

Children in domestic service c.1760-1830

Jenifer A Dyer (2016)

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Children in Domestic Service c. 1760-1830

Submitted by Jenifer Ann Dyer

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Abstract

Domestic service was a major source of employment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but has only in recent years been the subject of serious historical research. Child servants represented a rather small cohort of this sector but formed a significant section of the total child labour force. This thesis gives new attention to these youngest household workers and a 'voice' to many children hitherto 'hidden from history.' Recent studies of children working in factories have challenged many assumptions about child workers but indicate that they were, in general, favoured by employers because they were cheap, tractable and could be adapted to techniques and methods of organisation which adults resisted. This study shows that the decision to take a child into employment in domestic service was a more complex and individual matter. Cheapness and ease of exploitation had attractions for some masters, but the need for companionship or conveying a particular household image could also influence decisions. Previous studies have provided useful insights into the economic and cultural circumstances which pushed children into work at an early age. This investigation takes a different stance by looking at the considerations which the employer or master took into account when considering whether or not to employ a child. In some cases child servants were not welcome in households and were at times taken on out of duty or under duress. The thesis also explores the quality of the children's lives by focusing on the commitments made in the indenture, or similar private arrangements, and the success with which these agreements were fulfilled. The importance of the indenture can be seen when we consider other eventualities affecting child servants (e.g. punishment, sickness, free time) where no commitment was made and much uncertainty remained. Finally, a closer study of the apprenticeship policy of two eighteenth-century charities (1775-1804) provides a wider basis for a comparison of the lives of children placed in domestic service by the poor law and private agreements.

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Introduction

Laslett's image of the pre-industrial past where a multitude of children might be found 'thronging the churches, for ever clinging to the skirts of women in the house and wherever they went and above all crowding round the cottage fires', offers an evocative picture of the presence of children in past societies.¹ Population studies provide statistical support for Laslett's picture so that we can be confident that until the late nineteenth century children rarely formed less than a quarter of the population.² This preponderance of children persisted despite falls in fertility since these were generally associated with a decline in infant mortality – a complex and contentious subject to which historians have given much attention.³ What happened to those who survived the hazardous years of infancy and lived on into adolescence is less well documented. Yet they not only amounted to a significant percentage of the population as a whole, but, in many cases, were part of an active and visible work force. They grew up in households or institutions which required them, at an early age, to take up occupations in return for money, upkeep or payment in kind. Contemporaries were interested in the novel phenomenon of child workers in factories and mills; some approved the ingenious machinery which might allow the children of the poor to escape the twin blights of poverty and idleness; others deplored the inhuman conditions which this involved.⁴ Historians have generally pursued this pre-occupation with children carrying out industrial work whether, as in the case of E.P. Thompson, favouring a pessimistic interpretation of their lives or, more recently, pursuing the more nuanced approach of Katrina Honeyman.⁵

¹ Peter Laslett, *The World We have Lost* (London: University paperbacks, 1965), 104

² See E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 215-219

³ *Ibid.*, especially 249-50. See also E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, J.E. Oeppen and R.S. Schofield (eds), *English Population History from Family Reconstruction 1580-1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 249-61

⁴ For an example of those approving, Sarah Trimmer in 1787 welcomed the horizontal spinning machine, 'at which twelve little girls can spin at once', Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity: Or an Address to Ladies Concerning Sunday Schools* (London, 1787), 72

⁵ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1965); Katrina Honeyman, *Child Workers in England, 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the Making of the Early Industrial Labour Force* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Clarke Nardinelli represents a more firmly 'apologist' view arguing for the economic benefits of child factory labour and identifying mitigating factors in factory work for children, for example the protection provided by family co-workers, *Child Labour and the Industrial Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990)

Yet such children were perhaps no more than a small percentage of the total number of child workers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Joanna Innes' analysis of the background to the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act of 1802 indicates that parish officials apprenticed only about five per cent of the relevant age group into mill work, although this certainly varied depending on the region concerned, the nature of the work available and the scale of the problem of poverty which confronted the authorities at any one point in time.⁶ A far larger number of children, having first been given 'child-sized jobs to do' were then engaged in traditional occupations, and in some cases took on a good deal more than 'child-sized' work.⁷

It was, above all, domestic service, into which this pre-adolescent age group was traditionally recruited. This study seeks to take up the challenge laid down by Bridget Hill, and re-asserted recently by Peter Kirby in his work on child labour in pre-industrial and industrial society, to address the need for further work on children in this highly traditional role.⁸ There were many opportunities for children in the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both boys and girls, to assist in the running of households as ancillaries to older workers, in the kitchens, laundry, gardens and stables. Often they took on tasks, such as errand-running and sweeping the workshop, which older workers were more reluctant to perform. In the course of the eighteenth century more modest households began to keep servants and a child or very young servant might be the means of expressing new-found status at low cost or releasing a skilled member of the household for more profitable work. The focus here is on three distinct types of domestic service placements involving children; parish paupers with a particular spotlight on paupers in Leicestershire; children placed in domestic work by charities, focusing on the London Foundling Hospital and the Birmingham Blue Coat School; children entering domestic service through

⁶ Joanna Innes, 'Origins of the Factory Acts: the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act, 1802' in Norma Landau (ed), *Law, Crime and English Society 1660-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 235; Alys Levene shows that London parishes continued to assign many children to traditional apprenticeships long after textile mills found it profitable to take workhouse children 'Parish Apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London,' *Economic History Review*, 63:4 (2010), 915-41

⁷ Laslett, *World We Have Lost*, 104

⁸ Bridget Hill, *English Domestic Servants in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996), 252; Peter Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 2-4, *Child Workers and Industrial Health in Britain, 1780-1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 161

arrangements made by parents, kin, or themselves. The three-way perspective provides insight into a wide range of servant-keeping establishments from those employing numerous specialised household staff to those taking in a solitary girl as ‘maid-of-all-work’; it investigates the extent to which the experiences of child servants depended on the wealth and status of the receiving household, the attitude of the individual householder or the response of the existing servant body. In addition it allows a comparison of the approaches to placing children by different agencies. Overall, therefore, the spotlight on this neglected part of the domestic sector brings a new range of perspectives to the subject, including those of the children.

Defining Childhood

For the purpose of this study children have been defined as those aged fourteen and under. This is inevitably a somewhat arbitrary decision since in the eighteenth century there were no clear guidelines for the demarcation of childhood: physical development, leaving home, taking up work might all be seen as more significant stages in a person’s life than the attainment of a specific age. Anna Davin has shown in her 1999 essay ‘What is a Child?’ that these milestones are in no case a reliable guide to any general consensus on what constituted childhood; ideas about them might differ according to occupation, class and locality.⁹ The concept of childhood was a slippery one about which contemporaries were perhaps, little concerned when the children belonged to the poor. At times the young made their own decisions. On Valentine’s Day in 1791, James Woodforde spent 3s 4d giving 1d to each of forty children in his Norfolk village who were “under 14 and able to say ‘good Morrow Valentine’”.¹⁰ Gertrude Savile recorded the same practice in her Nottinghamshire Village in 1740 for the forty-two children ‘who came as customery a valanting’¹¹ which suggests a fairly widespread and enduring practice. Childhood in such cases must have been assessed on the basis of size, on-the-spot judgement and a little local knowledge which was hopefully (for the children), interpreted generously. Nevertheless, the children must have known that their benefactors would not tolerate

⁹ Anna Davin, ‘What is a Child?’ in *Childhood in Question, Children, Parents and the State*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Stephen Hussey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 26

¹⁰ John Beresford (ed.), *James Woodforde, The Diary of a Country Parson 1758-1802* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 14 February 1791, 393

¹¹ Gertrude Savile, *The Account Book of Gertrude Savile 1736-1758*, eds. Marjorie Penn and Mary Welch, Thoroton Society Record Series, 4 (1965), 130

the idea of those who were no longer considered ‘children’ in the eyes of the community, taking money to which they were not entitled.

Legal definitions are also unhelpful since the legal system defined childhood in different ways in different circumstances. Whatever the age of consent, the courts might consider girls who had been raped to no longer possess the innocence of childhood. In London children under the age of fifteen (identified in legal terms as ‘infants’) could not be arrested coming away from a riot and boys under the age of thirteen were deemed incapable of rape.¹² Yet these boundaries did not apply to all legal matters: a ten year old might be indicted for theft, though could not be committed for a capital offence.¹³ Here we find the same lack of consistency about the concept of childhood as well as definitions linked to gender. At the Old Bailey boy or girl, might (or might not) give evidence as a witness alongside adults on the basis not of age, but their understanding of the catechism. Thus eight year-old Margaret Cole was sworn in to give evidence at a trial for highway robbery because she stated that the devil would burn her in hell if she told a lie and God would not love her. Fourteen year-old John Nowland, however, gave no satisfactory answer to what would happen to him if he told a lie, and was dismissed as a witness.¹⁴ A further confusion arises from the legal treatise of 1805 by Michael Nolan which noted that ‘seven years is at common law the age of puberty’ – which may, however, refer only to the age at which milk teeth are replaced rather than to any more significant markers of age.¹⁵ Meanwhile it was possible for poor law authorities to remove poor children from their parents’ supervision on the grounds that at seven they were old enough to be separated from them.¹⁶ Such inconsistency is evident in later government enquiries. The Children’s Employment Commission in 1842 identified those aged below thirteen as children whereas the 1851 census took fifteen

¹² Davin, ‘What is a Child?’, p.27; Alys Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 17

¹³ See, for example, *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 21 June 2013, February 1776, trial of Sarah Bowyer and Joseph Bowyer (t17830226-13), hereafter *OBP*

¹⁴ *OBP*, version 24 June 2013, trial of Alexander Gregory (t17840915); *OBP*, version 24 June 2013, May 1718, trial of Alexander Elder (t17840526-100)

¹⁵ See Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England, 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 137

¹⁶ Crawford, *Ibid.* 137

as the age below which domestic workers were to be designated as children.¹⁷ In June 1835 Jane Wood was sentenced to three months hard labour for deserting her two children, defined as such because they were less than sixteen years of age.¹⁸ The provenance of these examples suggests that ‘the concept of childhood for the poorer sorts was particularly ill-defined’.¹⁹

A number of fairly well-established cultural traditions, along with the practice and observations of pre-industrial and early industrial commentators, have therefore been followed to provide justification for taking fifteen as marking the end of childhood and fourteen as a time of transition for many young people of the period. One of the key markers was the transition into employment. From the Middle Ages the most common age for formal apprenticeship into skilled artisan trades was between twelve and fourteen years but by the eighteenth century the later age became more common. In 1791 Parson James Woodforde was visited by Justice Pegg who, in response to the government’s preparations for a French invasion, came to consult Woodforde concerning ‘the Names of all the People in the Parish between 15 and 63 Years of Age’.²⁰ This provides a cut off point for childhood which had national application. With respect to the issue of work (and comparable to St. Valentine’s Day treats) Parson Woodforde’s parishioners seem to have seen fourteen or fifteen as a point of departure. We cannot always be sure of the exact age of the several boys who took on the role of his personal servant between 1758 and 1802 but, where this is the case, a certain pattern emerges. John Sucker was ‘about 13 Year’s of age’ when his father negotiated his terms of employment with Woodforde in 1785, making him ‘about’ fifteen when he left in April two years later. Barnabas Woodcock was taken on in October of 1796 when ‘between 11 and 12 Years of Age’. He gave notice to leave in September 1799’, when he would have been fourteen or fifteen ‘being too old for this place and can better himself.’²¹ Contemporaries frequently expressed dismay at the frequency with which servants ‘moved on’ but Woodforde saw this as the appropriate thing to do and made shift to hire a new boy, ‘one Henry Daines, a boy

¹⁷ Peter Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 20, Footnote 5

¹⁸ Irene Wyatt (ed.), *Calendar of Summary Convictions at Petty Sessions 1781-1837* (Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Record Series 22 (2008), 397

¹⁹ Levene, *Childhood of the Poor*, 17

²⁰ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 393

²¹ *Ibid.*, 242, 302, 534, 588

of 13 Years old'. Daines, in fact, lasted less than a year leaving because Woodforde dismissed him, finding him a poor worker and 'a very saucy, foul – mouthed Lad'. Had he been more to Woodforde's liking he too would have stayed until, like Jack Warton, 'being too old for a Skip-Jack any longer', he was advised to get another place. Warton went to be a plough-boy – a more robust employment, suitable for one of his age.²²

William Hugh Burgess, the son of a prosperous City banker began his diary in January 1788 when, at the age of fifteen, he 'left boyhood behind and entered the adult world'.²³ William came from a different class from the domestic servants of the day and was not to start work in his father's bank until the age of seventeen. The intervening period, however, represented a 'gap year' phase when he took on new responsibilities, accompanied his father to charitable events and spent more time in adult company.²⁴ This example brings home the fluidity of the concept of childhood which might have a different departure point in more prosperous households; on the other hand, the idea of a transition from childhood to a more responsible role seems to have been common to rich and poor households with the age of fourteen to fifteen representing some sort of watershed, especially for boys.

There were, of course, plenty of young people who took on more 'adult' roles by becoming apprentices, soldiers, sailors or housemaids before the age of fourteen. They were not necessarily, however, assumed to have left childhood and in many cases special arrangements were made for them. Matthew Flinders consented with some reluctance to his son Samuel's wish to go to sea at the age of eleven, noting that 'He is very young.'²⁵ What made the assignment acceptable for Flinders was the fact that Samuel was to be accompanied by his older brother, Matthew, who was already established in his career at sea. Matthew acted as guide and protector for his younger brother. He wrote back when he could with news of them both and reassured his father of Samuel's well-being. Flinders did not think it appropriate to place his other children in apprenticeships at so early an age; Matthew had gone to

²² Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 588, 596, 234

²³ Dianne Payne, 'An Eighteenth-Century Gap Year', *The Historian*, 107 (2010), 18

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-23

²⁵ Martyn Beardsley and Nicholas Bennett (eds), *Grateful to Providence: The Diary and Accounts of Matthew Flinders, Surgeon, Apothecary and Man Mid-wife* Vol. II, 1785-1802 (Lincoln Rec. Soc., Boydell Press, 2009), 142

sea aged sixteen and his daughters entered apprenticeships at the same age. John (Flinders' troublesome and troubled son), was fourteen when apprenticed to an apothecary in Boston. Samuel's circumstances, then, were exceptional in this family and special arrangements were made on account of his very young age. For his father Samuel was still, when he embarked on a life at sea, a child. In September 1795 he had a letter from Matthew 'and also one from my little Samuel'.²⁶

Samuel's apprenticeship arrangements may have been exceptional in his family (it was certainly exceptional to be taken into the navy at such a young age), but they were not unusual. Parish girls and charity children, both boys and girls, were quite commonly apprenticed at the age of eleven or twelve. Their circumstances will be considered in future chapters, but in some spheres at least, these children who were cast into apprenticeship before the age of fourteen belonged to a rather special category – the first stage of preparation for full-blown apprenticeship rather than the first stage of adulthood to which apprenticeship would lead. The possibilities behind this thinking could, of course, cut both ways involving greater consideration and protection for such children – or greater discipline and control.

Where, as is often the case, no age is given for a young worker it is sometimes possible to identify a child by other markers. Clues to age exist in rates of pay (markedly lower than other workers) or non-monetary rewards, punishments, and tasks which were held to be appropriate for children. If negotiations about wages and terms of work were made with the parent or if the parent collected the wages we can be sure that the person employed was very young. The Reverend John Newton of Nuneham Courtney in Oxfordshire hired a boy, George Brookes, whose age we are never given. In 1759 George, a rather unruly boy was 'lashed' by Newton's the housekeeper for 'Breaking one of the Pig's Back'.²⁷ This was hardly something she would have done to an adult servant. He was in trouble again in December of that year when he received a whipping from Newton for an unspecified misdemeanour.²⁸ (Newton's punishments for his adult servants consisted of fines, severe rebukes or dismissal.) Not all indications of George's tender years were so dismal. In October

²⁶ Beardsley and Bennett, *Grateful to Providence*, 47-9, 80,157

²⁷ Gavin Hannah (ed.) *The Deserted Village: The Diary of an Oxfordshire Rector, James Newton of Nuneham Courtenay, 1736-86* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), 38

²⁸ Hannah, *Deserted Village*, 72

he had received 2d to spend at Abingdon Fair – a suitably small amount perhaps for a child servant and a ‘treat’ appropriate for a young boy. (Mary Hall received 6d for the same event probably because she was rather older). When George left Newton’s service during a visit to London, it was George’s mother who came to take him away.²⁹ There seems little doubt that George was a very young boy. Where evidence of this kind occurs it is reasonable to conclude that the servant concerned was a child in the eyes of contemporaries as well as coming within the definition given above.

In this context apprenticeship indentures are interesting for the historian as documents which, though they may give no indication of age, will often recognise the apprentice as a child. Thus an apprentice sent out from parishes in Leicester, whatever his/her age, was sent as ‘a poor child of this parish’ and one from the Blue Coat School in Birmingham (invariably fourteen or almost so) was identified as ‘a poor boy’ or ‘a poor girl’ of the Charity School. Whatever the later status of apprentices, they began their terms as children. Perhaps this functioned as a reminder to the masters that their new charges needed special consideration and, to apprentices, of their obligation to be obedient and compliant. Many such children were absorbed into the domestic sector which was at this time a major employer of labour.

Historical context: domestic service

In 1767 Jonas Hanway, a writer and commentator well-known for his observations on the social issues of his day, estimated that one in thirteen of the population of London was employed as a servant. London may not have been representative of the rest of the country and Hanway’s figures may have been, like those of other contemporaries, ‘heroic estimates’.³⁰ Modern statistical studies, taking a broader sweep geographically, indicate that female servants formed 5.33% of the adult population, 1750-1821.³¹ Using the returns for the servant tax of 1780 Leonard Schwarz concludes that 2.6% of males over the age of fifteen were officially

²⁹ Hannah, *Ibid.*, 59, 88

³⁰ Leonard Schwarz, ‘English Servants and their Employers during the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Centuries’, *Economic History Review*, 52. 2 (1999), 238

³¹ Schwarz, ‘English Servants and their Employers’, 248, using Cambridge Population Group Research.

registered as manservants.³² While it may be necessary to adjust and qualify these figures to eliminate those who were not primarily *domestic* servants (such as those agriculture and retail work) and to allow that the London servant-owning class was more numerous than elsewhere, it is nevertheless certain that servants were a significant sector of the working population in London and other leading cities including Bath, Bristol, York and Norwich and probably the largest occupational force throughout the country as a whole – albeit a heavily female one.³³ From the early eighteenth century domestic service had become ‘feminised’ and by the 1780s women and girls made up approximately 75% of its labour force.³⁴

It is thus not surprising that servants were a constant presence in the social and cultural life of the Georgian period. As Carolyn Steedman shows us they might be found not only in the kitchen and scullery, but swelling the ranks of prostitutes and criminals when they fell on hard times. They appeared in court as witnesses to conflicts between master and mistress and as plaintiffs claiming delayed wages, unjust treatment or unfair dismissal. Legal theorists, political philosophers and historians found maids and menservants ‘a rich resource for thinking about the social order’, a useful reference point to explain the functioning of society or compare their own with another, confident that such references were meaningful to their readers. If those ranked above the servant class were well aware of their higher status it was because they were familiar with the servant’s lot. At the same time, the position of servants was compared and contrasted with the wretchedness of slavery. Servants also featured in the drama and fiction of the period, sometimes as no more than a ‘plot mechanism’ but also as astute observers, advisors and companions.³⁵ Smollett’s Humphry Clinker was kinder, more thoughtful and honest than those he served; Sheridan’s Lucy in *The Rivals* commends ‘a mask of silliness’ behind which, acting

³² Schwarz, ‘English Servants and their Employers’, 253

³³ For a critical assessment of contemporary estimates of the servant population see Schwarz, ‘English Servants and their Employers’, 236-48; R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 64-5

³⁴ For discussion of the feminization of the domestic labour force see Schwarz, ‘English Servants and their Employers’, 237, 250-2; Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow and London: Longman, 2000), 15-16, 33; Richardson, *Household Servants*, p.66. Figures for both numbers of servants and ratios of female to male, however, are generally felt to be uncertain. Figures for London which are more readily available (Meldrum gives a male female ratio of 1:4) may not be representative of the rest of the country.

³⁵ Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 13, 347 and passim

as go-between, she cleverly exploits the rivalries between the lovers and manages to amass handsome rewards in the form of money, gowns and hats.³⁶

Such characters exemplify the ‘servant problem’ – essentially how to acquire and keep honest and well-behaved servants – a preoccupation throughout the eighteenth century and beyond as servant-keeping households grew in number. This growth in numbers, however, gave servants little in the way of status. Male servants, in particular, came in for much opprobrium by the end of the century in handbooks, newspapers and correspondence. Valets, footmen, butlers, coachmen and grooms were a select section of the servant workforce widely perceived to be relatively well-paid and leading an easy lifestyle. Liveried servants might add status to their households but they represented a manifestation of ‘conspicuous consumption’ which moralists of the day condemned. In Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker*, Matthew Bramble called them ‘coxcombs in livery’.³⁷ This was not necessarily a just observation but domestic service was a markedly gendered occupation; women, as a rule, took on distinctly ‘female’ roles as scullery maids, laundry-maids, children’s nurses and maids-of-all-work. As such they were generally considered more useful, hard-working – and certainly cheaper than male servants. The Quaker writer Priscilla Wakefield, a strong advocate for female servants, believed that the discrepancy in wages between male and female workers was ‘an abuse greatest in domestic servants’.³⁸ Nevertheless both male and female could be criticised for such generic servant faults as unreliability, slovenliness, ‘sauciness’ and idleness.

