer in August 1803. The work Davies undertook for Fleet was manual labour, but it was intricate and detail-oriented work that demanded care and attention. Similar aptitudes were likely required of Michael Barrett. At the age of thirteen, Barrett was apprenticed to William Knight, a watchmaker from Hatton Garden (A/FH/A/12/004/97/1 Apprenticeship Indentures, 1806-1807). If Barrett was employed to study the watchmaking trade, he entered a profession that depended upon craftsmanship and a willingness to learn. The education provided by the Foundling Hospital certainly did not cover horology, but it did infuse boys with exposure to routine, with experience of learning and practising new skills, and with the work ethic associated with religious instruction.

Samuel Oldknow, a cotton mill owner from Chester, was another employer who received a number of children from the Foundling Hospital for apprenticeships in his factories (A/FH/A/12/004/095, Apprenticeship Indentures 1802-1805). Oldknow favoured younger apprentices, as they were capable of undertaking work unsuitable for older, larger children such as crawling in between the moving parts of the mills' machinery (Griffin, 2013: 58-9). Nine-year-old Harriott Larkin was the youngest Foundling to be apprenticed to Oldknow, and she left for Chester in February 1802. Fourteen years later, Oldknow apprenticed two older girls, Frances Carr and Elizabeth Cameron (A/FH/A/12/004/121, Apprenticeship Indentures, 1816). It is possible that the girls were employed to work machinery in the mills rather than as domestic labourers, as such duties were often handled by older girls and women (Cruickshank, 1981: 2).

However, no further information on Carr and Cameron's work for Oldknow was added to the indenture.

Oldknow was Carr's second master, as two years earlier—at the age of thirteen—she had undertaken an apprenticeship with a schoolmaster named Joseph Farmer. Unfortunately, no details have survived that document the reasons for Carr's release from her first apprenticeship, but it is possible that she was considered a potential school mistress or governess (A/FH/A/12/004/116, Apprenticeship Indentures, 1814). Carr was not the only Foundling to undertake an apprenticeship with a schoolmaster. In 1817, the fourteen-year-old Diane Boycott was apprenticed to a schoolmistress called Ann Herr (A/FH/A/12/004/122 Apprenticeship Indentures, 1816-17). Nor was Carr the only example from this period of a Foundling whose first apprenticeship proved unsuccessful. Louis French, aged twelve, was apprenticed to Joseph Lee of Derby in June 1807 (A/FH/A/12/004/100/1 Apprenticeship Indentures, 1808). No profession was recorded for Lee, and whatever role French was asked to perform in the East Midlands did not meet with satisfaction. Four years later, the then sixteen-year-old French was apprenticed for a second time when he travelled to the north-west to work for Benjamin Corf, a Liverpool butcher. Clearly then, in instances where the apprenticeships of Foundling Children did not succeed—whether due to the child being unhappy, unsafe, or incapable of meeting their master's expectations—the Hospital did not abandon the children but instead worked to ensure that suitable positions were provided for them in the future.

## **Conclusion**

The London Foundling Hospital's governors and administrators recognised the need for the children within its care to receive an education. The subjects taught within the Foundling Hospital drew heavily upon the practices recommended by the Church of

England's educational body, and provided the children in its care with training for an adult life outside the institution's care. This ensured that Foundling children received the same education as other children throughout the country, perhaps more so, as they were not required to leave school to assist with the familial economic unit. The use of religious instruction also reminded the children of their moral compass.

The education provided by the Foundling Hospital may seem basic and class-rigid, and whilst it was, there was an element of class liberation. The apprenticeships undertaken by Foundling children were usually of lower-class jobs, with domestic work being the particularly common destination for many of the girls. However, it is likely that this was down to the cost of offering children apprenticeships, rather than a way of keeping the poor in their place. Examples of Foundling girls taking apprenticeships with teachers, and Simonton's suggestion that teaching and governess work were acceptable positions for middle class girls suggest that the Foundling Hospital tried, where possible, to place children in apprenticeships that were suitable for the individual, rather than for the status.

Thus, the education and apprenticeships provided to Foundling children in the first quarter of the nineteenth century shows that, whilst some children did remain within the lower classes of society, not all did. This research sits between two very different arguments regarding the reasons behind educating poor children in the nineteenth century. Whilst some historians suggest that educating the poor was undesirable, as it led to them becoming dissatisfied with their lot in life, other historians suggest that educating children provided an element of social mobility, of bettering oneself, of promise for the future. The use of the Foundling Hospital as a case study shows that, to an extent, both arguments are valid, and Foundling children sit in

the middle of these two competing views, allowing a ‘bridge’ of two differing areas of scholarship.

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