Nor did the new theory of political economy help to promote a favourable perception of domestic servants. Far from drawing on servant life to elucidate his ideas, Adam Smith classified domestic toil as ‘unproductive’: it produced no saleable end-product or tangible commodity upon which a value could be placed. The army of household workers, some no more than slips of girls, preoccupied with scrubbing, dusting,

³⁶ Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, revised edition using 1771 and 1783 editions (London: J.M.Dent, 1961; Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 29-30

³⁷ Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, 83. Such views provided justification for the tax on male servants in 1777

³⁸ Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections on the Condition of the Female Sex* (London, 1798), 151-2. She gives the example of a footman earning £50 a year plus clothes and vails, while a cook, ‘mistress of her profession’ did not get £20. Jane Holmes found similar discrepancies in male/female wages in her study of domestic servants in Yorkshire, ‘Domestic Service in Yorkshire, 1650-1780’ (PhD thesis, York University, 1989), 166-7

peeling, washing and much that was far less appealing, could hardly rank in Smith's order of things with the butchers, brewers and bakers, whose exchange of goods kept the economy moving. Smith did not see all such 'unproductive' labour to be without any benefit to society but domestic service was low in his hierarchy of useful work – and, since the impact of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) was profound and enduring, so too was the reputation it accorded household labour.³⁹

Nor was there much sense of solidarity with workers in other occupations: many viewed domestic service as demeaning for adult men and believed servants were cushioned from the harsh realities of life (the cost of food and fuel prices, rents etc.) with which they contended on a daily basis. The anonymous author of *The Footman's Looking Glass* (1747) was aware of the low opinion in which his occupation was held by others: 'we are in a situation hissed at by the very coblers (sic), Shoe-Blacks, Chimney Sweepers, Street Rakers and Basket Women' he protested, 'a low, mean and despised Station of Life.' Francis Place despised his own trade of tailoring but could imagine 'nothing except being a footman or common soldier as more degrading'.⁴⁰ As R.C. Richardson and Tim Meldrum have demonstrated, the great range of experience as well as the hierarchy which existed within the occupation and the different social settings in which they worked, make it difficult to put domestic servants into a distinct class. Small wonder, then, that there was little solidarity amongst domestic workers themselves and little idea of a common identity. As more households lower in the social scale came to employ servants so the vertical reach between those at the top and those in quite modest households became greater. Common action was difficult to organise amongst such a young and often isolated work-force. Domestic servants were far from a homogeneous occupational group: what was remarkable, however, was the rich complexity of their lives, the many divisions among them and many different concepts of service.⁴¹

³⁹ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 430-1. For example, 'A man grows rich by employing a multitude of manufacturers: he grows poor by maintaining a multitude of menial servants', 430.

⁴⁰ Anon., *The Footman's Looking-Glass* (London, 1747), p.14; Mary Thrale (ed.) *The Autobiography of Francis Place, 1771-1854* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 216

⁴¹ Richardson, *Household Servants*, passim; Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, passim

We can be confident that children were one part of this diverse, scattered and numerous labour force. Servants were, in general, overwhelmingly young: by the eighteenth century it was still the case that sixty to seventy per cent of those aged fifteen to twenty-four were engaged as live-in servants.⁴² A number of this cohort would have begun their working lives before the age of fifteen; this youngest group may have been a minority within the domestic service body but they were more likely to be found working as domestic servants than in any other occupation.⁴³ They were placed in households essentially for the purpose of performing work, variously described as ‘housewifery’, ‘household business’ or the ‘business of an household servant’. Their numbers and presence in a wide range of households throughout the country, suggests that there is much more to be said about their role in eighteenth century life.

The great majority of these children came from the poorest sectors of eighteenth-and nineteenth-century society. Most were girls sent out by poor law authorities, charities and poor parents. Sixteenth century statutes had stipulated that ‘huswifery’ was the most appropriate training for ‘Girles or other waste persons’ and this continued to be the prevailing wisdom reinforced by the traditional view that this was useful training for becoming wives and mothers.⁴⁴ In 1753 Isaac Maddox, Lord Bishop of Worcester, making a plea for support for the London Foundling Hospital believed that the ‘pious and useful Lessons’ to be provided in the institution were those which prepared the children for ‘the meanest and most laborious Employments which their sex will admit’.⁴⁵ In reality this meant domestic work for the vast majority of girls who were also thought to lack the stamina and physique for many of the tasks undertaken by boys.

⁴² Although the figures are imprecise there is little disagreement about this general pattern. See discussion of the age profile of domestic servants in Richardson, *Household Servants*, 63-4. Schwarz finds that in 1851, 52 per cent of female domestics were between fifteen and twenty-four, Schwarz, ‘English Servants and their Employers’, 250

⁴³ Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain*, 9

⁴⁴ S. Hindle, “‘Waste’ Children? Pauper Apprenticeship under the Elizabethan Poor Law, c. 1598-1697”, in *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850* ed. P. Lane, N. Raven and K.D.M. Snell (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 17; For the importance attached to housewifery in early modern England, see Amy Louise Erikson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 53

⁴⁵ Isaac Maddox, *The Wisdom and Duty of Preserving Destitute Infants* (London, 1753), 7

‘Waste’ (or pauper) boys from the sixteenth century had routinely been allocated to husbandry but there had always been an acceptable role for boys in domestic service. By the second half of the eighteenth century when live-in placements in agriculture were in decline this became a more likely option for many boys since pauper children had been banned by guild restrictions from certain crafts. Financial constraints also pushed some boys into domestic work since it was more expensive to bind apprentices into the more skilled and semi-skilled trades. Priscilla Wakefield noted in the 1790s that domestic work was the most likely occupation for children whose parents were unable to pay even a small premium for an apprenticeship; work as a hired household servant contracted directly with the employer and usually just for one year provided a solution.⁴⁶ It was also a traditional occupation for children of the poor which required no specialist skills at entry level. Charities also placed a significant number of boys into household work. The navy had been the original choice when the Foundling Hospital sent out its first apprentices in the 1750s but this proved possible for only a small number of boys. Household work suited the ethos projected by the Hospital which was anxious not to alienate public opinion by raising ‘low-born’ apprentices above their station. London society provided many openings for such work but some opportunity for domestic work existed in all communities and in some areas there were few other ways in which a child might train or earn. Such circumstances and sentiments explain why so many children were placed in domestic service but also why it was not ranked highly.

Many children entered domestic service by these various routes at a very young age. Records for the parish of Leire in Leicestershire show that in 1780, Sarah Scotton was apprenticed to Thomas Barrowcluff, a tailor in Leicester, to learn the ‘Art of Good Housewifery’; Sarah was eight years-old and committed to serve her apprenticeship until the age of twenty-one. In 1782 Elizabeth West, aged eleven, was placed by the Foundling Hospital to be household servant to Richard Holliday a cheesemonger of Fleet Street in London.⁴⁷ Others obtained work in establishments where their parents or siblings already worked. James Watson was twelve when he began working in the house of a clergyman where his mother had worked before her

⁴⁶ Wakefield, *Reflections*, 158-9

⁴⁷ Indenture for Sarah Scotton, n.d.1780, ROLLR. DE 1425/97p; Indenture for Elizabeth West, 28 August 1782, LMA, A/FH/12/4/84/1-

marriage. She joined him a few years later to take up her former role.⁴⁸ In 1758 Molly Hook, aged twelve, began a ‘trial’ period as household help for her father’s friend, Thomas Turner. Mary Ashford and Thomas Dunning both found work as domestic servants for themselves; Mary was thirteen and Thomas had to ‘turn out before I was thirteen’.⁴⁹ Even a superficial acquaintance with the print culture of the period, indicates that child servants were part of the domestic labour force. Boys feature in the diaries of clergymen and surgeons of the period serving short stints as *general factotum* or ‘skip-jacks’ before moving on to a formal apprenticeship or work thought to be more appropriate for older boys. Children appear as servants in the fiction of the period. Pamela went into service when, as she says, ‘I was not twelve years old’; Joseph Andrews was apprenticed to Sir Thomas Booby at the age of ten, soon to become Lady Booby’s own footboy.⁵⁰

The duties performed by these children depended, for the most part, on their gender, but also the nature of the household into which they were received, its function, wealth and social category. The tasks undertaken by John Stephenson, the twelve year old orphan and live-in servant for the Reverend Humphryes in Suffolk were set out for the male-servant tax assessors in the 1770s: John, ‘Went on errands, cleaned his shoes, sharpened knives, swept the garden, lighted the fire and did other occasional business in the house’.⁵¹ Nine year-old John Bezer described a similar round of duties when working for a warehouse man and his wife in Newgate Street.⁵² Philip Thicknesse drew attention to the ‘*all work* maid servants’ in London, many of whom were no more than little girls, but were expected to take on all the necessary domestic tasks in one-servant households.⁵³ What passed for domestic service amongst these child servants was, indeed, hugely miscellaneous. Frances Hamilton, a

⁴⁸ David Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism: Memoirs of Working Class Politicians 1790-1885* (London: Europa, 1977), p.109; Jane Holmes found servants with the same name listed in several larger households in Yorkshire which she took to indicate members of the same family, Holmes, ‘Domestic Service in Yorkshire’, 61

⁴⁹ David Vaisey (ed.) *The Diary of Thomas Turner 1754-1765* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, reprinted East Hoathly, 1994); Mary Ann Ashley, *Life of a Licensed Victualler’s Daughter, Written by Herself* (London: Sanders and Otley, 1844), 18; Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism*, 123

⁵⁰ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, first published, London 1740 (London: Everyman, 1984), Vol. I., 13; Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, first published 1742 (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 42

⁵¹ Cited in Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 70-1

⁵² Vincent *Testaments*, 162

⁵³ Philip Thicknesse, *Memoirs and Anecdotes of Philip Thicknesse* (London: printed for the author, 1788), 284

Suffolk farmer, described her boy servants as footmen but gave them a range of domestic tasks to complete both inside and outside the farmhouse including rat catching, sawing wood and cleaning the pigsty. She also kitted them out to serve at table when visitors came. For the most part girls in service seem to have been confined more closely to work within the household, nursing and child-minding as well as laundry work and cleaning. The reach of domestic work and the extent and nature of the gender divide will be one of the concerns of this study.

Historiography

Servants and domestic service

Despite the numerical importance of servants and their constant presence in the lives of eighteenth-century households they are an occupational group to which historians have only relatively recently given close attention. The early post-war work of Dorothy Marshall and Jean Hecht was taken further in the 1990s by Bridget Hill's extensive study of eighteenth-century servant life. An important thesis by Jane Holmes pursued many of the same themes and moved away from their London bias by drawing on the abundant sources available for the study of servants in Yorkshire.⁵⁴ These works emphasise the significance of the growing number of households employing servants in the late eighteenth century and indicated the ways in which domestic servants at once contributed to and reflected changing social and economic developments. All four writers drew attention to the need for more research into these questions.

Hill and Holmes, however, were exceptions. Twentieth-century historians failed to pursue this lead and for the most part excluded servants from their studies of working-class history or at least marginalised them. Carolyn Steedman and Tim Meldrum, in particular, have drawn attention to the pre-occupation of twentieth-century historians with industrial and proto-industrial workers.⁵⁵ Part of the

⁵⁴ Dorothy Marshall, *The English Domestic Servant in History*, Historical Association Pamphlet, G13 (London, 1949); J. Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1956); Hill, *Servants. English Domestic of the Eighteenth Century*; Holmes, 'Domestic Service in Yorkshire'

⁵⁵ Carolyn Steedman, *Master and Servant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 227-8; Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender, 1650-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (London: Longman, 2000), 5-7

explanation lies in the limited and scattered sources which are available for domestic work but also in the amorphous nature of the servant world. The historians of the 1960's who followed E.P. Thompson's lead in charting the making of working class consciousness allowed no place in this process for domestic servants who did not fit easily into any class category. Feminist historians, whilst raising interest in women's history, have tended to be preoccupied with women workers outside the household and those who made inroads into spheres which were formerly closed to women. One of the most influential feminist works, Davidoff and Hall's *Family Fortunes* (1987) did indeed focus on domestic life between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It acknowledged the importance of servants in shaping the role of women but its chief concern was with middle-class women's response to domesticity rather than the practicalities of household or servant management.⁵⁶

More recently a new wave of interest in servants has been informed by a wider concern with history from below, by women's history and methodological approaches working to uncover new sources for the lives of those formerly 'hidden from history'. Historians have acknowledged Dorothy Marshall's awareness that 'Too many persons have gained their livelihood in this way for the subject to be ignored by the social historian'.⁵⁷ Earlier studies of servants relied heavily on the perspective of employers (household accounts, personal diaries and letters) and contemporary manuals on household management written by representatives of the employer class who were often highly critical and judgemental in their observations of servants. In a work which covers the whole of the early modern period, R. C. Richardson has sought a more balanced and representative approach: while revisiting the writings of those who viewed servants from above he also seeks out 'self-representations' by servants as expressed in court cases, autobiography, poetry and purchasing power. By making use of this wider range of source material and applying a rigorous analysis to all source material, whatever its provenance, he attempts to see the lives of servants through their own eyes and to make this much neglected workforce 'more audible and visible'.⁵⁸ For Richardson servants were far

⁵⁶ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987)

⁵⁷ Marshall, *English Domestic Servant*, 3

⁵⁸ Richardson, *Household Servants*, 230 and passim

too diverse in their household experience, wealth, culture and authority to constitute a coherent class. They were, nevertheless, not without power: they might exploit their intimate knowledge of household scandals for their own ends or trade on their employer's dependence on their services.

Steedman and Meldrum have contributed significantly to this 'democratisation' of the subject. In *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660-1750* (2000) Meldrum gleans evidence from the London consistory court in order to shed light on the lived experiences of servants who worked in a range of different households in the metropolis. His concern is to illustrate the variety of experience which existed amongst and between male and female servants but also to rescue servants from inevitable 'victim status' - to show that they were exploitative as well as exploited and, at times, able to exercise agency. In *Labours Lost* (2009) Steedman presents a more deliberate attempt to restore domestic servants to their rightful role in history. She seeks to remind us, through detailed case studies, of the everyday demands on their time, energy and sensibilities whether shovelling out the privy, cleaning the knives or caring for children and 'their piggy little clouts'.⁵⁹ Pamela Horn's study of service, *Flunkies and Scullions: Life below Stairs in Georgian England* (2004) reviews the lives of a very broad range of household workers of many ages and in households belonging to different social groups. She draws from rural and urban examples throughout England and includes many examples from the lives of children and young workers in domestic service.⁶⁰

These studies have drawn on newly discovered or newly published autobiographies, biographies and diaries stimulated by the new interest in the lives of servants and the desire to get closer to a wider range of servant experience. A remarkable example is the diary of the Reverend Murgatroyd of Slaithwaite which forms the focus of Steedman's book *Master and Servant* (2007) and provides grounds for challenging much of the received wisdom on master/servant relations – in particular the conventional picture of a girl in service destined as a result of her pregnancy to dismissal and destitution. Murgatroyd kept his servant, Phoebe, with him and cared

⁵⁹ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*; Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 254 and passim

⁶⁰ Pamela Horn, *Flunkies and Scullions: Life Below Stairs in Georgian England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004)

for her child. A number of earlier works have gained new attention; Samuel and Sarah Adams, *The Complete Servant*, written by two former servants in 1825, was reprinted in 1989; *The Diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765*, which was published in 1984 and has been much used by social historians, is interesting for providing an insight into the life of a shop-keeper who employed servants but whose business was conducted on a modest and insecure income.⁶¹

The experience of servants has also taken on new significance in other aspects of social history: in *Unfortunate Objects* Tanya Evans looked into the significance of servants as mothers of illegitimate children. Ruth McClure and Alysa Levene considered the experiences of servants amongst the mothers who applied to place their infants in the London Foundling Hospital. Joanne Bailey shows that servants might become embroiled in household disputes and bear witness to domestic violence. Other studies consider the involvement of servants in crime and punishment and their vulnerability to sexual abuse.⁶² Children, however, are for the most part absent from the literature on service, just as domestic service is largely absent from the historiography of childhood.

Children and childhood

The attention given in this study to the role of working children in domestic service belongs to the wider process of rescuing the children of the past from obscurity which made remarkable progress following Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* published in 1960.⁶³ His contention that the concept of childhood was, in historical terms, a relatively recent one provoked a wide response. His hope that his ideas

⁶¹ Carolyn Steedman, *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ann Haly (ed.) *The Complete Servant* with an introduction by Pamela Horn, Samuel and Sarah Adams, first published London, 1825 (Lewes: Southover Press, 1989); David Vaisey (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Turner 1754-1765* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)

⁶² Tanya Evans, *'Unfortunate Objects': Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Ruth McClure, *Coram's Children: the London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Alysa Levene, *Childcare, Health and Mortality at the London Foundling Hospital 1741-1800* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007); Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Douglas Hay and Paul Craven (eds), *Masters, Servants and Magistrates* (London and Capital Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Kristina Straub, *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism and Violence between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2009)

⁶³ Philip Aries, *L'Enfance et La Vie Familiale sous L'Ancien Regime* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1960)

would inspire further investigation was not disappointed: sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and art historians as well as historians were drawn into the issues he raised and have taken the discussion in unforeseen directions. Historians of the family and of demographic trends were quick to incorporate the presence of children into their broader studies of family and community life.⁶⁴ Feminist history drew attention to new sources and approaches aware that the lives of working women and children were so often inextricably linked. The history of childhood became a highly contentious issue. In the 1970s Lloyd de Mause and Edward Shorter were associated with the view that little humanity towards children in any context may be discerned before the mid-nineteenth century when modern and ‘enlightened’ attitudes began to emerge.⁶⁵ The ‘whiggish’ nature of this thesis has been challenged by studies of primitive societies and primates; medievalists have shown that a distinct and ‘humane’ approach to childhood in the middle ages can be discerned in language use and through the existence of toys.⁶⁶ The position of working children has become a particular focus of the debate and while not denying that for many children in the past life was bleak, studies by Linda Pollock and more recently Jane Humphries, Katrina Honeyman and Patricia Crawford suggest that the reality for working children was complex and diverse.⁶⁷ Emma Griffin’s investigation into child labour in the Industrial Revolution draws attention to wide regional differences in the scale and intensity of work undertaken by children.⁶⁸

The distinct contribution of working children to the social and economic life of the past, their particular role in historical development, has begun to emerge - no longer subsumed in general surveys or studied simply as a marginal aspect in the quality of life debate. A number of studies have sought to extend this approach by focusing attention on children’s active participation in events and their own perception of their

⁶⁴ See, for example, M. Drake, *Time, Family and Community: Perspectives on Family and Community History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)

⁶⁵ Lloyd de Mause, *The History of Childhood* (London: Souvenir Press, 1976); Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London, 1975)

⁶⁶ See, for example, Nicholas Orme, ‘The Culture of Children in Medieval England,’ *Past & Present*, 148 (1995): 48-88

⁶⁷ Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten children: Parent-child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children*

⁶⁸ Emma Griffin, *Liberty’s Dawn: A People’s History of the Industrial Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 57-83

lives. Jane Humphries shows that children's earnings, even when very small, could help families get by in difficult times; she uses childhood experiences as one means of answering quantitative questions about the impact of industrialisation. Katrina Honeyman shows that pauper apprentices working in mills during the industrial revolution made a significant contribution to the pace and scale of industrial expansion not, as previously thought, simply in its early stages, but well into the nineteenth century. Humphries has argued that skilled apprentices in small artisan workshops, contributed significantly to industrial expansion from the late eighteenth century through a system that was both cheap and efficient for masters and entrepreneurs.⁶⁹ In other words child workers were 'agents' in the nature and direction of the industrial revolution - not necessarily mere passive victims or recipients of its effects.⁷⁰

My own contribution to this line of investigation is to consider what opportunities there were for children in domestic service to express some degree of autonomy, to bargain for better conditions or gain greater independence. Child servants, so often isolated, unschooled and in an occupation with very little sense of collective identity seem the least likely to have been able to make any positive impact. Unlike apprentices producing goods or services which were marketable, they might save household funds, but could rarely contribute substantially to the household income. Nevertheless, too little has been done on how households survived and functioned, to be able to dismiss this possibility. Even the most abject and oppressed groups (slaves, paupers, impoverished wet nurses) have found ways of asserting their influence and were not invariably victims of their circumstances.⁷¹ Pertinent to this study is twelve year-old Nanny Nutter in Lancashire who made life stressful for her

⁶⁹Jane Humphries, 'English Apprenticeship: A Neglected Factor in the First Industrial Revolution,' in *The Economic Future in Historical Perspective*, ed. Paul A. David and Mark Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 73-102

⁷⁰ Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, 230-7; Honeyman, *Child Workers in England*, 59, 113-28. For a recent general discussion of the question of agency in childhood and further examples see Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (eds), *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency, 1750-1914* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013)

⁷¹ See, for example, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). Wet nurses in France took action against physicians who had treated them with mercury (without their knowledge) as part of an experiment to cure infants born with syphilis, Joan Sherwood, *Infection of the Innocent: Wet Nurses, Infants, and Syphilis in France, 1780-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010) I am grateful to Alison Appleby for drawing my attention to this source.

mistress while promoting her own interests (as well as her wardrobe), thanks to the shortage of servants in rural areas and the pull of higher paid work in mills.⁷² At the very least children in household work made their contribution to services which allowed others to fulfil valuable services to the community.

Nature and scope of study

The aim of this study is to address these two areas of historical research (domestic service and childhood) by focusing on child servants. The chief rationale arises from Peter Kirby's observation that children working for their living (or making a significant contribution to their own households) in early modern England were most likely to be identified as 'servants'.⁷³ For contemporaries this general term might include a multitude of workers; boys who worked in husbandry for a local farmer; an apprentice with an artisan or shop-keeper; a girl placed with a milliner or dress-maker; parish girls sent to needlework shops. This study isolates one particular section of this heterogeneous servant body – those children, boys and girls, working essentially and predominantly as *domestic* servants. Most were 'live-in' servants but a small number were day workers. They were a recognisable and distinct occupational group in the sense that they were all contributing to the daily functioning of a household. The focus is on children who were placed by poor law authorities, by charitable institutions such as foundling hospitals or orphanages, or through private arrangements made by parents or kin. Domestic service was, for the reasons discussed above, the occupation most likely to be chosen for girls and for a significant number of boys. For this reason too there are more sources available of both a private and public nature.

The study will consider why households in this period took children in to work but also why others refused or were reluctant to do so. It will include an examination of the circumstances in which children lived and worked and the extent to which the indenture, which bound child apprentices to domestic service, safeguarded their livelihood and well-being. Despite the standardised wording of the indenture the application of its terms was, in practice, open to wide interpretation. The same is true

⁷² Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 143-5

⁷³ Kirby, *Child Labour*, 9-10

of the many private agreements which mirrored the indenture even if they were qualified or extended by local custom. The position regarding circumstances and needs which were not covered by the indenture or agreements, for example sickness, leisure and discipline could be even more complex and uncertain.

By giving attention to the age at which child servants began their working lives, some contribution is also made to the wider debate about the age at which children commonly began their working lives. Peter Kirby believes that ‘Very few children below ten were ever engaged in productive labour’ at least in a full-time capacity. Jane Humphries, on the other hand, finds a significant number of children working below the age of ten among the (male) authors of the autobiographies in her study and in a range of occupations including mining, factory work and the army as well as in traditional areas. The number of very young children taking up work increased during the difficult period of the Napoleonic wars due to economic constraints imposed on the poor and the absence of fathers.⁷⁴ To Kirby, these were children placed ‘at abnormally young ages’, but for Humphries the phenomenon of very young children at work ‘was far from rare’ amongst certain categories of families.⁷⁵

The current study thus seeks to extend the remit of work on domestic service in several ways. By taking a wider perspective this thesis will also be able to address differences within the ranks of child servants, to consider how the lives of children reflected the gender division of the adult servant body, what safeguards and hazards existed for this dispersed and highly vulnerable work force and with what effect children themselves responded to these circumstances.

Chronological and geographical scope of the study

The study focuses on the years 1760-1830 providing scope for a survey covering a period which is extensive enough to allow significant observations of continuity and change over time. It covers a period when new developments, for children as well as adult workers, engaged the interests of contemporaries. The period boundaries are not, however, rigid. As evidence for some aspects of children’s lives is limited,

⁷⁴ See, for example, Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain*, 4,131; Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, 367; Honeyman, *Child Workers in England*, 45

⁷⁵ Kirby, *Child Labour*, 131; Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, 42-83, 367

evidence will be taken from earlier in the eighteenth century to illustrate general conditions and to highlight changes associated with the post 1760s period. Similarly the bulk of evidence comes from England but some examples have been taken from Scotland where higher levels of literacy have provided us with useful biographies. John MacDonald's account of his early life illustrates the value of this wider reach. He was employed as a boy in a number of different households in Scotland during the 1740s and 1750s. We must allow for the problematic nature of autobiography (see discussion below) but his life-story, published in 1790, includes a rare example of a first-hand account of the haphazard fortunes of a child servant.⁷⁶

By focusing on child servants placed by three different agencies rather than any particular local or regional grouping, this study draws upon households from a range of social ranks. This seems an appropriate strategy for bringing out the variety of experiences of child servants but also makes the study more manageable and representative. As a general rule we can say that parish children who were apprenticed into domestic service (most were girls) were likely to be in poorer households belonging to small tradesmen, artisans or farmers. Charity apprentices tended to be placed with more 'respectable' and economically stable households where their services had often been sought by their masters or mistresses. Many charitable bodies had links with wealthy subscribers and this too opened up the possibility, for some children, of placements in large and prestigious households. Parents were more likely to seek annual contracts (rather than apprenticeships) when putting children to domestic work. The nature of the household in which they were able to place them depended on their family's reputation for respectability and their proximity to households requiring domestic help. This too opens the possibility of a good range of households from grand establishments to one-servant households which might be economically precarious.

Methodology and Sources

As is the case for servants in general, children left few records; most of our information comes not directly from their own accounts, but from those responsible for some aspect of their work or training and who were often in positions of

⁷⁶ John MacDonald, *Travels in Various Parts of Europe, Asia and Africa During a Series of Thirty Years and Upwards* (London: printed for the author, 1790)

authority. Earlier studies of servants relied heavily on such records (household accounts, personal diaries and letters), and on contemporary manuals on household management giving the perspective of employers and masters. These remain valuable sources and my approach is to revisit these texts giving new attention to references to child servants. For example the diary of Parson Woodforde of Western Longville in Norfolk has proved valuable to social historians of the eighteenth century but little attention has been given to the many boy servants employed by Woodforde to assist in the running of the household and accompanying him in his parish work. At the same time, I have consulted a broader range of sources which give access to children in lower income households (See below).

An important concern of this study, however, is to try to access the ‘voice’ of the child. Here my investigation is informed, in particular, by the methodology of Katrina Honeyman: in her study of pauper children in textile mills she gains new insight into the response of children to their work experiences by close analysis of their appearances in court and by the observations of factory inspectors who reported on their circumstances.⁷⁷ A similar approach will be used here drawing on evidence from the Old Bailey, local courts, poor law and charity officials, correspondence between masters/mistresses and placement bodies, autobiographies and appearances of children before charity governors. As this study aims to uncover the experience of children working as servants in a wide range of social and economic households, the nature and origins of sources consulted have been numerous and various. This study is also mindful of Linda Pollock’s caution that many of the sources favoured by and most readily available to the historian of childhood may tell us more about abuse than about the everyday experiences of children unless interrogated carefully.⁷⁸ Legal records and coroners’ accounts, for example – dealing with accounts of starvation and neglect – cannot be assumed to be typical and may be entirely exceptional. Newspapers published reports of sensational cases of the abuse of children in service, but had little reason to record an apprentice or maid whose life generally ticked over satisfactorily.

⁷⁷ Honeyman, *Child Workers in England*, especially chapter 10

⁷⁸ Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, especially, 56-67

Personal and household accounts

A total of forty-five diaries and account books have been consulted; the two types of sources are linked because some diaries, for example, that of Isaac Fletcher of Cumberland, double as account books. Diaries, correspondence and household accounts from larger and wealthier establishments are more numerous than those from poorer households but some examples survive for all but the poorest. The examples used were chosen to represent households which spanned the ranks of servant-keeping families. The diaries of Anna Larpent, who was the wife of a senior civil servant in the Office of the Lord Chamberlain are, like similar records by women in her position, interspersed with concerns and observations about servants. Gertrude Savile, the sister of a Whig politician, provides us with another ‘top down’ outlook on servants in an early eighteenth-century household.⁷⁹ The ‘middle range’ diary sources include those of Abigail Gawthorn, the wife of a well-to-do white lead manufacturer living in Nottingham and Mary Hardy the wife of a successful farmer in Norfolk, both of whom were actively involved in the running of their family concerns.⁸⁰ Much use is made of the writings of the Anglican clergy - the great diary-keepers of the eighteenth century – ranging in wealth from John Longe in the ‘comfortable’ benefice of Coddensham in Suffolk who kept around eleven domestic servants, to the Somerset parson, William Holland who struggled to keep two maids.⁸¹ Matthew Flinders, an apothecary and man mid-wife, and Thomas Turner a shop-keeper, are useful as representatives of servant-employing households under some economic strain; Flinders’ rather uncertain yearly income and his several children meant that tight control of household expenditure, including the cost of servants and wet-nurses was a constant concern; Turner’s account of his daily and public life is interesting because he was close to the few servants he employed and counted servants among his friends and relatives. The diary of William Tayler, who

⁷⁹ Huntington Library, *Mrs. Larpent’s Diary 1790-95*, HM 31201; Alan Saville (ed.), *Secret Comment: The Diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-1757*, Thoroton Society Record Series, 41 (1997)

⁸⁰ Adrian Henstock (ed.), *The Diary of Abigail Gawthorn of Nottingham 1751-1810*, Thoroton Society Record Series, 33 (1980); Basil Cozens-Hardy (ed.), *Mary Hardy’s Diary*, Norfolk Record Society, 37 (1968)

⁸¹ Michael Stone (ed.) *The Diary of John Longe, 1765-1834*, Suffolk Record Society, 51 (2008); Jack Ayres (ed.), *Paupers and Pig Killers: The Diary of William Holland: A Somerset Parson, 1799-1818* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984), 95

came from a poor farming family, provides insight into the thoughts of a footman in a fairly prosperous household in London, struggling to improve his literacy.⁸²

The most extensive account books used are those from the Temple-Grenville family at Stowe and Wotton and the Babington family of Rothley. As a contrast to these large and high expenditure servant-employing households, we have the account book of Richard Latham, a yeoman farmer with an annual expenditure of £20 to £40.⁸³ The Lathams employed only occasional help from servants at times of greatest need. Correspondence comes from the Purefoy family of Buckinghamshire, two family records located in the Leicestershire and Rutland Record Office (the Shirley, Earls Ferrers family of Staunton Harold, the Vaughan's of Halford) and the letters of the Reverend George Woodward of East Hendred.⁸⁴ Access to the daily lives of working children can be found only by trawling through many pages of material to find the occasional relevant reference or insight. Much of interest to the historian has been lost or omitted. The diary of Isaac Fletcher, for example, gives detailed information about wages but only tantalising hints about the work the young servants in his household were engaged in or their relationship with each other. On the other hand, since servants were central to household life and a constant in the lives of many individuals they feature in the accounts and reminiscences of many contemporaries.

Parish and charity records

Sources for children sent out from poor law parishes and from charitable institutions are often abundant and widely available in public record offices; such bodies were accountable to rate payers or subscribers who expected some account of expenditure and action taken. In this case close attention has been given to the parish records of

⁸² Beardsley and Bennett, *Grateful to Providence*; Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*; Dorothy Wise (ed.), *Diary of William Tayler, Footman*, 1837 (London: St. Marylebone Society Publication Group, 1962)

⁸³ Lorna Weatherill (ed.), *The Account Book of Richard Latham, 1724-1767*, Records of Social and Economic History, 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

⁸⁴ G. Eland (ed.), *The Purefoy Letters, 1735-1753* (London, 1931): Shirley, Earls Ferrers, Letters, Leicestershire and Rutland Record Office (hereafter ROLLR), 22D64; Vaughan family of Halford, Letters, ROLLR, DG24; D. Gibson (ed.), *A Parson in the Vale of White Horse. George Woodward's Letters from East Hendred, 1753-1761* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1982)

Leicester (the parishes of All Saints, St Anne's, St Leonards, St Lukes, St Margaret's, St Martin's, St Mary de Castro, St Nicholas) and in Leicestershire parish records for Leire, Little Bawden and Market Harborough, Lockington cum Hemington, Loddington, Long Whatton, Loughborough and Oakham. The amount and value of much documentary evidence which survives for individual parishes is variable. Much is concerned with the practical issues of the location of the placement of the children and the occupation of those who received them. Workhouse records and correspondence, however, contain information about the cost of clothing and circumstances of individual children, for example, those who were placed with new masters due to the death or imprisonment of their first. Indentures (or in a few cases a record of details of a placement) were consulted for 184 apprentices in the Leicester records.

Likewise the minutes of the governing bodies of charities, reports of inspectors and correspondence with masters and mistresses reveal information about the condition and treatment of the children and the attitude of the public to charity children. A more detailed discussion of the records of the London Foundling Hospital and the Birmingham Blue Coat School, is contained in chapter four. For the period covered for the comparative study (1775-1804) 814 indentures (or record of placement) were surveyed for the Foundling Hospital and 316 for the Blue coat school in conjunction with the administrative records for both institutions.

Household manuals

The manuals and advice books on household conduct belong almost without exception to the 'top-down' category of documents. One of the most popular works, *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658) belongs to the seventeenth-century tradition of homilies which sought to fashion both servants and their masters (it was 'for the Use of All but especially the Meanest Reader') into godly and law-abiding members of their households. It merits attention because it continued to be issued to charity children at the point when they entered apprenticeship well into the nineteenth

century.⁸⁵ Later handbooks, like Anne Barker's *The Complete Servant Maid*, were more secular and practical in their aims; useful guides to what the middle-class writers *believed* was the correct way to run a household and the proper way for servants to behave. The danger is to assume that such works necessarily reflected the reality of domestic life. Their very proliferation suggests that there was a need for them; many households were woefully lacking in the ideals the writers put forward. In 1825, two retired servants, Samuel and Sarah Adams produced their own guide, *The Complete Servant*. Concerned more directly with the interests of the servant, but highly practical and with strong emphasis on moral guidance, economy and prudence, it hardly represented a radical departure from the genre.⁸⁶ Most such works have been located through Eighteenth-Century Records Online using keyword searches.

Autobiography

The thirty-two autobiographies have been chosen to gain insight into the childhood of poorer children including those working in households with precarious incomes. Autobiography is a source which has been challenged by some historians on account of its subjective and unrepresentative nature and the distortions of hindsight. For others it is a 'constructed' source rather than one providing genuine insight into the thoughts of the individual writer. Jane Humphries, however, provides a robust defence of her use of autobiography to gain insight into the lives and responses of boys engaged in various occupations during the industrial revolution. She finds them representative of the wider group of working children. Moreover autobiographies tend to deal quite extensively with childhood and, it is argued, have less reason to distort or exclude events of childhood. It is the shameful memories of adult years - illegitimate children or shabby treatment of partners which are omitted.⁸⁷ In this study a limited number of autobiographies are consulted in conjunction with a range of other sources; the intention is to gain an insight into individual circumstances

⁸⁵ Anonymous, *The Whole Duty of Man* (London: E. Pawlet, 1718, first published 1658)

⁸⁶ Anne Barker, *The Complete Servant Maid: or Young Woman's Best Companion* (Dublin: J. Cooke, 1770); Samuel and Sarah Adams, *The Complete Servant* (London, 1825) reprinted, Ann Haly (ed.) with an Introduction by Pamela Horn (Lewes: Southover, 1989)

⁸⁷ Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, especially, 12-28; Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn*, 6-8

rather than to represent a whole category of workers. There is certainly a gender bias: more autobiographies were written by men than by women in this period. This makes the autobiography of Mary Ashford, who began her life in service in 1801 when she was thirteen, of special value to the historian but also in danger of being seen as typical of the life of female domestics.⁸⁸ Something can be learnt about girls at work, however, from the reminiscences of boyhoods spent with fellow female servants and sisters engaged in domestic work. An example used here is John Cannon's memoirs of his early life in a farming community in Somerset.⁸⁹

Legal records and coroners' reports

An indication of the lives of children including those in households at the lower end of the servant owning class can sometimes be found in records of court clerks in assize, quarter sessions and summary courts. 'Proceedings of the Old Bailey' provides ready access to cases in London; children, including young servants and apprentices appear as both perpetrators and victims of crime and sometimes as witnesses. Their responses to questions put to them can reveal significant details about their living conditions and work. These are often recorded in detail and in their exact words.⁹⁰ Peter King has shown how frequently JPs settled disputes between masters and servants and with what effect.⁹¹ Local Record Societies have produced printed editions of surviving legal records in local areas; the records of summary convictions for Gloucestershire for 1781-1837 and 'Criminal Cases on the Crown Side of the King's Bench' from Staffordshire. Deposition books for individual magistrates have also been published, for example that of Richard Wyatt a JP in

⁸⁸ Mary Ann Ashford, *Life of a Licensed Victualler's Daughter, Written by Herself* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1844)

⁸⁹ John Money (ed.), *The Chronicles of John Cannon, Part I, 1684-1733, Memoirs of the Birth, Education Life and Death of: Mr John Cannon. Sometime Officer of the Excise & Writing Master at Mere Glastenbury (sic) & West Lydford in the County of Somerset*, Records of Social and Economic History, 43 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For further discussion of attitudes to women in Cannon's writings, see Tim Hitchcock, 'Sociability and Misogyny in the Life of John Cannon 1684-1743' in *English Masculinities*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen (London and New York: Longman, 1999), 25-43

⁹⁰ *OBP*

⁹¹ Peter King, 'The Summary Courts and Social Relations in Eighteenth Century England', *Past & Present* 183 (2004), 125-169

Surrey for the years 1767-1776.⁹² Contemporary works on the operation of the law provide a guide to prevailing attitudes as well as to prevailing legal practice, notably James Barry Bird's 1799 work on laws respecting masters and servants.⁹³ Coroners' reports provide the last reference to children who died in service.

Print Culture

Press reports provide an insight into attitudes and concerns of the day. Particular care must be taken here to be aware of the bias or hidden agenda of the writer, as well as the overarching aims and objectives of the newspaper. Sensational stories are good for sales but this may lead to exaggeration and distortion. London and many local newspapers for the eighteenth century are increasingly available on-line. The eighteenth century was a time when the subject of childhood engaged the interest of leading commentators of the day. Works consulted to gain something of the breadth of ideas on this subject include those by Jonas Hanway, Sir Frederick Eden, Catharine Cappe and William Cobbett; all saw children as relevant to their concerns about the economy, poverty, morality, charity and population. Writers of 'cautionary tales' saw children as prime targets for their pamphlets and short stories and children feature as central characters in the 'improving' works of Hannah More. Where appropriate, the fiction of the period will be used to shed light on attitudes to child servants and relate fictional accounts to the real experiences of children in service. Fictional sources, used critically, add an interdisciplinary dimension to the study and supplement our understanding of the perceptions and beliefs of the age. Samuel Richardson, Tobias Smollett, Henry Fielding wrote about servants and their works were read by people at the time. Servants are key figures in the plays of John Townley and Richard Sheridan.

Structure

Following the Introduction the thesis consists of four chapters and a conclusion:-

⁹² Irene Wyatt (ed.), *Calendar of Summary Convictions at Petty Sessions 1781-1776*, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Record Series, 22 (2008); Douglas Hay, *Criminal Cases on the Crown Side of King's Bench*, Staffordshire Record Society, 4th series, 24 (2010); Elizabeth Silverthorne (ed.), *Deposition Book of Richard Wyatt, JP 1767-1777*, Surrey Record Society, 30 (1978)

⁹³ James Barry Bird, *The Laws Respecting Masters and Servants, Articled Clerks, Apprentices, Manufacturers, Labourers and Journeymen*, 3rd edition (London: W. Clarke, 1799)

Chapter one considers why children were taken on as household servants in the period covered by the study (c. 1760-1830) and why in other cases they were not. This chapter makes particular use of diaries, correspondence, account books, handbooks, poor law records and autobiographies to consider why some households engaged children willingly while others did so with reluctance or not at all. The provenance of the children concerned, the costs which might be incurred and the responsibilities expected of masters and employers all had a part to play.

Chapter two focuses on the apprenticeship indenture and the contracts between parents and employers which, in the case of non-indentured child servants, closely mirrored the formal agreement. For the most part these were concerned to secure a basic standard of living: food, clothing (and its washing), and accommodation for child workers who 'lived-in'. In addition apprentices were promised training which was intended to equip them for a future livelihood. This chapter considers how effective the indenture/contract was as a means of securing these commitments and examines the role of parents, kin and other concerned bodies in securing the welfare of the children. It draws extensively on apprenticeship indentures, autobiography, charity records, poor law documents, contemporary guides to apprenticeship and diaries of employers.

Chapter three considers what was omitted from the indenture and short-term private agreements. Most child servants (and parents and charities on their behalf) hoped for something more than the bare means of subsistence; reasonable working conditions; a time for leisure; care and attention during sickness; safety from sexual assault. The indenture and other agreements were usually silent, or at best vague, on these points. This absence of clear guidelines on issues identified only as 'all other Things necessary and fit for an Apprentice' left children in service open to overwork, abuse and neglect or, at least, heavily dependent on the goodwill of master or mistress. In addition to the sources mentioned for the chapters above, this chapter draws on Old Bailey Proceedings Online, local records of legal cases and coroners' reports.

Chapter four is the comparative study of the two charities, the London Foundling Hospital and the Birmingham Blue Coat School. Evidence from both institutions informs all sections of the research but the comparative study covers a shorter period (1775-1804) and takes a different perspective on the issues discussed elsewhere. This

chapter makes use of the abundant records which survive for both institutions to get closer to the lives of individual children and to the ideas and beliefs of those responsible for their placements. The focus is on the children bound to domestic service but there is scope here for informed comparisons and contrasts with those placed in other occupations as well as those placed by parishes and privately. London and Birmingham provide the locations for a comparative approach, but it is less a comparison of two regions than a means of extending the examination of the range and scope of children's experience in domestic service in a more detailed study. While the thesis as a whole is a qualitative study, the focus on just two institutions over a period of thirty years makes possible a manageable but meaningful statistical analysis of the ages at which apprentices were placed out, the occupations and households to which they were sent and the numbers for whom the charities were responsible.

The Conclusion draws together the findings of the study and presents a comparative analysis of the experiences of parish, charity and 'free' child servants. Attention is given to the all-important material and physical conditions of their lives but also to the opportunities for an existence outside working hours. Different types of placement, different kinds of households presented different challenges and possibilities all of which influenced the children's perceptions of their role and future prospects. Few, after all, had been involved in the decisions which placed them in domestic work.

The task of uncovering the lives of child servants is a challenging one. In Carolyn Steedman's *Masters and Servants*, the life of Phoebe Beatson, Reverend Murgatroyd's servant, must be recovered mainly through his diary. For the most part 'eighteenth-century poor women are perforce as silent as the grave, unavailable to historians except as a name on a list, or an entry in a register of church and state.'⁹⁴ This is even more the case for children when the distance between baptismal and burial record was often brief and contacts with master or mistress were fleeting.

⁹⁴ Steedman, *Master and Servant*, 10

Chapter 1: The reasons for employing child servants.

In her review of recent publications on domestic service, Kathryn Hughes attributes an upsurge of interest in its history to the recognition that so many people have ancestors who were employed in just this way: ‘The history of the servants’ hall, complete with red hands, sore knees and a burning sense of resentment, turns out to be the story of us all’.¹ Hughes exaggerates only a little. As we have seen, contemporary estimates of the servant population in the eighteenth century are suspect, heavily reliant on figures for London and almost certainly too high. Leonard Schwarz calls Patrick Colquhoun’s figures ‘almost biblical in the sweep of their range’.² But neither contemporary observers nor census figures taken at one point in time convey the number of those who, at some stage in life, had worked as a servant: for many it was a life-cycle experience between leaving home and marriage, before taking up a ‘proper’ apprenticeship or before becoming eligible for more rewarding or appropriate work. James Davis, for example, between 1830-32, began his first full time post at the age of about ten as junior page at the in the household of the Duke of Gloucester but later turned to a life on the road as a wandering musician.³ Many of those who employed servants might once have spent some years serving in the household of another. The head waiter of a Coffee House, in whose household Mary Ashford worked as a maid between 1802 and 1803, had once been her grandmother’s pot boy. George Beard, the shopkeeper friend of the diarist Thomas Turner, had once been Turner’s servant.⁴ Others moved in and out of domestic work when their regular occupation was in decline or recession. From his teens, Henry White served as groom, coachman, liveryman and man-servant before

¹ *The Guardian Review*, 16 January, 2010

² Leonard Schwarz, ‘English Servants and their Employers in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Economic History Review*, 52. 2 (1999), 238. His reference is to Colquhoun’s *Police of the Metropolis*, 340.

³ John Burnett, David Vincent, David Mayall (eds), *The Autobiography of the Working Class, 1790-1945: An Annotated Critical Bibliography* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984-9), 92

⁴ Mary Ann Ashford, *Life of a Licensed Victualler’s Daughter, Written by Herself* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1844), 23; David Vaizey (ed.), *Diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 2, 327

setting himself up as a tea merchant and shop keeper. When his business failed he returned to domestic service as a butler and itinerant waiter.⁵

Above all the servant workforce was a strikingly youthful one, unmarried and constantly 'moving on'. Estimates suggest that in pre-industrial Europe 60 to 70 per cent of fifteen to twenty-four year olds worked as 'live-in' servants. Again precise information is lacking, but in Cardington in Bedfordshire in 1782 the median age of servants born in the parish was seventeen which gives some indication of their age structure in eighteenth-century England.⁶ If half of this cohort were below the age of seventeen, some must have been a good deal younger than this at the point of the count and would have begun their life in service at an earlier age still, working in a minor ancillary role in a prosperous household or perhaps as sole 'maids-of-all-work' in one of the growing number of lower income families employing a servant for the first time. As they reached adolescence and moved on to more responsible or demanding roles many would have been replaced by a new child.

It is more difficult to identify these child workers or be precise about their numbers; Jonas Hanway's estimates made no distinction between 'young' servants and those who were children; the informal nature (or absence) of many of the agreements made when children were engaged to work meant that ages were not necessarily recorded or even considered relevant. The many household manuals which dispensed advice on how to manage household servants might say much about the particular problems of youthful recruits and the tasks and the conduct expected of them, without ever mentioning their ages. 'Boy' or 'Girl' could be terms used for quite mature servants; they indicated a subordinate status as much as a description of age. Indentures drawn up at the time apprentices entered domestic service are valuable in this context because they identify the apprentice as a child even if they give no actual age. Calculations based on indentures, however, leave a wide margin of error; apprenticeship indentures are incomplete and many child workers were enlisted into

⁵ J. Burnett et al., *Autobiography of the Working Class*, 336, taken from White's autobiography, *The Record of My Life* (Cheltenham, 1889), 184

⁶ Cited in R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 63, based on estimates in Majorie K. McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society 1300-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 46-84; for Cardington figures see D. Baker (ed.), *The Inhabitants of Cardington in 1782*, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 52 (1973), 44

household work on a casual basis without a formal indenture or any written agreement.⁷

Hence the ‘stark absence’ in historic sources, to which Peter Kirby refers, of the distinct role of children engaged in this work. Yet he identifies domestic work as ‘the single most important urban occupation for female children and adolescents outside the home’, echoing Laslett’s calculation that while only a minority of all children were at any one time in service ‘a majority of them may have been in this situation at some time in their lives’.⁸ The purpose of this chapter is to uncover something of the wide range of households in which children worked as servants and the reasons why they were employed. It draws mainly on evidence from diaries, autobiographies, records of charities, poor law authorities and works of fiction to show how and why domestic service was a life-cycle experience for so many young people in this period. Much has been written on the circumstances which pushed young children into household work (or indeed other occupations).⁹ The focus on this chapter is on the rationale behind the employment of children in domestic service and why some households were unwilling to employ them.

Why should employers ever choose children in preference to adult or at least adolescent workers? Katrina Honeyman has shown that child apprentices in the mechanised mills of the late eighteenth century, and most especially those from parish workhouses, might be keenly sought after by employers. Cheap (they worked without wages for their seven year apprenticeship term), tractable, and only occasionally inspected by parish officials, the children proved, despite the cost of clothing and feeding, to be an economic asset. Even the wage-earning children recruited from the locality could be tempered to mill-work mentality, ‘tailored’ to the specific needs of the industry and adapted to new methods which their parents

⁷ Edward Higgs indicates the extent to which the numbers of domestic workers and child workers were underestimated in the nineteenth century census. Some girls, for example claimed to be older in order to gain access to domestic service or higher wages. Eighteenth-century calculations must have been similarly skewed, Edward Higgs, *A Clearer Sense of the Census* (London: HMSO, 1996), 76-81

⁸ Peter Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 69; Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 34

⁹ For a recent analysis of the circumstances which pushed children into work in various occupations and at various ages see Emma Griffin, *Liberty’s Dawn: A People’s History of the Industrial Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 57-83

resisted.¹⁰ Their wages were less than those for adults and parents bore the cost of food and clothing. Honeyman's examples, of course, concern a particular and novel form of work in which economic survival and profit loomed large. But in traditional manufacturing trades, too, a new apprentice whose services were free could provide valuable labour services (running errands, preparing and cleaning the workshop, looking after the shop) and at the same time contribute to productivity.¹¹ The latter increased as the limitations of the early years (inexperience and a lack of strength and stamina) were overcome.

Individual households employing child servants could enjoy some of these advantages; there was, however, no new technology of significance and little opportunity for economies of scale. This study argues that domestic service was an altogether more complex and idiosyncratic affair, governed as it was by tradition, local custom and individual household practice. Children were welcome additions to the labour force of numerous households at all levels of the servant-keeping classes. However, while mill owners set out to obtain child workers, many household employers and masters were unwilling to take children as servants or did so only under pressure. Cost and adaptability were certainly factors which were taken into account but not necessarily decisive issues. Householders, or those acting on their behalf, were also exercised by concerns about the ability of children to carry out the required tasks, as well as their morality and behaviour. For others, taking a child relation into household service was simply the most expedient way to fulfil an obligation to kin. A number acted out of charity or sought companionship from the presence of a child.

Cost and productivity considerations

To what extent were masters and employers who took in children as domestic servants attracted by the possibility of acquiring cheap labour? Certainly many children in household roles, whether apprenticed or hired under private agreements, were cheap. In the 1740s a Corstorphine farmer got the services of John MacDonald,

¹⁰ Katrina Honeyman, *Child Workers in England 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the Making of the Early English Labour Force* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), chapters 5, 6 and *passim*

¹¹ Patrick Wallis, 'Apprenticeship Training in Pre-modern England,' *Journal of Economic History*, 68.03 (2008), 832-61. Wallis argues against the 'standard' view that it was some time before a master saw any returns for his investment in an apprentice.

not yet nine years old; John got no wages but assisted the farmer's coachmen 'doing what they desired me' in return for food and the clothes of a coachman's son who had died.¹² In 1750, Lord Dalrymple a neighbouring landowner employed him, now aged nine, as a postilion for £2 a year, 'all my cloathes, and a third of all the vails'.¹³ Such terms suggest that the work was worth more to the child than it cost the employer.

MacDonald was in one sense in the same category as John Carter and John Bezer, two boys who also recorded their early domestic service experience in later life; all three began work before the age of twelve and had to negotiate their own working agreements. MacDonald was, however, 'living in' which meant that his employers bore the cost of food and clothing. In 1805 and not quite thirteen years old, John Carter had no help from his parents nor any special skills when he began his second employment serving in the household of a draper in Colchester for 3s 6d a week. This would amount to £9 2s a year with, he recalled, about 4d a week in perquisites. He lived at home so that it was his parents who provided food, clothing and lodging. Carter certainly thought that his employer got the best side of the bargain: for a meagre payment he was expected to attend to the needs of twenty-one people in the household including the children and mistress of the household and several journeymen for whom he had to fetch beer and run errands.¹⁴

John Bezer also felt that his master got the better deal given the low wages he received and the long hours expected of him when he became errand boy and domestic worker to a warehouseman and his wife in Newgate Street, London. Aged nine or ten in 1825 Bezer took on, at his own initiative, a punishing schedule of 'errand boy slavery' which could keep him out sometimes until eleven o'clock at night. In addition to this he was expected to clean knives and forks, polish boots and shoes in a freezing, damp cellar, rub up the fire-irons and candlesticks and clean windows in return for 3s a week. In his case, too, his mother bore the cost of his

¹² John MacDonald, *Travels in Various Parts of Europe, Asia and Africa* (London, printed for the author, 1790), 23

¹³ *Ibid.*, 30. As it happened he had great difficulty in retaining his vails (or perquisites) which became a source of conflict between MacDonald and the head coachman in this and his next employment – perhaps because MacDonald's youthful good looks and becoming livery won rewards which the older men thought should go to them.

¹⁴ A.F.J. Brown (ed.), *Essex People, 1750-1900 from their Diaries, Memoirs and Letters*: Essex Record Office Publications, 59 (1972), 105-6

food, clothes and lodging. Bezer was well aware of the weakness of his position: blind in one eye and with parents who were unable to negotiate for him (his drunken father, whose business as a barber had failed, spent much time in a hospital for ex-sailors). Unscrupulous employers – but also economically straitened ones – could hope to save money and extract unreasonable levels of work from a child; Bezer's extreme youth, his disability and the absence of effective parental protection or support, made him peculiarly vulnerable.¹⁵

Bezer may have exaggerated his plight: in his published autobiography he sets out to impress his reader with how much he has achieved. All the same the above examples show the potential which existed for an employer to extract excessive amounts of work for a small outlay from very young children whose circumstances were difficult or even desperate. Peter Linebaugh cites the case of Olive Orton a seventeen year old deaf girl who had become pregnant during her time of service at a Deaf and Dumb asylum. Asked how she had been hired some years earlier she replied in a written statement, 'I heard Mr. Watson wanted a servant and my mother sent me I made no bargain whatsoever'. Asked about wages she replied that she 'did not agree for any'¹⁶. In such situations a ruthless employer could undoubtedly make savings from a young worker – or perhaps, in an impoverished neighbourhood, a cheap child worker was the means of shoring up a precarious business which was unable to bear the cost of an adult worker.

The absence of wages for John MacDonald's contract in Corstorphine was not unusual especially in a first year of service. In his Servants' Wages Book for January 1811, the Reverend John Longe of Suffolk wrote against his servant boy John Brunwin, 'no wages as I cloath him' and for John Crooks in 1816, 'I pay him no wages, but find him with cloathes and linen'.¹⁷ In January 1822 clothing and pattens were purchased for two apprentice girls but, under the terms of apprenticeship, Longe would have been under no obligation to pay them wages. Elizabeth Shilcot, 'a pauper from the House of Industry' came to be 'a servant girl of all works' in

¹⁵ David Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism: Memoirs of Working Class Politicians 1790-1885* (London: Europa, 1997), 153-64

¹⁶ Settlement examination for Olive Orton, January 1828 cited in Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 138-9

¹⁷ Michael Stone (ed.), *The Diary of John Longe 1765-1834*, Suffolk Record Society, 51 (2008), January 1811, 179, 25 March 1815, 193-4

December of the same year.¹⁸ No ages are given but on the basis of poor law practice in Suffolk and elsewhere all three girls would have been under fourteen and possibly a good deal younger. They would have arrived equipped with clothing but Longe would have been under an obligation to provide renewal of clothing (as well as to keep and train them), having taken over the role of the parish. His large household with its several servants and functions provided opportunities for training in a range of domestic skills.

Payments in kind (commonly food, clothing and shoes, washing and mending services) instead of wages or linked to very low wages were common for children and make it difficult to estimate the cost (or savings) to a master of hiring a child. Thomas Dunning served his physician for ‘a few shilling and a bit of food’. In the 1770s and at the age of around seven James Hogg’s wages for half a year were a ewe lamb and a pair of new shoes.¹⁹ A generous master or mistress might, of course, decide to reward a hard-working and loyal young servant, but was under no obligation to do so. In 1764 Ruth Johnson was hired as a maid by Isaac Fletcher a Quaker farmer in Cumberland. She was to get no wages ‘at first’ but as a live-in servant she was entitled to food and accommodation. No mention is made of any other non-monetary reward and her seven year stay suggests that she too was an apprentice; from 1767, however, she received a half-yearly payment of £1.²⁰

Such cash payments as Ruth Johnson received were, however, unusual at least until the last years of apprenticeship. This suggests that payments in kind were more acceptable to employers and did make taking on a child a means of reducing household costs. John Longe’s adult footman was paid £14 14s a year which suggests a worthwhile saving in household expenses if Brunwin was standing in for an adult; the cost of the coat bought for the serving boy three years later (1815) and probably the most expensive item, cost 16s 6d so his full outfit and customary change of clothing was unlikely to approach the cost of the footman’s wages.²¹

Payments in kind could also be less troublesome. James Hogg’s employer, a farmer

¹⁸ Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, 16 January 1822, December 1822, 205.

¹⁹ Vincent, *Testaments*, 123; James Hogg, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* with Introduction by J.A.Cuddon (London: J.M. Dent, 1998, first published 1824), xvii

²⁰ Angus J.L. Winchester (ed.), *Diary of Isaac Fletcher of Underwood, Cumberland 1756-1781*, The Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, 27 (1994), 462

²¹ Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, 179,189

on the Scottish Borders, would surely have found the payment of a lamb easier than a cash payment. On the other hand Parson Woodforde's arrangements with the parents of his hired boys suggest that these were issues which involved negotiation. Recruiting George Hutchins ('my George') in 1768, Parson Woodforde, then living at Ansford in Somerset, made an agreement with the boy's father to pay George £2 2s a year. He was also to receive 'a coat, a waistcoat and a hat etc.' to be lent to him 'during the time he lives with me'. George's father had to find shoes, breeches and shirts himself.²² If this was a generous act on Woodforde's part it was also a wise and frugal one. During the years of his diary (1758-1802) Woodforde employed at least fourteen boys (most between the ages of eleven and fourteen) and the coat, waistcoat and hat were presumably passed down until too much wear and tear made it necessary to replace them. He left the more expensive items, notably the shoes and breeches, to be found by Mr. Hutchins. If Woodforde bought these items, the cost was to be deducted from George's wages.²³

Was Woodforde saving by employing a boy rather than an adult? One London parish later in the eighteenth century allowed 17s per annum for a child's clothes. This was rather more than half the amount allowed for an adult, so, if Woodforde could rely on the same differential he made a saving by employing a boy.²⁴ Certainly a growing boy needed clothing replacements more often but Woodforde's boys stayed with him for periods of only two to three years so that a generous sized coat would probably last long enough to be handed down to the new boy who replaced him. But it is difficult to see the cost of clothing as playing any part in Woodforde's decisions about whether to employ man or boy. Perhaps the terms arrived at owed more to his assessment of what a family could afford or reflected local practice. He renewed or made presents of clothes to all his servants on several occasions without any recorded obligation to do so. He seems not to have resented the money spent. In September 1789 he gave his maids 'a Cotton Gown apiece' costing £1 8s and bought

²² John Beresford (ed.), *The Diary of a Country Parson. The Reverend James Woodforde, 1758-1781* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 49. Clothes were an important item for children going into service as can be seen from the letters from applicants to the poor law overseer in Essex requesting money for clothes to enable a child to take up a place found for them, see Thomas Sokoll (ed.) *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837*, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

²³ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 49

²⁴ Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 122. The parish was St Augustine, Watling Street.

his male servant a new waistcoat for 6s; in 1801 he paid a visiting tradesman, Mr. Aldridge, a total of £5 13s 7d for various items and materials for clothing for himself and the servants. These included handkerchiefs for his washerwomen, a waistcoat for his boy Robert Case and ‘Cotton Gowns for my two Maids of pink and white’. At no point (there were other such occasions) did he complain about the cost, which he bore himself, or the time and trouble involved – and this despite complaining in the previous page of his diary of the cost to the household of beef, mutton and veal.²⁵ In April 1792 he gave his current boy Billy Downing 5s and a day off to go to Norwich with his mother to buy breeches, ‘he having been a very good lad and of good natured turn.’²⁶ In other words Woodforde’s purchase of clothes for his servants, including the youngest, had more to do with a means of rewarding them and keeping up appearances than with cutting costs by judicious appointments to his household.

The cost of putting boys into distinctive livery was much more expensive. In 1750 John MacDonald’s employer, Mr Gibb supplied him with an elaborate outfit: a green jacket with red cape, red waistcoat and leather cap lined with red morocco. John was not, however, employed in order to save the cost of a man-servant’s outfit. Gibb was described as a ‘man of great possessions’ with no need to skimp on his household retinue. Much the same could be said of the Dalrymple household where MacDonald was taken into Lady Ann’s parlour to see if she liked her new postilion. There he was ‘admired in my livery for my littleness, being only nine years of age’²⁷. He was, it seems, a charming sight ‘the littlest postilion in Scotland or any other country’ as well as a skilful handler of horses.²⁸ We must take on trust MacDonald’s account of his charm and good looks (a recurring theme in his autobiography), but he was employed neither for his cheapness nor his adaptability. Households which could afford livery had other interests to serve; if they needed to economise they did so in more fundamental ways than substituting a boy postilion for an adult.

We know less of John Brunwin, but if his coat cost 16s 6d or thereabouts it was an insignificant item in John Longe’s wages and clothes bill for his servants which in 1811 amounted to around £240. Perhaps Longe did look for savings at all levels and

²⁵ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 360, 601-2

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 415-16

²⁷ MacDonald, *Travels*, 31

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 27

the coat, as in Woodforde's household, was passed down to the in-coming boy. It is also possible, however, that he took on children out of an obligation to provide employment for young people in the locality or to relieve a poor household of one mouth to feed. His young boys left after short spells of one to two years usually to go to a better position with a neighbour or acquaintance of Longe's; Brunwin went into service as a second postilion with a Mr Acton; John Crooks replaced William Keeble, also described as a 'servant lad' who, 'being sufficiently qualified for a superior place' was hired by Mr Pearson of Ipswich. Crooks in turn left in 1819, 'having got a better service'²⁹. Was Longe well-known for providing useful training for young boys who in turn became a service to his neighbours? It may also be more appropriate to see some of these examples as belonging to the traditional circulation of children to gain a wide range of experiences and skills in different households.³⁰ This seems more likely than that he hired his boys because they were cheap since, in the context of his total expenditure, his savings were negligible.³¹ Nor were the girls from the house of industry sought out by Longe for their cheapness since they were allocated to him by the poor law overseers and to other rate-payers on a rota basis. There is no evidence that Longe resented their arrival but nor that he welcomed a cheap addition to assist in the running of the household. Indeed in 1826 he pursued the parish for the premium (£5) due to him for taking Mary Ann Goldsmith, as if he wished to make it clear that he wanted some recognition of an obligation he was undertaking (to feed, accommodate and train the girls) rather than being obliged to the overseers for providing cheap labour.³²

Not all young boys or girl servants who lived in were without any money wages even in their first year but these were usually well below the wages of other member of the household. Rates were complicated by the age of the child, the tasks required of them, or the amount of responsibility taken by the employer for their needs while living in. The anonymous author of *Domestic Management* (1800), who claimed to write from her experience of 'modest' households, provided a list of recommended

²⁹ Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, 193, 198.

³⁰ Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 53 and passim

³¹ In 1826 Longe's income from his benefice and rents was approximately £1,495 after taxation, Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, xx-xxi

³² Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, 55.

wages which allowed only £1 a year for the lowest paid servant.³³ This would have been for work traditionally assigned to the youngest girl or a small boy acting as ‘general factotum’ to the kitchen staff and so, perhaps, the tasks demanded were lighter or required on a more casual basis. (The designated rates of pay may, also, have been expressing the writer’s ideal rather than reality). Twelve-year old Thomas Dunning, who began working as an assistant to a doctor in Newgate Street in Chester in the 1820s, may have been typical: his first job involved ‘assisting in the stable, cleaning knives, shoes, waiting at table, and in the surgery, taking out medicines etc.’ A year or so later he moved on to be employed as a liveried page-boy, a position he considered to be a more demanding, rigorous and responsible one.³⁴

Parson Woodforde’s rates of pay seem to have been influenced by age and the extent of his own responsibility for provisions and amenities. In 1785, now living in Weston Longeville in Norfolk, he hired John Sucker, ‘about thirteen Years of age’ for £1 1s plus the regular coat hat and waistcoat ‘when wanted’. The boy was also allowed something ‘for being washed out and mended’; friends were ‘to find him in Stockings and Shoes &c’.³⁵ The lower rate of pay compared with the £2 2s paid in Ansford in 1768 may indicate that John (who becomes ‘my Boy Jack Secker’), was younger than George Hutchins or that wages in Norfolk were lower. Eleven years later in 1796 Barnabas Woodcock, who began working at the parsonage for ‘between 11 and 12 Years of age’ got the earlier (Ansford) rate of £2 2s, but whether this reflected his age, the amenities provided by his family, or the much complained of inflation of the time is not clear.³⁶ The annual wage to one of Woodforde’s favourites, Jack Warton, in 1783 was a mere 10s 6d, topped up by 2s 6d as a free gift. Jack, however, was ‘my servant Boy whom I take out of Charity’, probably only seven or eight when Woodforde first brought him to the rectory and dependent on him for all amenities. All three got a good deal less than the man-servant. In 1783 this was Will Coleman who was paid £4 4s each year.³⁷ Jack, of course, may not

³³ Anon., *Domestic Management or, The Art of Conducting a Family* (London, H.D. Symonds, 1800?), 108

³⁴ Vincent, *Testaments*, 123

³⁵ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 25 January 1785, 242

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 534, 559

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 195, 147, 195. Jack was with Woodforde when Dr Thorne came to inoculate ‘little Jack Warton’ in November 1776, 26. He left in January 1785 which means, if he matched the ages of the

have been a worthwhile economy if more frequent changes of clothes and shoes were needed and he required either greater supervision or training - in this case seen as a continuation of the parental role. We cannot, however, assume that economic considerations were of great importance for Woodforde. He complained forcefully and frequently about the behaviour of his adult male servants – drunkenness, impudence and returning late at night were frequent causes of conflict - but not of the burden of their wages. He gave rewards for good behaviour which most often went to his boys – hence the 2s 6d for Jack Warton and the breeches for Billy Dowling. Again, behaviour and appearances were more important than petty economies.

Those employing or taking in live-in children had also to take into account the cost of feeding them. Household account books and advice on household management show that it was the cost of maintaining and accommodating servants which exercised household heads more than any other outlay (except, perhaps taxation). The authors blamed servants' extravagance with food and other essentials urging supervision and economies in the kitchen.³⁸ Thomas Cooper of New Place Farm in Guestling in East Sussex spent £410 8s 5d in 1795-6 of which half went on food and drink and only 10 per cent on servants' wages. In 1781 *The Economist* reckoned that in a household with £400 income per annum a maid cost £18 a year to keep but just £6 in wages.³⁹ A 'Gentleman of experience' spending £613 a year was expected to spend 5 per cent (a little over £30) of his income on the wages of his three servants but £70 to maintain them (11 per cent).⁴⁰ The calculations of the Reverend John Trusler a few years later suggested a similar balance of pay and maintenance expenses in his expenditure guidance for households with annual incomes ranging from £750 to £130.⁴¹ The employment of an unwaged or low waged child in place of an adult could reduce the overall wage bill by a relatively small amount, but would

other boys on leaving (fourteen or fifteen) he was only seven or eight when Woodforde brought him to the rectory.

³⁸ See for example, Lady Sarah Pennington, *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters* (London: S. Chandler, 1761), 29-31

³⁹ Cited in Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 81. In 1783 Woodforde paid his head maid £5 15s which is comparable.

⁴⁰ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 195; Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 81-2

⁴¹ John Trusler, *The Way to be Rich and Respectable. Addressed to Men of Small Fortune*, privately published, London: printed for the author, 1780), 25-69

surely save almost nothing in food and maintenance (the greater cost); a growing boy or girl might eat as much as an adult worker. Once again child workers were not particularly cheap, at least in the context of a fairly well-off household. Agreements concerning a child did not, as adult servants' settlements increasingly did, include allowances for tea and sugar; such savings, however, were marginal. Considerations of this kind were unlikely to influence Mr Hamilton where John MacDonald worked when still very young. Hamilton employed at least twenty-one other servants plus coachmen and their helpers.⁴² MacDonald, as we have seen, was employed for quite different reasons.

Parson Woodforde's household which, came within Trusler's 'small fortunes', was one where, famously, economies were least likely to fall on food items. He regularly recorded in his diary what had been served up for the main meal of the day, often pronouncing his verdict on the fare. We cannot be sure how much the servants (he kept two man servants, two maids and the boy) benefitted from his ample table, but there are likely to have been fairly generous left-overs from what was, for the Weston Longeville parsonage on 1st November 1792, an unremarkable mid-week dinner of 'some boiled Skaite, a Leg of Mutton roasted and Damson Tarts' to be followed at supper time by a roasted partridge.⁴³ There is no evidence that the current 'boy' was less favoured than the rest of the household. From time to time Woodforde complained of food prices but, for the most part, left the supervision of kitchen purchases to his niece, Nancy, who clearly felt little obligation to stint on provisions. Clothing, food, and wages for the servants, young or old, were unlikely to have made serious inroads into Woodforde's income of a little under £400 a year. While this was modest compared with that of other members of the clergy, he had no wife or children to maintain, and his niece, Nancy, functioned as his housekeeper. It seems unlikely that the possibility of gaining a cheap addition to his workforce was uppermost in Woodforde's thoughts when he took on his boys.

Like Woodforde, the Reverend John Skinner with a living in Camerton in Somerset, also kept a boy servant. We do not know what 'our boy George' cost in either wages or kind, but he was hardly a sound economy. In 1828, following an argument with

⁴² MacDonald, *Travels*, 49

⁴³ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 1 November 1792, 425

George, Skinner told him that if he was dissatisfied he could leave, for ‘if he imagined that I thought him of any value he was mistaken.’⁴⁴ George features elsewhere in Skinner’s diary as a wayward and disruptive member of the household. When, in 1829, however, Skinner was preoccupied with ways in which he might economise on costs, including those incurred by his servants, he turned to more expensive items, deciding he could cut costs by doing without his carriage and livery servant. This amounted to a worthwhile saving, but beyond this, and much as Skinner complained of both behaviour and expense of his servants, there was no great scope for further economies.⁴⁵ With the coachman in livery gone, the Camerton Rectory housed and fed five servants – a housekeeper, two maids and a man servant as well as a boy. Skinner was a widower with three children still living. He needed his servants for the smooth running of his household. By replacing one of his maids with an inexperienced girl, under fourteen years old, he would have saved perhaps £5 in wages and a small amount in food and provisions each year.⁴⁶ This would hardly, in Skinner’s case, have been a significant contribution to his economy drive and would have done little for efficiency.

A much heavier burden on Skinner’s pocket than the cost of his servants came from his expenditure on the education of his three children which, in 1825, cost him £500. Four years later his eldest son Owen was going to have to get by on £200 a year at Cambridge. Joseph, his second son, had already wasted an expensive time at University. Nor did his servants have such extravagant diversions as his children. ‘Joseph’, Skinner notes with evident displeasure, ‘has gone into Bath to have his hair curled for the Ball in the evening’.⁴⁷ Against such heavy expenses, even if temporary or occasional, the ongoing cost of servants was negligible – and ‘our boy George’, a trifle. While Skinner was not in the same income bracket as Lady Hamilton or Lord

⁴⁴ Howard Coombs and Arthur N. Bax (eds), *Journal of a Somerset Rector: John Skinner, 1772-1839. Parochial Affairs of the Parish of Camerton 1822-1832* (London: John Murray, 1930), 21 August 1828, 201

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 215. In 1824 Samuel and Sarah Adams calculated the wages of an adult postilion to be between sixteen and twenty guineas and his upkeep around £30. On top of this would have been savings on the maintenance and servicing of the carriage as well as livery. Ann Haly (ed.), *The Complete Servant* by Samuel and Sarah Adams (1824), (Lewes: Southover Press, 1989), 164

⁴⁶ Haly, *Complete Servant*, 16. Samuel and Sarah Adams calculated in 1824 that a maid cost between 5-10 guineas a year. A very young girl would have been at the bottom of the scale, an apprentice, unwaged.

⁴⁷ Coombs and Bax, *Journal of a Somerset Rector*, 100, 215, 234

Dalrymple, nor was he an impoverished curate. He had a reputation and status to maintain. He kept a foot-boy because this seems to have been almost a ‘must-have’ item for many clergymen – a useful attendant when visiting in the parish but also a way of relieving the burden of a poor family by feeding one of its children – an obligation which a prominent member of the community might be expected to undertake. John Gibbs’ efforts to find employment as a boy show just such a circumstance, and at the same time provide further reason to doubt the economic benefits of a child domestic worker for all but poorer employers. At the age of ten John applied to work in a ‘small gentleman’s house’ but believed that he was taken on as an act of charity rather than for any economic gain he might bring.⁴⁸

Considerations of the cost of food and accommodation did, however, compel families on more modest incomes to give serious thought to ways in which adjustments to their servant force could reduce household expenditure. This did not necessarily favour the youngest and cheapest in the employment stakes. In 1804 the Reverend William Holland and his wife in Stowey, Somerset, decided that with his son now away at school, he and his wife could manage without a second maid. It was Betty, the under maid who was sent back to her father. Holland does not reveal what wages he paid his servants but he could certainly have saved more by dismissing Phoebe his upper maid who also functioned as cook. Costs and savings mattered very much to Holland and he was at that time concerned about his income tax arrangements; by dismissing Betty he saved not only her wages but the greater cost of her upkeep. This was not, however, his only consideration. A little earlier when the vicarage had been left temporarily without an upper maid Holland was dismayed, ‘we are left without a cook and have only Betty who is a young girl.’⁴⁹ Betty went because she was less useful and inexperienced in household management.

Similar considerations influenced Thomas Turner, a shop-keeper in East Hoathly in Sussex, in his decision to send his maid Molly Hook back home. Molly was the twelve year old daughter of a friend and business acquaintance. Turner took her ‘on trial’ for one month in 1758 and when she proved unsatisfactory he paid her ‘2s 6d

⁴⁸ Cited in Griffin, *Liberty’s Dawn*, 65-6

⁴⁹ Jack Ayres (ed.), *Paupers and Pig Killers: The Diary of William Holland a Somerset Parson 1799-1818* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984), 74

for the time the girl has been with us'. It is possible that Turner employed a young girl to fulfil the role of a general maid in order to keep his household costs down. Had Molly stayed on she would have received 30s whereas his departing maid Mary Martin had been paid 40s a year.⁵⁰ Turner worried frequently about his business, the lack of trade in the area and the difficulty of obtaining debts due to him. He also made efforts to prepare for alternative sources of income should shop-keeping fail. On the other hand, while he might express some concern about other expenses, for example, 'I have oftentimes . . . been at too great expense in buying books and spending too much time in reading' he does not mention the cost of keeping or feeding servants to be a drain on his budget.⁵¹ Turner seems to have employed Molly to oblige a friend and fellow tradesman rather than to cut down on costs. Her cheapness, however, was no compensation when she failed the productivity (or usefulness) test which brought about an end to the arrangement. Her brief episode with Turner and his wife underlined what many other household employers thought: at twelve years old Molly was too young to take on the heavy tasks of domestic work or the responsibilities of household management which the mistress of the house might at times wish to delegate. Unlike Reverend Holland or John Skinner, Turner enjoyed the company of his servants and his concept of family was an inclusive and adaptable one involving both servants and kin.⁵² But Molly could not supply the companionship he sought. 'A very lonely time', Turner complained at one time when his wife was away, 'having nobody all day but a poor wild girl to take care of the household affairs'.⁵³

Turner and Holland were much concerned with the respectability and financial probity of their households. For others, especially those bordering on genteel poverty, it was the status attached to keeping servants which mattered even when their finances could hardly bear the outlay. In 1762 the *London Chronicle* claimed to know 'many a Doctor or Apothecary . . . starve themselves that they may maintain

⁵⁰ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 6 July 1758, 158, 28 March 1758, 144

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3 July 1758, 158, 154

⁵² Turner records several occasions when he shared meals with his own servants or with friends who were servants, Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 18 November 1758, 167, 23 January 1759, 172. For discussion of Turner's concept of 'family', see Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 74-89 and passim

⁵³ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 22 June 1758, 143

their footmen'.⁵⁴ These were circumstances which could be favourable to overseers or parents looking for placements for children. 'Footman' may well have been the fine title given to the boy assistant which a doctor or apothecary found essential to the running of both household and business. The low cost of labour was an incentive to use a small boy – but to cut down on expenditure whilst keeping up appearances rather than to gain any profit from his work. It was, of course, bad news for the boy, tied to an outwardly refined household business behind which he went hungry with the rest of the household. Households less concerned with status might have found it more profitable to employ a boy who came in each day and to let parents take care of basic food, and living costs as John Bezer's warehouse employer did (see above).

Conscientious or more generous employers often incurred additional or occasional expenses on behalf of children in their employment. Lady Hamilton paid for John MacDonald to attend the local school whenever his work load was light; there he got 'reading, writing and arithmetic' during the six years he remained with them.⁵⁵ Employers increasingly valued a literate servant with some skills in accounting so that this might be seen as a worthwhile investment. MacDonald certainly saw his education in Scotland as something which made him a more valuable and employable servant. But the Hamilton's had a strong sense of their social duties; this was surely an altruistic gesture rather than an obligation or a means of improving their servant labour force. The same must be true of Parson Woodforde. In December 1776 he arranged for the local schoolmaster, Mr Chambers, to teach his servants Ben and Will 'to write and read at 4s.6d a quarter each.'⁵⁶ Ben was Woodforde's 'farming man' and Will Coleman had accompanied him to Norfolk from Oxford and stayed with him for some years to serve as his man-servant. There is no suggestion that Woodforde hoped to make use of these skills. It makes more sense to see it as one of his several attempts (sometimes in vain) to civilise and enlighten his household than a cost he felt obliged to undertake. Employers or masters who did value skills beyond the mere rudiments of reading were best served by a child from a charity school (boy or girl) who came with a range of skills learnt in the schoolroom. Literacy and basic accountancy were useful business assets to

⁵⁴ Haly, *The Complete Servant*, 1

⁵⁵ MacDonald, *Travels*, 47

⁵⁶ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 128

skilled tradesmen who took apprentices from the Birmingham Blue Coat School when they themselves had limited knowledge of either.

In households where economic circumstances were more strained there was little incentive to teach apprentices any skills beyond those demanded for routine tasks. Three of the five boys whose lives are considered in David Vincent's *Testaments of Radicalism* spent some years as household servants, but acquired their education elsewhere; Thomas Dunning at a National School 'to learn but very little'; James Watson from his mother; John Bezer at Sunday School.⁵⁷ There also seems to have been less emphasis on the need to teach girls and female servants. Payment for education cannot, therefore, be considered as a factor influencing whether or not a master or mistress employed a child. It was a 'benevolent' extra, possible for a few but not an obligation.

It might have seemed possible to some masters and mistresses that the servant tax, levied from 1777 on those employing male servants, provided an incentive to employ a young boy. Employers were liable for taxation on servants of whatever age but there were exemptions for employers who could argue that their servants were involved primarily in making a contribution to the economy of the household and that any domestic tasks they performed were incidental to that end.⁵⁸ The multi-tasking role of the typical boy worker, involving much in the way of errand running and deliveries, helping in a kitchen garden or dairy - any of which might produce goods for sale - was particularly difficult for tax collectors to categorise. Carolyn Steedman cites the case of a grocer in Northamptonshire whose appeal against the tax notice served on him for his 'Boy' in 1779 reached the King's Bench. The decision went in favour of the grocer who argued that despite occasional household duties (cleaning shoes and table knives) his young worker was essentially contributing to his business and should not be a taxable item.⁵⁹ Such outcomes could conceivably have encouraged others to make similar claims and retain a boy who

⁵⁷ Vincent, *Testaments*, 119, 109, 157

⁵⁸ The justification for the tax followed Adam Smith in seeing domestic services as essentially non-productive occupations which 'seldom leave any trace or value behind them for which an equal quantity of service could afterwards be procured', Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Books I-III, first published 1776 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 430. For discussion of Smith's views and its influence on attitudes to household service, see Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 41

⁵⁹ Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 159

might otherwise have been dispensed with, or even to replace an adult worker with a child whose activities could be more plausibly presented as outside the scope of the new measure. This category of worker was certainly the subject of much uncertainty and legal wrangling. In 1778 Parson Woodforde wrote to a Mr Priest at Reepham to ask whether or not he would have to pay tax on Jack Warton who performed just the sort of range of duties which perplexed the assessors. Priest's answer is not recorded but much later (November 1789) Woodforde recorded a half-year servant tax payment of £1 5s which (since the full annual tax was £1 5s per male servant) indicates that he was paying for two. This would have been for his man-servant as well as his boy. (Woodforde's second male servant was his farm worker, clearly performing an economic role). Woodforde's plea, in 1778, seems to have been on the grounds that Jack was taken 'out of Charity' and it is possible that this earned an exemption for this boy but not for the local boys he subsequently took on. Such a plea did not work for the Reverend Humphryes of Woodbridge in Suffolk. But whether Woodforde's case succeeded or not, it did not change his decisions about either the number or age of servants he employed.⁶⁰ Besides, tax assessors in different counties reached different decisions about what constituted domestic service: elsewhere employers with boy servants who carried out much the same range of duties as the grocer's boy in Northamptonshire were obliged to pay up. Given the complexities, cost and uncertainties of appeal most employers in the same position decided to stay as they were and foot the bill. The more controversial tax on female domestics (1785-92), which permitted the exemption of those under fourteen might have been expected to result in a wave of thirteen year-old housemaids, but seems to have resulted, for the most part, in no more than 'tiny acts of domestic economy' too trivial to record.⁶¹ The several exemptions which could be claimed from the tax on female servants and the decision to bring it to an end after a very short time help to explain its lack of impact on employment policy, but the episode underlines the point that those making decisions about whom to employ were influenced by many other considerations besides economic ones.⁶² Children were

⁶⁰ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 9 September 1778, 147, 11 November 1789, 361; Steedman, *Labours Lost* 70-1

⁶¹ Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 152

⁶² Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 148. There were exemptions, for example, for women over sixty and families with children were allowed one tax-free maid.

taken on as servants for a wide range of reasons not simply because they were cheap or a means of tax evasion.

Value for money: were children strong enough and responsible enough for domestic work?

Households with enough means sought servants strong enough to cope with the heavy physical demands of domestic work. Nimble fingers which proved so valuable in factory work were of little value when carrying coal to upstairs fires or scrubbing steps. Housework was not for the faint-hearted and for the most part this did not favour taking on children. In 1787 the Reverend Trusler made just such assumptions when he took into account what the cost of a ‘sturdy’ girl would be.⁶³ Parson Woodforde noted with approval, in October 1784, that his new maid ‘seems to be a mighty strapping Wench’.⁶⁴ Perhaps William Holland and his wife felt much the same when they appointed Mrs. Edith as their cook, ‘our Somersetshire six foot high beauty’, ‘so stout and large as seemingly to be able to knock down an ox and eat him up’.⁶⁵ Whereas William Gould, Lord Torrington’s manager on his Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire estate, was reluctant to take on Thomas Matthews’ son for fear he would ‘prove too young and too little’⁶⁶ John Bezer almost failed to get his warehouse work for much the same reason.⁶⁷ Households which were not in desperate straits saw little reason to employ those, including children, who were not appropriate for the task. Cheap or not, Thomas Turner dispensed with little Molly Hook (see above) because she turned out to be ‘a poor wild girl’ incapable of the work and responsibilities he required.⁶⁸ Thereafter he relied on occasional visits from washerwomen paid by the day and his former servant Mary Martin who had proved her worth and competence.

⁶³ Trusler, *Way to be Rich*, 59

⁶⁴ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 234-5

⁶⁵ Ayres, *Paupers and Pig-killers*, 80, 83

⁶⁶ M. Hanson (ed.), *Ducal Estate Management in Georgian Nottinghamshire: the Diary of William Gould, 1783-1788*, Thoroton Society (2006), 19

⁶⁷ Vincent, *Testaments*, 162

⁶⁸ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 22 June 1758, 154

Were pauper children the most economical?

The best value for households with limited resources might have been the pauper children placed by the poor law authorities; they came with a small premium, typically between £2 and £5 and usually with clothes and shoes provided by the parish. They were placed in apprenticeships involving many different occupations and trades but most girls were bound to ‘housewifery’ and a very few boys to ‘household work’. Even after textile mills found it profitable to take workhouse children in the later eighteenth century, the growing problem of poverty ensured that there were children enough, especially in London to assign to traditional placements.⁶⁹ They were apprenticed until the age of twenty-one (or for seven years) and though a generous employer might reward them for good service (for example the Quaker, Isaac Fletcher as detailed above) he/she was under no obligation to pay wages and indeed might meet with objections from fellow masters for breaking an unwritten ban on payments.⁷⁰ Pauper apprentices were in general three to four years younger than those placed by private arrangement (who were usually fourteen) which meant the master gained a longer period of unpaid labour. In the later years of the eighteenth century, Frederick Eden, philanthropist and chronicler of the poor argued for greater flexibility: repeal of the seven-year term and payment for apprentices.⁷¹ Nevertheless, for many of those placed as young children the long period of unpaid toil remained a reality: the advantage was, supposedly, with the employers who continued to benefit from free labour.

Some employers, mostly those in trades with a profitable end product, certainly saw some sense in this and took in more than one apprentice at a time thereby earning immediate cash benefit in the form of double or treble premiums. Spitalfield weavers were said to take on several apprentices to meet occasional and short-lived demands for their products only to ‘overwhelm themselves’ with unwanted hands when trade

⁶⁹ Alysa Levene, ‘Parish Apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London’, *Economic History Review*, 63. 4 (2010), 915-41

⁷⁰ Until 1768 it was possible to bind until the age of twenty-four but this had for the most part lapsed. A child placed at the age of ten could still, nevertheless serve an eleven-year term.

⁷¹ Frederick Eden, *The State of the Poor*, Vol. II (London: J. Davis, 1797), 430-3. Eden reflected Adam Smith on the desirability of removing obstacles to free trade; he also expressed understanding of the frustrations of the apprentice bound to a long period of unpaid labour.

fell off.⁷² But there was less reason for masters and mistresses to take on multiple live-in apprentices for household work; they might hope to gain by stinting on food and at the same time extracting an excessive amount of work, but a household servant did not generally contribute in any obvious way to the material well-being of the household. It was in these poorer one-servant households where the youngest child workers were most likely to be found - their sobriquet, the 'maid-of-all-work' probably said it all. In his *Memoirs* in 1788, Philip Thicknesse said that 'the veriest slaves' he had seen in the two hemispheres were the all-work maid-servants in London.⁷³ Even Eliza Haywood's *A New Present for a Serving Maid* (1771), aimed at 'modest' households, sets out a punishing regime for the lowest and youngest maid which would have been challenging for a fit, adult worker: even before the rest of the house was up she was to have cleaned the grates with lard and camphor mixture which she had first made up, cleaned the hearth, lit the fire, black-leaded the stove, washed the kitchen tiles, the chimney and locks.⁷⁴ Perhaps this was wishful thinking on Haywood's part, but Samuel and Sarah Adams who had both been servants themselves, set out a similar rota for the 'servant of all work', described as 'one continued round of activity'⁷⁵

On the other hand masters were aware of the downside to taking on pauper children: generally younger than other new-comers to domestic work, they were thought to be physically inadequate and lacking in experience for many of the required tasks until some years into their apprenticeship. In the later years they were said to become resentful workers, waiting impatiently for release from the constraints of apprenticeship. In households with other servants they could sometimes fulfil menial tasks which older and more experienced workers avoided; in one-servant households, however, a 'sturdy' maid was required who could undertake the range of household tasks described above. A twelve-year-old girl even under the guidance of

⁷² Jonas Hanway, *Virtue in Humble Life: Containing Reflections on the Reciprocal Duties of the Wealthy and Indigent, the Masters and the Servants* (London: J. Dodley, Brotherton and Sewell, 1774), xlv

⁷³ Philip Thicknesse, *Memoirs and Anecdotes of Philip Thicknesse*, (London: printed for the author, 1788), 284. Thicknesse's observation needs to be seen in the light of his views on slavery. His point here is that slaves were, in his view, treated no worse than these wretched girls.

⁷⁴ Eliza Haywood, *A New Present for a Serving Maid* (London: G. Pearch, 1771), 252-7

⁷⁵ Haly, *The Complete Servant*, 102-5

the mistress would struggle with this.⁷⁶ All the same, the parish authorities had the power to bind out children from the age of seven and, as the problem of the poor became more acute in the late eighteenth century, the pressure on parish overseers to remove children from the responsibility of the poor law at a younger age, increased.

Pauper apprentices acquired an unenviable reputation. It was a pauper apprentice who was observed by the Reverend Holland in 1799 ‘with his basket in hand and talking to another for a very long time. Indeed this is generally the way with apprentices, it seldom answers to take them for they scarce turn out well. At first they are great trouble and expense and when they come to earn anything they grudge their labour’.⁷⁷ For many employers cheapness could not compensate for expectations of low productivity or an unwilling worker. This may be why, from the late eighteenth century, masters were increasingly inclined to release apprentices from the full term of the apprenticeship especially when very young children were contracted until the age of twenty-one. In Leicestershire, for example On 16 July 1806, Ann Askey aged ‘nine years or thereabouts’ and Mary Askey (probably her sister), aged twelve were placed by the Leire poor law overseer and church wardens with Thomas Richardson a framework knitter of Broughton until they reached the age of twenty-one. On the reverse of the form for each girl (and signed on the same day as the indenture), Richardson signalled his willingness to release Ann and Mary after seven years; Ann would then be only sixteen (or thereabouts) and Mary nineteen. We can only speculate on Richardson’s reasoning. Did he, like Frederick Eden, recognise the injustice of lengthy terms of apprenticeship for very young apprentices or believe that apprentices would be idle towards the end of their term if they received no monetary rewards? Perhaps the Askey’s were a troublesome family – they feature quite often in poor law records. Was he keen to be free, as soon as possible, of his commitment to feed, house and clothe his apprentices in case things turned out badly? Such considerations may have reconciled Richardson to taking the two young girls. Commitments such as these, made on the same day as the indenture or well before the official term of service expired, were not uncommon in

⁷⁶ Patrick Wallis shows how useful and profitable apprentices could be in their early years, but few of his examples are taken from domestic service and most concern rather older apprentices in private or guild arrangements, Wallis, ‘Apprenticeship Training in Pre-modern England’, 832-61

⁷⁷ Ayres, *Paupers and Pig Killers*, 20

Leicestershire in the early nineteenth-century. In addition there was, in this case, a financial reward: by taking Ann, Richardson he gained the rather high premium (for a pauper) of £5 5s and a further £3 3s for Mary. This was hardly a princely sum but may have represented some compensation for taking a very young child with limited ability as a worker.⁷⁸ Clearly the Leire overseer did not assume that a child worker, even one to whom the master paid no wages, was an unqualified economic or productivity gain.

Some parish ratepayers who were liable to take pauper apprentices refused to do so. According to James Barry Bird, who provided guidance on legal matters between masters and servants, they could legitimately do this if the child was under thirteen or deemed not healthy or strong enough to undertake the work.⁷⁹ But there were ratepayers who preferred to pay a fine whatever the age or suitability of the child. In January 1803 John Hill, a saddler and husbandman came before the summary courts in Gloucestershire having reneged on a promise to apprentice Elizabeth Roch to learn housewifery. We do not know Elizabeth's age but as the informant was the overseer for the poor in Newent and the witnesses were two guardians of the poor we can be sure that she was a parish pauper and unlikely to be more than fourteen. In a similar case concerning a yeoman in Bromsberrow in May 1811, the 'refused' boy, Joseph Child, was only ten. The complainants were again acting in their capacity as poor law officials. In each case the defaulting men paid the £10 fine. Their reasons for rejecting the children are unrecorded; perhaps they calculated that the fine was less punishing than the up-keep of the child; perhaps they felt that they could not usefully or profitably employ a young person in their household or that s/he would be a disruptive influence; perhaps it was their wives who were reluctant to take on the responsibility for training a child. Whatever the supposed benefits of a child as worker, they were not sufficiently convincing to persuade these households to take them in.

Yet other poor law rate-payers accepted and kept children reluctantly which was a dismal prospect for both sides of the arrangement. In January 1808 Samuel Vail of

⁷⁸ Apprenticeship indentures: Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Record Office (hereafter ROLLR), DE1425/97vv; DE1425/97ww; DE1425/97yy.

⁷⁹ James Barry Bird, *The Laws Respecting Masters and Servants, Articled Clerks, Apprentices, Manufacturers, Labourers and Journeymen*, 3rd edition (London: W. Clarke, 1799), 26-7

Churcham expressed his resentment with a system which had burdened him with an unwanted addition to his labour force and family, by turning his apprentice out. His fine was 20s to be paid as recompense to the apprentice, Joseph Barnes, which suggests that the JPs did not think Barnes was at fault.⁸⁰ A common practice to avoid miss-matches or unsatisfactory long-term contracts was to take an apprentice, ‘on liking’ or ‘on trial’ for a short period (as Thomas Turner had done with Molly Hook in his private arrangement), but if this failed the rate-payer might be obliged to take a different child and resentment towards the parish remained. Even in quite low-income families, therefore, economic considerations existed alongside many others when the household head contemplated (or was confronted with) taking in a parish child.

How tractable were child servants?

Mill-owners believed that children could be trained more easily and effectively than older workers and were less resistant to adopting new methods. What appealed about this malleability of children to eighteenth-century writers was that the children of the poor might be moulded into hard-working and honest citizens who served the interests of the country. Such sentiments were in keeping with the original aims of apprenticeship and sixteenth century strictures designed for social control. Jonas Hanway reinforced this moral objective with an economic one: by calculating the future economic worth of a properly trained child of the labouring classes he thereby estimated the loss to the country of a child who died or grew up idle.⁸¹ Such arguments had wide appeal for eighteenth-century economists. Hanway did not, however, see such children merely as the nation’s future ‘human capital’: he argued for better care and nurture on humane grounds showing particular concern for

⁸⁰ Irene Wyatt (ed.), *Calendar of Summary Petitions at Petty Sessions 1781-1837*, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Record Series, 22 (2008), 68, 90, 75

⁸¹ Jonas Hanway, *A Candid Historical Account of the Hospital for the Reception of Exposed and Deserted Children* (London: 1760), 82-3 and passim. Hanway estimated that a fifteen-year-old’s labour was worth £15 to the nation. See also discussion of eighteenth-century responses to child poverty and welfare and ideas influencing the education and up-bringing of children in Alys Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

children who became household servants.⁸² The Quaker philanthropist Priscilla Wakefield also stressed the importance of early domestic training for practical and moral purposes. Few services were more beneficial on the part of a woman, she believed, ‘than that of taking a poor child into her family and forming her into a useful servant, at the age when they are commonly discharged from Charity school’ which would usually be between ten to fourteen years.⁸³

Such ideas reflected the Lockean view of the child as *tabula rasa* upon which moral and social ideas could be impressed. Jean-Jacques Rousseau extended these ideas, allowing more freedom for the individual and ‘natural’ development of the child, but still stressing malleability and the need to take childhood seriously.⁸⁴ How widespread such ideas were with those who employed children in their homes is difficult to say but common sense and practical considerations could lead in the same direction. The diaries of Woodforde, Skinner and Holland, amongst others, are punctuated with complaints about the feckless, drunken and idle conduct of their manservants as well as dismay at the immorality of maids. They were aware that many children came not from any state of nature conceived by Rousseau but from local families with dubious reputations. With boys, taken into their homes at an early age, clergymen had a chance to instil something of their own standards of behaviour as well as to train them in a wide range of household duties and useful skills. Boys in such households were on public display: they assisted with visits to neighbours and the sick, with purchasing goods in the town and might be sent with messages to the manor house or church wardens.

It was perhaps because Jack Warton, the charity boy, had been with Woodforde from such a young age and for so long that he became a favourite, well-tuned to Woodforde’s ways. When he left for more appropriate work, aged fourteen or fifteen (to be a ploughboy), Woodforde wished him well, ‘He has been a very good lad ever

⁸² Hanway was involved with the London Foundling Hospital which sent most of its girls into domestic service and, in its early years, about one third of its boys. In 1786 he wrote *Domestic Service Promoted*, described as ‘a Series of Discourses From Father to his Daughter on occasion of Her going into Service’, one of several works on a similar theme.

⁸³ Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections upon the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (London:1798), 113

⁸⁴ For a discussion of the ideas of Locke and Rousseau on the up-bringing of children and their influence in the eighteenth century, see Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 62-74 and Levene, *Childhood of the Poor*, 3-4 and passim

since he has been here'.⁸⁵ Woodforde rewarded for good behaviour and hard work, took his servants, including the youngest on improving outings and at times worked alongside his boy servants to train them in their tasks and set an example of industriousness. He got rid of those who did not meet his standards: in October 1796 after only four months in his service, Woodforde dismissed 'My Boy John Brand' on account of his being 'the most saucy swearing Lad that ever we had'. He was replaced by Barnabas Woodcock not yet twelve years old who seems to have been more adaptable to Woodforde's ideals.⁸⁶ Cultivating good behaviour mattered to Woodforde both inside and outside of the parsonage. Like other clergymen, he had an image and reputation to maintain. The Reverend Rastal felt much the same when, in 1759, he asked his coachman if he knew of 'any lad, about fourteen years of age, born of sober, industrious parents' who could act as his attendant. Rastal wanted a boy 'that has not been out at service' and so, one must suppose, one who could be more easily adjusted to his own requirements. He took on John Mastin which, in the opinion of the boy's father, a local farmer, provided John 'being not yet thirteen', with 'an opportunity of improvement in manners and address'.⁸⁷

Charity schools aimed to turn out a new generation of children to become obedient, disciplined and honest servants on the grounds that this would find favour with those who took their apprentices. The two institutions in York with which philanthropist Catharine Cappe became involved were more correctly described as 'Schools of Industry' where girls were taught to sew, knit and spin worsted. The regulations were explicitly concerned with 'fitting them for servants'. At the Grey Coat School the girls were equipped for a wide range of domestic positions by taking on the duties of housemaid, kitchen maid, laundry and house assistant, roles which were rotated every six weeks. Their modest academic training was also designed to enhance their chances in the domestic servant market.⁸⁸ After Mrs. Cappe's reforms of 1786 few girls left before they were sixteen. They were not, therefore, 'child' servants but from the age of nine had been rigorously primed for a life of dutiful

⁸⁵ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 7 October 1784, 234

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13 January 1783, 13 April 1792, 10 October 1796, 534

⁸⁷ Christine Vialls and Kay Collins (eds), *A Georgian Country Parson: the Reverend John Mastin of Naseby*, Northampton Record Society (2004), 5

⁸⁸ Catharine Cappe, *An Account of Two Charity Schools* (York, 1800) p. ii. The author of *Domestic Management*, hired none who could not 'read, write and keep a common account.'; Anon., *Domestic Management*, 10

domestic service. Most charity girls, however, left their institutions a good deal earlier than sixteen. At the London Foundling Hospital the mean age for girls was eleven.⁸⁹ All those destined for domestic work (which was most) might be thought to have been doubly disadvantaged since they left at an age when they might be considered too frail for the heavy demands of household tasks and without the premiums which, in other institutions, softened the deal for those taking apprentices.⁹⁰ The prestige of the institution, however, its extensive network, and the reputation of its children for ‘Honesty, sobriety and diligence’ gave them a distinction which made masters and mistresses likely to favour them over parish apprentices who could rarely acquire such advantages.⁹¹

A supposed bonus for masters and mistresses was that these young charity recruits, already schooled in domestic skills, could be taught the particular demands of the household in which they were placed and fashioned to its individual requirements. The author of *Domestic Management* might well have appreciated this: it was certainly the younger members of the household who were thought to be in most need of supervision, proper conduct, sound morality as well as training in domestic skills. It was, she complained, a ‘strong country wench’ who cracks a cabriole chair by cleaning it too vigorously; other ‘ignorant wenches’ used the wrong brushes to clean beneath the carpets; the boy sent on errands ‘may be induced to play by the way for want of thought’.⁹² Such problems were echoed in many of the domestic manuals of the day and must have struck a chord with readers. A sluttish ‘slavey’ might be hidden away in the kitchen but more discerning mistresses wanted to ‘polish’ well-trained and neat girls to admit visitors and take messages in a style which suited their status. The carefully worked samplers produced by charity girls were tangible evidence of their ability to master a variety of complicated stitches but

⁸⁹ A. Levene, *Childcare, Health and Morality at the London Foundling Hospital, 1741-1800* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007), 18

⁹⁰ For example the premiums or fee paid to those taking apprentices from charities in Oxford was £10 for the Grey Coat School, but only £5 for Blue Coat School girls. In financial terms pauper apprentices were far less attractive with premiums of perhaps £2 to £5, Alannah Tomkins, ‘Charity Schools and the Parish Poor in Oxford, 1740-1770’, *Midland History* 22 (1997), 59-60

⁹¹ For discussion of this point see, Alys Levene, ‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence: Master-Apprenticeship Relations in Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century England,’ *Social History*, 33:2 (2008), 187

⁹² Anon. *Domestic Management*, 43, 44, 52

also of their moral and religious training. The one produced by Ann Limbird at Bisham School in Berkshire in 1827 declared in faultless needlework:

When gath'ring clouds around I view
And days are dark and friends are few,
On him I lean who not in vain
Experience'd ev'ry human pain.⁹³

For those who could afford to forfeit the premium such qualities had much appeal. While poor law overseers cajoled and coerced rate-payers into accepting a child, the London Foundling Hospital in 1775 alone, received applications from 57 would-be masters or mistresses, 37 of which were for apprentices in 'household business'.⁹⁴ Five of the applicants had previously taken in foundling apprentices and must have found them satisfactory. When Thomas Clarke applied for Mary Seecombe for household work the inspector noted that he had received four girls in earlier years.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, if charity children suited some masters, recruits to household service whether from charitable institutions, parishes or private arrangements, were often far from the charity ideal. Emma Griffin suggests that children in factory work earned their reputation for tractability only because they were closely (and sometimes savagely) supervised.⁹⁶ For household masters and mistresses supervision on the same scale was rarely possible. Rather it was important to have servants who could be left to carry out their allotted tasks and, if necessary, react responsibly to a situation. This too militated against the choice of child servants. A count against thirteen-year-old Henry Daines, another of Parson Woodforde's 'saucy foul-mouthed' lads, was that he 'could not be trusted to do anything if not overlooked'.

⁹³ See Rebecca Quinton, *Patterns of Childhood: Samplers from Glasgow Museums* (London: A & C Black, 2005), 65

⁹⁴ Applications to take an apprentice, London Metropolitan Archive (hereafter LMA), A/FH/A/12/1/24/1-. One apprentice, George Horsley, did come with a premium (£4 4s) given as compensation for taking a child with a disability – in this case a 'the defect of his arm': Application from Mr Ballard, 13 December 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/12/1/24/1-

⁹⁵ Applications for apprenticeship, Thomas Clarke, 21 November 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/12/1/24/1-

⁹⁶ Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn*, 82

Thomas Turner on occasions left his household servant to look after the shop – a responsibility he could not have entrusted to twelve-year-old Molly Hook.⁹⁷

As later chapters show, many children in service made what use they could of their relative freedom and the limited opportunities this afforded for defying and evading a master's control. Complaints by masters indicate that 'idleness' and staying out late were common forms of rebellion and newspaper reports and court cases of household apprentices who had disappeared were not uncommon. John MacDonald ran away from an abusive and exploitative position and found new work. Nanny Nutter left Elizabeth Shackleton her Yorkshire employer despite receiving many gifts and indulgences. She was brought back by her father, but it was not the end of her rebellion or efforts to make her mistress's life difficult. Foundling Hospital Committee Minutes show that, despite many years of conditioning children to be obedient and industrious, the same problems could occur.

Those who did not have access to children from a tried and trusted charity required evidence of whether or not the child might meet the requirements of a respectable household. The absence of a 'character' – a reference, usually written, from a previous employer - was therefore an additional disincentive for a master or his representative when approached by a child applying for his/her first place of work. In the country-side knowledge of local families or a word from the clergyman, might be all that was needed. The situation in urban areas was more difficult when previous employers were unknown. It is true that 'characters' were known to be highly suspect: many were forged and others unreliable because the writer feared retaliation from the servant. Anna Larpent was so suspicious of these accounts that on one occasion she drove from Ashted in Surrey to the Edgware Road to cross examine a Mrs Stevens – and this on behalf of a friend of her sisters.⁹⁸ Reverend Longe also took 'character' seriously, noting in his Servants' Wages Book the details of those he engaged: Phoebe Davey came with 'a very good character' but Ann Leggat, who came as cook, was only 'satisfactory'.⁹⁹ Such vigilance was wise. Masters who

⁹⁷ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 10 October 1800, 596; Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 7 February 1763, 266

⁹⁸ *Mrs Larpent's Diary*, I, 1790-95', 29th February, 1792, 22 May 1792, 58, Huntington Library, HM31201

⁹⁹ Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, 11 September 1812, 182-3

complained about servants in legal disputes might be asked if they had obtained a ‘character’; failure to have done so was an admission of carelessness and having brought misfortune on oneself. The absence of a ‘character’ (inevitable in the case of many children) was, therefore, a disadvantage for both sides in the negotiation. Parson Woodforde, at times, relied on first impressions: he judged Henry Daines to be a likely boy ‘having an open, honest Countenance’ and accompanied by his mother ‘a good kind of Woman and very Motherly’. Intuition proved, in this case, to be misguided, Henry turning out to be another who was dismissed before his time was up.¹⁰⁰

Children as a source of household stability

In certain respects, however, child servants and apprentices in particular could bring special benefits to a household. Those recruited either from institutions or poor law authorities and bound by a seven year apprenticeship, as well as very young ones from families in the locality, were more likely than adults to stay in post. This was valued by employers, many of whom expressed dismay at the alarming frequency with which servants moved on to find new places.¹⁰¹ Most accepted that ‘moving on’ was, as suggested by the examples of the Reverend Longe’s hired boys, a traditional means by which the young might acquire promotion, but it was worth staying in your first place in order to gain the skills and experience as well as a ‘character’ which made this possible. An apprentice, however, was committed until the age of twenty-one unless marriage, in the case of a girl, or some unforeseen event (death or debt of a master) intervened. For the apprentice recruited at the age of ten this was a dismal prospect, but could be well suited to the needs of the householder whose other staff left when and if the opportunity arose, sometimes after the mistress had spent time and energy training a new maid. Elizabeth Shackleton, a genteel householder married to a woollen merchant in Lancashire, required four maids for the efficient running of her household, but in the course of 1772 recruited a succession of twenty-nine in order to cope with the frequent turnover of staff in that year. Ten of those

¹⁰⁰ Beresford *Diary of a Country Parson*, 3 September 1799, 588

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Pamela Horn, *Flunkeys and Scullions; Life Below Stairs in Georgian England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004), 120; Meldrum, *Domestic Service*, 121; Richardson, *Household Servants*, 46

employed on a permanent live-in capacity lasted for less than thirty days and even Molly Viviers the housekeeper (holding, therefore, a key role), lasted only twenty-four weeks. Like her clergymen counterparts Mrs. Shackleton had standards which she wished to impose on her servants but this was difficult without a stable workforce. Her best hopes lay with twelve-year-old Nanny Nutter the daughter of a local farmer. The relationship between Nanny and her mistress was far from easy: despite efforts on Mrs Shackleton's part to win Nanny's co-operation with clothes, fancy accessories, trips to Yorkshire and presents for her family, she remained recalcitrant. At so young an age, however, Nanny was unable to escape her domestic role (her father returned her on each occasion she attempted to run away) and had acquired neither the skills nor the crucial 'character' to enable her to find work elsewhere. For three years, therefore, despite the tensions between mistress and maid, Nanny was the one permanent member of the Shackleton household.¹⁰² In Donington (Lincolnshire) Matthew Flinders (Surgeon, Apothecary and Man-Midwife) expressed similar discomfort with changes to the servant members of his household. In 1777 he recorded his decision to keep the existing servants for another year despite his servant boy, John Harmston's, insistence on higher wages; 'nor are we fond of new faces, if we are in any way well' he explained.¹⁰³ Tried and trusted servants, accustomed to the ways of the household, were invariably favoured and child workers were no exception.

The advantages of the absence of parental influence

The absence of parental influence was believed by many contemporaries to ease the task of inculcating appropriate manners and attitudes in young children. In 1753 when Isaac Maddox, the Bishop of Worcester, preached a sermon in the Chapel of the London Foundling Hospital, he urged sympathy for 'the most pitiable, most helpless, and most innocent part of the human species'. Some infants, he believed, 'are the unlawful offspring of lewd and profligate parents' and should be rescued

¹⁰² Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 137, 143-5

¹⁰³ Martyn Beardsley and Nicholas Bennett (eds), *Gratefull to Providence: The Diary and Accounts of Matthew Flinders, Surgeon, Apothecary and Man-Midwife, 1775-1802* Lincoln Record Society, 96 (2007) Vol. I, 22 April 1777, 46

‘from the very Jaws of Death; or what is even worse than Death, Wickedness and Ruin’ – which, it appeared, their parents had represented.¹⁰⁴ The Lockean belief in the *tabula rasa* and the malleability of the child exposed only to positive influences is again evident, linked here to a Christian ethos. The Hospital presented a particularly fertile ground for promoting the Bishop’s ideals; all foundlings, by virtue of the terms on which they were admitted to the Hospital, were cut off from both parents.¹⁰⁵ His sentiments were interspersed with the obligation to provide useful and appropriate occupations for the foundlings and echoed the concerns of many contemporaries about the idleness and regrettable conduct of the poor and their offspring – problems which could be remedied more readily if parents were absent. Here was another point in favour of the Hospital and similar charities seeking placements for children who were deprived of both parents.

The absence of parental influence could, in this canon, make a pauper apprentice a more attractive proposition. Many children under the authority of the poor law had lost at least one of their parents; others were placed in distant parishes which meant less risk of intervention from parents or kin.¹⁰⁶ Such occurrences, which might be fuelled by existing local conflicts, were not unusual when local children (pauper or otherwise) were bound to ratepayers. The children might be the offspring of the parish’s most notorious family or coming from the ‘contaminated’ atmosphere of a mixed workhouse. Many poor parents were far from indifferent to the treatment of their children and took action on their behalf. In his role as parish overseer Thomas Turner arranged, in 1756, for Ann and Lucy Brazer, then about nine and eleven, to

¹⁰⁴ Isaac Maddox, ‘The Wisdom and Duty of Preserving Destitute Infants’, Sermon preached at the Chapel of the Hospital for Exposed and Destitute Children, April 1753 (London, 1753), 4, 6-7

¹⁰⁵ Foundlings were taken in as infants, usually before the age of two months, given a new name and thereafter cut off from all contact with parent(s). While the incidence of being orphaned in the sense of losing one parent was high in this period (perhaps one third of the population and rarely below one fifth for those before the age of marriage), the existence of ‘true’ orphans deprived of both parents was less common. For a discussion of figures for orphans in pre-industrial England see Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 160-73. Estimates remain subject to error due to dearth of sources, regional differences and changes over time. It seems likely, however that the figures are an underestimate because some orphans are ‘hidden’ from surveys. The main reason for the high rate of deprivation of parenthood was the high incidence of (early) mortality amongst male adults; during much of this period the Napoleonic wars deprived many households of a father figure through death but also because many men sent off to war never returned to their original homes.

¹⁰⁶ The incidence of ‘distant’ placements should not be exaggerated. Poor law officials did not routinely send children out to other parishes because there might be considerable objection to a master taking a child from outside their own parish. See Honeyman, *Child Labour*, 55-89, and Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England 1600-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 55-61

be placed with two East Hoathly families.¹⁰⁷ Sometime later he reported that ‘both of which girls have for some time past been very saucy and impertinent’. As a consequence Lucy had been ‘corrected’ by William Elphick, in whose house she lived, by an order of a public vestry. This had ‘so affronted’ Richard Brazer, their father, that he took Lucy home and claimed for her upkeep the money paid to Elphick. Brazer was reprimanded and told to return his daughter, but such incidents can scarcely have improved village relationships and must have discouraged other parishioners from accepting local children.¹⁰⁸

Parental interference was even more likely in the case of non-apprenticed children employed locally. In 1797, aged fourteen, Joseph Mayett worked as a live-in servant for a drunken farmer and was caught between a vindictive mistress who insisted that he retrieve her husband from the alehouse, and his master who beat him with a walking stick when he did. He turned in despair to his father who sent Joseph back to retrieve his belongings and with the message that he would make the master ‘smart for it’ if these were not returned. The elder Mayett, a respectable man and the master’s ‘right hand’ worker could not easily be ignored. In the end Joseph got his job back and had only to endure the refusal of his mistress to speak to him.¹⁰⁹ Such incidents again served to persuade employers that it was a better idea to take on a child whose parents were not on hand. Not all confrontations were so aggressive but parental pressure could still impose unwelcome changes on employers’ practices. In support of her settlement examination in Thatcham, Berkshire, Caroline Streatley’s mother said that, aged twelve, Caroline had gone to work for Mr Phillips at Woolhampton as a servant of all work. She was to receive food and her mistress’s old clothes. Her father initially agreed to this but after a few weeks said that, ‘if he w[ould] not give more than vic[tua]s she w[oul]d better herself’. Phillips then agreed to give 9d a week and Caroline stayed on for more than twelve months.¹¹⁰ Phillips

¹⁰⁷ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 5 May 1756, 39

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 121

¹⁰⁹ A. Kussmaul (ed.) *The Autobiography of Joseph Myatt of Quainton*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 23 (1986), 5

¹¹⁰ Peter Durrant (ed.), *Berkshire Overseers’ Papers, 1654-1834*, Berkshire Record Society, 3 (1997), 196-7. The examination is undated but Caroline was then nineteen and Thatcham registers show that she was baptised in January 1811 (editor’s research). The examination would have been ‘Probably c. 1829’ and Caroline’s employment with Phillips in the early 1820s. The anecdote was important because it gave force to the claim that Caroline had been with the same employer and place for at least a year, and was thereby entitled to settlement.

seems to have been fairly easily persuaded but, had Caroline been an orphan, or distant from her parents, he might have kept his 9d. A father's influence may also have carried more force than that of a mother. There were, of course, occasions when parental or kin influence worked in favour of the employer. William Cole relied on the older brother of his servant Jem to discipline the boy for lateness and other failings on the grounds that he 'would be spoiled' by Cole. Elizabeth Shackleton had reason to be grateful to Nanny Nutter's father for returning her runaway maid.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, for the ruthless, enticed by the cheapness of pauper children and the potential to exploit their labour, the absence of parent or kin was welcome. At the very least it might be a consideration which persuaded a reluctant rate-payer to accept a pauper placement. Those with loftier aims - wishing to fulfil Bishop Maddox's concept of Christian duty - were also encouraged. The coarse behaviour of poor children might be modified if parental influence was absent or removed. The position of such children, bereft of either parent or kin to offer any protection, will be considered in later chapters.

Placements linked to family support, social obligations and companionship

While taking in a pauper or charity child to work in the house could involve a good deal of deliberation and apprehension, householders were more receptive to taking in children of kin. Ties of blood and marriage carried obligations and those towards children - for example to look after them in times of difficulty or assist their future prospects through training - might have been reinforced by vows made at the child's baptism or in the terms of a will. This could certainly pose problems for the receiving family but when a child could act as a servant the outcome could be satisfactory for both sides. In November 1781 Matthew Flinders felt duty-bound to dismiss his existing boy assistant to make way for his nephew Thomas Ward. Flinders records this in a fairly matter-of fact way but his feelings are clear: he had previously no intention of parting with John Bettison but does so 'to oblige Mr.

¹¹¹ Francis Griffin Stokes (ed.), *The Bletchley Diary of the Reverend William Cole, 1765-67* (London: Constable and Co., 1931), 7 September 1766, 115, 9 September 1776, 118; Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 137

Ward' and adds 'I hope after the experience I have had of him he will suit'. There is no evidence that the new boy failed to please (he is referred to affectionately as 'Tommy') but he left the next November and, Flinders recorded with what seems like some satisfaction, 'I have got John Bettison again'.¹¹² Nevertheless family obligations had overcome Flinders' personal preferences. Following the death of his father's widow (and second wife) at the beginning of 1783 Flinders became responsible (not without some complaint on his part) for his half-brother and two half-sisters. In 1786 Penelope, the youngest 'who is a good girl', and then in her twelfth year, was living with Matthew and his second wife. In April 1792 we find her in receipt of a year's wage of £1 10s which suggests that she may have stayed to help with domestic work for which, in the early years she received no payment. Matthew's observation suggests that she fitted in well with Flinders' household; as there were five other children in the household in 1786 and two more would soon be born, additional help from Penelope, by now well-established in the family, was welcomed.¹¹³

Masters and mistresses seeking an apprentice were more open to an arrangement with an acquaintance or trusted member of society and Flinders' reputation in his profession and his wide connections must have eased the process of finding apprenticeships for his half-brother and sisters. In April of 1783 William was apprenticed to Mr. Jennings an ironmonger in Spalding and Mary (Polly), at the age of thirteen, to a milliner in Boston.¹¹⁴ These were not domestic service apprenticeships but they indicate the same sort of connections which facilitated the arrangements between Thomas Turner and Robert Hook when Molly was taken 'on trial'. Flinders had family, commercial and professional contacts in Spalding and Boston just as Turner and Hook had business contacts. Hook, a shoemaker later took Turner's ten year old nephew, Philip, as his apprentice.¹¹⁵ Sometimes apprenticeship arrangements between families and friends were more neatly reciprocal. The Reverend William Jones apprenticed his son to a stationer in St Paul's church yard in

¹¹² Beardsley and Bennett, *Gratefull to Providence*, Vol. I., 23 November 1781, 116, 25 November 1782, 125

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 2 January 1787, 35, 30 April 1792, 110

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 22 April 1783, 138, Vol. II, 25 July 1785, 14

¹¹⁵ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 12 June 1759, 185. On his death, aged fifteen, Philip appears to have been with Turner's brother Moses, learning the trade of a tailor, 294

London and in return (and in lieu of a premium) took Mr. Lukyn's little boy. 'He is a charming little fellow, and it will give me pleasure to return the kindness and attention they show my son' - which suggests a happier outcome than in Molly Hook's case.¹¹⁶

Children employed for companionship and from altruism

A child taken for companionship might most often be found in the household of kin; with a grand-parent who needed care and attention in old age; or with a childless-couple who could, by taking them in, relieve the pressure on a family of poor relations. A child placed into an apprenticeship, however, was sometimes said 'to be taken into a family' since the eighteenth-century concept of 'family' was a broad one and could accommodate those who were not blood relations.¹¹⁷ Sometimes a child was welcomed as companion as well as servant and it was often in poor and modest income households, where social differences and social divides were less acute, that friendships developed and endured. When Sarah Doughty petitioned the Foundling Hospital to ask them to take in her infant, a Hospital inspector made enquiries about her from her former employer. Mrs Rolf, a London milk-woman said that Sarah had come to work for her 'when a child of nine or ten years old from her Grandmother' and that she remained a friend for whom she had high regard and whom she would employ again.¹¹⁸ Samuel Bamford told of a case of successful assimilation into respectable lower class family life. As a small boy he shared a bed with a Sally Owen, an orphan brought up by his grandfather's family. She was now working in his uncle's house 'living more as a sister than as a servant'. At a later date she married his cousin William, becoming to Bamford 'a second mother . . . more dear to me than all the rest'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ O.F. Christie (ed.), *The Diary of the Reverend William Jones 1770-1821* (London: Bretanos, 1929), 103

¹¹⁷ Eighteenth-century concepts of family and kin are discussed in Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), passim

¹¹⁸ Cited in Tanya Evans, *'Unfortunate Objects': Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 177

¹¹⁹ W.H. Chaloner (ed.), *The Autobiography of Samuel Bamford: Early Days* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967), 42, 77

Thomas Turner refers in his diary to his 'family' whenever more than one dependant was living in his household and whether or not they were kin.¹²⁰ Could it be that Turner's attempt to enlist twelve year old Molly Hook was also intended to provide a young companion, as well as help for Mrs. Turner whose own child, an infant of twenty-one weeks, had died three years earlier?¹²¹ Elizabeth Shackleton, too, had lost a child in infancy, a little girl Betty. Mrs Shackleton was extravagantly fond of her sons (especially 'Dear, Dear, Dear, Dear Tom') and her early attention to twelve year old Nanny Nutter when she arrived in 1772 may have been an expression of her wish to extend her attentions to a surrogate daughter as well as to provide some stability to the household.¹²² Nanny's illnesses were recorded along with those of the boys, as well as her first menstrual period. Pretty clothes, trips and occasional treats seem to have pleased Nanny in the early days and suggest an attempt to foster a relationship which went beyond a mistress/servant one.¹²³ Mrs Shackleton may have recalled the letter when she was pregnant which came from her maternal aunt, 'If a little Miss should come, I hope 'twill prove a charming companion to you which you cannot expect from the boys who will or sho'd spend most of their youth in schools.'¹²⁴ In the end, her efforts with Nanny were in vain, which must have been a cause of some sadness. Her three boys were now sixteen, fifteen and fourteen. She had re-married in 1765 a younger husband who spent much time with his 'pot companions' - men as boorish, drunken and unrefined as he turned out to be; she may have wished for quieter female companionship.

Mary Hardy, a Norfolk farmer's wife, employed a young boy for the mixture of farm and household tasks which were typical for this age group. These boys are rarely mentioned in the early days of her marriage, but seem to have been very young: in 1779, for example, the current boy was sent with her own children to see Gingell's Puppet show. Mary was a fond mother taking an active role in her children's upbringing: she took them with her on long walks, on trips to Norwich, swam in the summer months with her youngest son Billy in the open air cistern, showing every

¹²⁰ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*. See again Naomi Tadmor on this point, 'The concept of the household-family,' *Past & Present*, 151 (1996), 111-39

¹²¹ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 4

¹²² Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 189

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 137-44 and passim

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 289

indication of enjoying their company. It is not surprising, when they grew up to find 'the boy' featuring more often in her diary especially after the death of her eldest son, Raven. In April 1793 she notes that 'our boy' was inoculated for the small pox. In November 1797, 'The boy and I sett some pease and beans' and in December she was concerned about his injury after a fall from his horse at Holt. He accompanied her to various meetings in the neighbourhood and in 1799 after she recorded the difficult journey he experienced in the snow, 'the [current] boy' is, at last, credited with a name - 'George'.¹²⁵ Widows and single women may have felt similar needs. In 1769 six-year-old Jane Yarmouth was bound to Elizabeth Peck of Adbury in Berkshire who was to teach her to sew and 'instruct her to make a good servant'; Jane would have been incapable of the more strenuous household tasks and was probably intended to be a companion as well as a helper in the house.¹²⁶

It is possible that companionship was one reason for the employment of Parson Woodforde's 'boy'. It was 'my New Boy' George Hutchins who accompanied him to Oxford in 1768 and to Bath in 1769 and another, William Coleman, who went with him when he moved to Weston Longeville in 1776.¹²⁷ He took Billy Downing hare and rabbit coursing (for Woodforde a diversion as well as providing food for his table) and showed great concern for Jack Warton's illness.¹²⁸ Perhaps a child seemed a cheerful addition to the Longville Rectory where Woodforde lived as a bachelor with his unmarried (and sometimes indifferent) niece as housekeeper. At the same time Woodforde was fulfilling both his Christian and civic duty: he provided assistance to a poor family of his parish, ensured that his charge went regularly to church, inculcated ideals of Christian conduct and encouraged work discipline in the lower orders. These were practical, charitable measures which contemporaries and writers of household manuals of the age would have considered admirable reasons for taking a child into your home. Altruism and self-interest might easily coincide. J. Bunce an inspector for the Foundling Hospital in 1766 wrote to recommend a wine merchant in Oakingham in Berkshire as a suitable person to take a foundling, Paul

¹²⁵ Basil Cozens-Hardy (ed.), *Mary Hardy's Diary*, Norfolk Record Society, 37 (1968), 83, 97, 98, 100.

¹²⁶ Gillian Clark (ed.) *Correspondence of the Foundling Hospital Inspectors in Berkshire*, Berkshire Record Society, 1 (1994), 179

¹²⁷ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 51, 55, 119-121

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 404, 407; 154.

Holton, as his apprentice. He had already ‘taken a likeing to the child and put him to scooll at his expence’ for he ‘have not any child of his own’.¹²⁹

Within their means these ideals might be shared by those who were themselves poor, aware that they one day they too might be at the mercy of poor law authorities.

Thomas Turner who considered his shop-keeping business to be precarious expressed concern on this account: during a ‘melancholy’ time in 1758 he wished not to amass a large fortune, ‘only that I might have the prospect removed before my eyes of an approaching poverty’.¹³⁰ As an overseer of the poor, Turner knew better than most the difficulties of placing a pauper child, but also its importance. He took his sister’s illegitimate son into his household and took time and trouble at a later date to find him an apprenticeship as he had done for his own younger brother Richard. Those one removed from poverty were all too aware of the need to avoid its miseries in future.

Conclusion

In 1750 Elizabeth Purefoy wrote to an acquaintance asking for assistance in finding a new maid and specifying the qualities she should have, namely an ability to sew plain work, wash linen, iron and, at busy times, help with serving the dinner. She added, ‘I should like it none the worse if she was forty years old’.¹³¹ Purefoy sought a maid who was the antithesis of a child servant: experienced, recommended by a previous employer and well-used to the regular and varied duties of a properly run household as opposed to one who was untried, without a ‘character’ and in all possibility not strong enough for the demanding, routine nature of domestic work. Looked at from this position it is difficult to see why anyone would employ or take in a child. Of course, not all employers wanted such a specialist or senior servant for their household, but on the basis of the evidence reviewed it would seem likely that few servant-employing households could hope to win much economic advantage by taking on a child worker. The handbooks of the era complained endlessly of the cost of keeping servants but the savings which might have been made in a household of

¹²⁹ Correspondence, LMA, A/FH/A/6/1/19/2/33

¹³⁰ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 169

¹³¹ Quoted in Richardson, *Household Servants*, 70

any standing by substituting a child for an adult or adolescent would have been insignificant.

Cheapness held some attractions for precarious businesses on the margins of economic life especially when a child could be obtained, as in the case of John Bezer, without parental interference and on terms determined by the employer. Many of the 'slaveys' or 'maids-of-all-work' that Philip Thicknesse observed were taken on by those who could not otherwise have employed anyone or to give temporary help after the birth of a child. Poor law authorities were right to think that premiums for pauper children plus free labour were incentives to those thinking of taking their apprentices as domestic servants. Other considerations, however, might deter them; the reputation of paupers for insubordination and idleness; their less than respectable origins; the proximity of interfering parents; the absence of any personal recommendation; the disruptive presence of an apprentice resentful at having to serve out his term when the trade had been learnt but no wages were forthcoming. Economic considerations were not the only ones to concern those responsible for domestic staff.

There were, however, 'plus' points about a child servant which employers might exploit to good or evil intent. A child learnt easily and could be trained to meet the particular demands of a master or mistress as well as to behave appropriately. Many came without either mother or father and since a new generation of servants had to be nurtured for the future what better than to begin with a child of your own choosing without 'parental baggage'. This provided an opportunity for individuals to address two of the overriding concerns of the age: the idleness as well as the immorality of the children of the poor. They might do this while exercising Christian charity and civic duty as well as common humanity. Others favoured charity girls who came with ready-made domestic skills and promise of good behaviour which, as the example of the London Foundling Hospital shows, could override the absence of a premium. Not all employers who opted for a child's help were motivated by such lofty aims. For some the attraction was that children who failed to act as their employers wished could be beaten into submission with impunity where there was no parent, no government inspection and infrequent enquiry by Poor Law officials or charity inspectors (a subject discussed in chapter three).

Thus a range of negative and some positive considerations prevailed when employers decided whether or not to employ a child in their household. What carried much force, was the idea that there were certain qualities or a facility which made children peculiarly well-suited to a particular domestic role and distinguished them from other servants. It may be that in factory work, adults were just as capable of undertaking the tasks that children performed; the advantage of children lay simply in their cheapness.¹³² In domestic service children had their own distinct ‘selling points’. Robust children, in fine livery and acting as postilions, footboys and serving girls, reflected the prestige of a household and advertised a style and confidence which justified the financial outlay. Lord and Lady Dalrymple employed John MacDonald as their postilion because he could so effectively convey a colourful and winsome image of the family. So important was his youth and appearance in the Hamilton family (he had been favoured over a stout seventeen year old) that a special strap was made to secure his small frame to the saddle and prevent him from being thrown from the carriage.¹³³ Clergymen wanted a small boy, trained to their particular standards of behaviour to accompany them on their parish rounds. Perhaps it was only a little girl, willing to work along with the mistress in the everyday duties of the house, who could have provided Peggy Turner and Elizabeth Shackleton with consolation for a lost child.

John MacDonald was aware of the transient nature of his youthful appearance and took care to learn additional skills; cooking from the kitchen staff; elementary reading, writing and arithmetic; greater efficiency in handling horses, in the secure knowledge that he would soon lose the childish appeal which had served him so well. At fifteen he was ‘too big’ for a postilion and applied for the ‘adult’ role of coachman.¹³⁴ In this respect he resembled the several eleven to fourteen-year-olds who worked for parson Woodforde in Norfolk and, on a more casual basis, ran errands for the Reverend William Holland in Somerset. They, too, became aware that their value to their employers was coming to an end at the age of fourteen or fifteen and that custom and practice expected them to move on. At the age of fifteen

¹³² Jane Humphries, ‘Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution’, *Economic History Review*, 66, 2 (2013), 395-418, 406

¹³³ MacDonald, *Travels*, 38,41

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61

Jack Warton told Woodforde that he had been advised to get another place, 'being too old for a Skip-Jack any longer'.¹³⁵ At fourteen, or so, Woodforde's boys were no longer willing to fit in with his ways. He was ready to engage a younger replacement and to adapt him, while he could, to the role of 'parson's boy'. Many obstacles stood in the way of a child obtaining household work, but it was also the case that boys soon came under pressure to give up the one role for which they were trained.

¹³⁵ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 7 October 1783

Chapter 2: Life as a child servant

The previous chapter has indicated something of the range of households in which children might be found working as servants by the second half of the eighteenth century and the reasons why they were taken in. This chapter identifies the nature and variety of tasks undertaken by these children, which, given the large numbers of children involved and the growing number and variety of households which aspired to keep servants, could be very different. Likewise their conditions and experiences were determined by economic, social and environmental circumstances and the attitude of the host families towards them. Much depended too on the agent responsible for the placements, the age and expectations of the child, and how well prepared they had been for their new role.

One way to break down these varied topics is to structure them around the indenture document which, with similar agreements made between parents and employers, expressed a widely accepted standard of the conditions in which these children ought to live and the obligation of masters and mistresses towards them. The daily lives of child servants were affected most immediately by the commitments to feed, clothe and accommodate them and to maintain standards of personal hygiene. They were also to be trained for a means by which they could earn a living. This chapter examines the ways in which the indenture and other such contracts were interpreted and the extent to which they served to protect child servants and provide them with a reasonable means of existence. Where possible the analysis of the living and working conditions will take into account the children's perceptions of their lives and experiences.

The duties and roles of child servants

The work which children were taken on to do in the domestic sphere was extremely varied but also fairly sharply gendered. In one sense there was little variety for girls; whether placed by parents, the poor law or charity agencies they were most likely to be destined for domestic service. Ivy Pinchbeck found examples of women who had been apprenticed to goldsmiths, gilders, furniture makers and engravers and recent research has shown that the range of occupations open to girls in the eighteenth

century certainly was much wider than once thought.¹ Some acquired highly regarded skills through family connections without the formalities of an apprenticeship: Mary Beilby, the sister of Thomas Bewick's master, for example, learnt enamelling from her father.² Nevertheless, sixteenth-century statutes had stipulated that 'huswifery' was the most appropriate training for 'Girles, or other waste persons' and traditional thinking prevailed, reinforced by the belief that domestic skills were useful in marriage and motherhood. Girls were also thought to lack the stamina and physique for many of the tasks undertaken by boys.³

Joan Lane's study of apprenticeship concluded that in all periods (1600-1914) the great majority of girls were sent into housewifery and that this was especially true for those from poor backgrounds. While many went into different branches of needle-work this was still 'second only to housewifery as an apprenticeship for girls'.⁴ More recently, breakdown of the occupational classifications of parish apprentices in London between the 1760s and 1830s tends to confirm this general conclusion; during this period domestic service increased its share of apprenticed children despite the trend for more children, including those in charity schools, to be directed into industrial occupations.⁵ Pauper children male and female were also banned by guild restrictions from several trades within city jurisdictions, for example building and leather trades.⁶ Domestic work was also the destiny of many poor but non pauper girls whose parents could afford only a modest apprenticeship premium or none at all. These girls were often preferred by reasonably prosperous households: in Warwickshire (1700-1834) 22 per cent of housewifery apprentices went to serve

¹ K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 279-91; Amy L. Erikson, 'Married Women's Occupations in Eighteenth-Century London', *Continuity and Change* 23 (2008), 267-307

² British Library, Add. MS. 41481 (Thomas Bewick, *The Autobiography of Thomas Bewick*) 45,

³ G. Markham. *The English Husbandman*, cited in Steve Hindle, 'Waste' children? Pauper Apprenticeship under the Elizabethan Poor laws c. 1598-1697', in *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850*, ed. Penelope Lane, Neil Raven and K.D.M. Snell (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 17

⁴ Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 39, 52

⁵ Alys Levene, 'Charity, Apprenticeship and Social Capital' in *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency, 1750-1914*, ed. Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 14

⁶ Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 39

with, for example, drapers, surgeons and chandlers as well as in the households of clerics and schoolmasters.⁷

There is also some reason for caution when interpreting the returns of girls sent out (apparently) to craft or industrial trades. Of the six girls (for whom indentures exist) placed by the parish of St. Leonard's in Leicester between 1699 and 1795, one was sent to learn framework knitting, one wool-combing and three to 'all manner of household business'. The training of the sixth girl, Alice Irish, was described more variously (in 1711) as 'Jersey Wool, Doubling, hurling of yarn and other household business'.⁸ We find a similar blend of tasks outlined for Jane Beale when she was placed with John Leedham junior in October 1787 by Leire parish in Leicestershire. She was to be taught and instructed in 'the Art of spinning Jersey, seaming of the Stockings and other Domestic affairs'.⁹ In 1807 eleven year old Maria Askey was placed with Thomas Richardson a framework knitter of Broughton Astley to learn his trade but 'also cleaning of Stockings and other domestic Employments'.¹⁰ The suspicion must be that for many of these girls (and perhaps some of those sent specifically to learn framework-knitting and wool-combing) it was household and menial work which occupied most of their time. Framework-knitting was a dying trade for which, by the late eighteenth century, a man might have to work long hours to make a living. The employment of a girl for domestic duties could release his wife or another member of the family for the textile work in which they were experienced. In Spitalfields children of nine to ten years old were hired out for 1s or 14d a week to clean and cook for weavers' families so that the wife could continue to earn as a skilled worker.¹¹ In Birmingham in 1783, Mary Harve (Hane) was placed by the Blue Coat School with Edward Pardoe, a chaser (an engraver/embosser of metal), 'to learn the said art of a Chaser and also to be instructed in all necessary Business of an Household Servant', which suggests that a girl could be considered

⁷ *Ibid.*, 127

⁸ Indenture for Alice Irish, 18 April 1711, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Record Office (hereafter ROLLR), DE1615/5

⁹ Indenture for Jane Beale, 1 October 1787, ROLLR, DE1425/97/aa

¹⁰ Indenture for Maria Askey, 1807, ROLLR, DE1425/97/yy

¹¹ Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), II, 402

for an occupation generally considered more appropriate for a male.¹² It is impossible to know, however, how her different duties were apportioned. The same quandary arises for many girls from London parishes, recorded as being employed for housewifery, as well as the master's trade.¹³ No boy in the Leicestershire indentures, for example, was sent to a hybrid role of this kind, in which trade and domestic service were combined even if, in practice, this might occur in the early years of his service (see below).

This miscellany of trading households and social groups into which girls were placed or hired as servants suggests that while there was limited scope for girls outside of domestic service, there was a good deal of variety within the occupation even for the youngest. The close integration of domestic, craft and commercial roles meant that girls might be drawn into some aspect of their host household's business whether or not it was part of their job description. Joseph Harrison, who managed the White Horse at St Clements-inn Fore-gate in London, kept a girl to 'get pots in' as well as to clean the house. It was a place in which 'a good deal of company' was kept according to Esther Harrison who gave evidence in court following a theft on the premises.¹⁴ The pot girl must have been confronted with many aspects of noisy tavern life and less than respectable customers. 'Housemaids', working for shopkeepers, might have been required to deliver and collect goods, like twelve year-old Ann Roch, sent out one evening in 1768 to buy two yards of three-penny ribbon for her mistress.¹⁵ Others might occasionally 'mind the shop', while girls sent as servants to Leicestershire framework knitters washed the stockings produced on the workshop looms. Mary Ashford had to attend to the needs of her mistress, a lodger, two dogs, a cat, many birds, including parrots, and Jacko the monkey 'the most vicious little beast that ever there was.'¹⁶ Mary's work, however, was securely and

¹² Indenture for Mary Harve (or Hane), 2 May 1783, Birmingham City Archive (hereafter BCA), MS1622/2/6

¹³ See discussion in Alys Levene, 'Parish Apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London,' *Economic History Review*, 63.4 (2010), 927

¹⁴ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, (hereafter OBP) version 6.0, 23 June 2013), September 1787, trial of Mary Davis (t17870912-49)

¹⁵ *OBP*, version 7.0, 12 September 2014) December 1768, trial of Bartholemew Fanton (t17681207-57)

¹⁶ Mary Ashford, *Life of a Licensed Victualler's Daughter, Written by Herself* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1844), 29-32

almost entirely tied to the house and it was this feature of girls' work which distinguished their role.

A smaller number of boys bound into formal apprenticeships were placed as household servants but a myriad obtained work in households where their parents or siblings worked, beginning as errand boys, aides to kitchen and stable workers, gardeners and boot cleaners. Others, like the young personal servants of James Woodforde and Matthew Flinders served short stints as household 'Skip-Jacks' or general factotum before moving on to a formal apprenticeship or work which was thought to be more appropriate for older boys. Yet even apprentices sent to learn 'the Art and Mystery' of more prestigious crafts could expect to spend some time in their earlier years preparing the workshop in the morning, running errands, fetching drinks for the journeymen and clearing up at the end of the working day. Only later would they progress to learning the skills of the trade.¹⁷ Thomas Giordano Wright, expensively bound to a Newcastle doctor (his premium was £150), could not escape, as under apprentice, the obligation to unsaddle and feed the horse, sweep the shop, light the fire and clean the mortars and scales.¹⁸

The reach of domestic work was, therefore, considerable and the boundaries between domestic, commercial and training roles blurred for both boys and girls. There was, nevertheless, a distinct domestic role for boys and an existence which was more likely to take them outside. Despite describing her boy servants as her footmen and calling on them to serve at table when visitors arrived, Frances Hamilton gave them a wide range of domestic tasks to do outside the house including rat-catching, sawing wood and cleaning the pig-sty.¹⁹ There were tasks for which boys were thought to be particularly well-suited and others for which they were not. Variations on the work done by John Stephenson, the twelve year old orphan who worked as footboy to the Reverend Humphryes in Suffolk (discussed in the Introduction), and set out for the male-servant tax assessors in the 1770s can be seen again and again for boy

¹⁷ Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 76-7

¹⁸ Alistair Johnson (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Giordani Wright 1826-9*, Surtees Society, 206 (2001), 57

¹⁹ Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 69-72

servants.²⁰ Thomas Dunning's duties as an assistant to Dr Bromfield in Chester consisted of 'assisting in the stable, cleaning knives, shoes waiting at table, and in the surgery, taking out medicines, etc.' It was much the same for John Bezor who considered himself first and foremost an errand boy but with the cleaning of fire-irons, candlesticks and windows thrown in.²¹ Acceptable roles for a 'footboy' could also include work with the horses and carriage of the household and gardening. The decisions of servant tax assessors (Humphryes paid the taxed for Stephenson, Hamilton paid nothing on any of her boys after 1782 although their tasks were much the same) illustrate the vagaries of the tax assessment but also the amorphous nature of domestic service and the difficulty of defining its limits.²² The continued demand for boys in this distinct and varied role ensured their presence in domestic life even if, in later years, they moved to other occupations. Meanwhile, 'housewifery' was generally seen as a labour intensive occupation with a range of tasks which girls could be expected to master but which were 'out of bounds' for boys.²³

Included in the above categories of child servants were the many girls, and some boys, placed into domestic service by charity schools and institutions founded, in some cases, for the very purpose of creating a new, skilled and more civilized and servant class (see Chapter 1). Such children were thought to be more accommodating and adaptable to employers' needs, less contaminated by the vices of the age than older servants or those from labouring families. In any one year of the eighteenth century, therefore, a significant number of children joined the small army of child workers who swept, cleaned, fetched, carried, washed the household linen and cared for smaller children in and around the households in which they found themselves. Domestic service in one of its many manifestations was a feature in the lives of many children in this period for at least some part of their early life.

There were many different ways of experiencing service. Time spent as an indentured pauper was not invariably bleak, nor could negotiation by a caring parent or an institution with altruistic aims guarantee a satisfactory placement for non-paupers. Much depended on the master or mistress, the nature of the household and

²⁰ Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 70-2

²¹ Vincent, *Testaments*, 123, 162

²² Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 70-1

²³ Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 14

the disposition of the child towards domestic work. For most children placement into domestic service was something of a lottery.

Contractual obligations to child servants

The apprenticeship indenture functioned as a prescription for, on the one hand the behaviour of apprentices and, on the other, the obligations of masters and mistresses. Early apprenticeships had been devised as a means of social control but also as a means of maintaining high standards of craftsmanship. The intention was to afford a degree of protection to the apprentice as well as a route to a useful trade which would enable them to avoid destitution. For many young people, especially those entering the more prestigious trades, the apprenticeship system worked well providing them with the prospect of a secure future, entry into a specialist trade, social status and a sense of belonging to a community. Such lofty aims were difficult to reconcile with the early poor law practice of sending apprentice girls into ‘huswifery’ to any who would take them (as well as many who would rather have not done so).²⁴ Nevertheless, the indenture was the legal tool by which apprenticeship of all kinds was regulated. It bound together master and apprentice and a successful outcome depended on the fulfilment of its terms by both sides. By 1691, parish apprentices were required to have written indentures which made their situation a little less precarious and their status closer to that of apprentices outside of the poor law. The legislation was intended to clarify issues when disputes concerning parish children came before magistrates, which had happened frequently in the seventeenth century.²⁵

Charities were not usually under any compulsion to draw up formal indentures but most chose to do so in the interests of their image as paternalists as well as for the security and well-being of the apprentices. For the Foundling Hospital apprenticeship was a means by which those who left them might obtain a settlement and therefore the right to poor law assistance; as such, it was a safeguard against destitution in hard times for foundlings who lacked settlement eligibility which was

²⁴ Steve Hindle, ‘“Waste” children? Pauper Apprenticeship under the Elizabethan Poor Laws c. 1598-1697,’ in *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850* ed. Penelope Lane, K.D.M. Snell and Neil Raven (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 15-46

²⁵ Lane, *Apprentices*, 3

acquired by most children at birth through their father.²⁶ This was significant when so many of their children were destined for domestic service, often an insecure occupation. These institutions were thereby bound into the legal system and masters became more accountable for the training and conditions they provided for their charges. At the same time it was a way of indemnifying the parish where the hospital was located.

Charities recognised that beginning an apprenticeship, which usually involved leaving home or institution, was a significant point in the life of working children. The London Foundling Hospital held a small ceremony to mark the leaving of their apprentices.²⁷ Other institutions gave Bibles and ‘improving’ reading, for example, *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658) which had a section on ‘Servants Duty’.²⁸ The indenture itself was part of this process and gave the occasion formal recognition. For many this was a rite of passage which made a lasting impression. In 1802 James Dede, aged 39, appeared before a Berkshire magistrate to request settlement rights in the parish of Thatcham where he was then living with his two children, following the death of his wife. As was usual in settlement examinations he gave an account of his previous employment. Dede had been bound apprentice, aged 14, by the Westminster French Refugee Charity and, ‘well remembers’ signing and sealing the indenture.²⁹ Practical, legal, personal and, at times, financial considerations reinforced the importance attached to the indenture which would be kept safely and retained for future reference.

In 1799 James Barry Bird in an attempt to provide clear guidance to the employment of children and young people, devoted a lengthy and detailed section to apprentices and to the function of the indenture. *The Laws Respecting Masters and Servants*

²⁶ Settlement was entitlement to receive poor relief where one had gained that status. For most children this was acquired at birth through their father and in some circumstances their mother. As foundlings were cut off from parents on being received into the Foundling Hospital and given a new name their settlement had to be acquired by themselves; this was most practically done by eligibility through indentured service. For entitlement to settlement see, Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging, Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 81-6

²⁷ Ruth McClure, *Coram’s Children: the London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 127

²⁸ *The Whole Duty of Man*: a devotional work first published anonymously. Subsequent editions were produced throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century.

²⁹ Cited in Peter Durrant (ed.), *Berkshire Overseers’ Papers, 1654-1834*, Berkshire Record Society, 3, (1997), 176

included examples of apprenticeship indentures for various trades. All committed the master to the provision of food, drink, clothing, washing, lodging and training, in some form of wording.³⁰ Printed, standardised indentured forms had existed from the mid-seventeenth century for all types of apprenticeships. The Blue Coat School indentures were hand-written but the wording was much the same and remained so for many years. This consistency encouraged widespread familiarity with the terms of contracts as did issues and disputes arising from indenture agreements. Appeals to summary courts concerning runaway apprentices or negligence by masters might turn on reference to the original indenture. Statements releasing apprentices from a long term of service or transfers to new masters clarified the new situation in much the same way. In March 1805 Keziah Bishop ‘aged thirteen or thereabouts’ was transferred to Richard Jervis of Stoney Stanton in Leicestershire. Her previous employer was in the county gaol but before being taken there he ‘did deliver the said apprentice and also the Indenture of the apprentice to the Overseers of Leire’ so that poor law officials could find a new place for her (which, according to the indenture, the overseer was bound to do). Keziah was subsequently formally discharged from John Fossill’s service and from ‘anything in the indenture of Apprenticeship made betwixt them, or otherwise howsoever.’ A new indenture, drawn up on the same day, set out the new relationship.³¹ Such incidents meant that many people had some acquaintance with the legal niceties of the indenture and of what ought to constitute a ‘reasonable’ life for an apprentice.

Indentures for children placed into domestic service by the poor law overseers or charity officials closely resembled those for all other apprentices: they were intended to offer a guarantee of ‘reasonable’ living conditions. Less specific and less detailed than those drawn up for those entering more prestigious trades they were nevertheless concerned with the same basic concerns; the conduct of the apprentice; the obligation of the master/mistress to supply food, drink, clothing, lodging, and washing facilities; an understanding that the apprentice would receive appropriate

³⁰ Bird, James Barry, *The Laws Respecting Masters and Servants* (London: W. Clarke, 1799), 65-74

³¹ Apprenticeship indenture for Keziah Bishop, 4 March 1805, ROLLR, DE1425/97/uu; Certificate of transfer for Keziah Bishop, 4 March 1805, ROLLR, DE 1425/97/tt .Transfers due to the imprisonment of the master were not uncommon (often for debt) or if the master died or was ill. Sometimes a transfer took place when a placement had not worked well in the hope that the new relationship would be a happier one.

training. Like those drawn up by the guilds they set down strict moral standards to be observed by the apprentice and expectations of loyalty and obedience. Certainly there were aspects of these indentures which signalled a second class status: the parish wardens of St. Margaret's in Leicester, for example, did 'put and place' an apprentice in the late eighteenth century as 'a *poor* child' of their parish. At the Blue Coat School in Birmingham the children were sent out as 'one of the *poor* Boys/Girls of the Charity School' (my italics).

Premiums, where they are mentioned, were much lower for paupers and charity children. (For some of the latter premiums were not given as a point of principle. This was usually, as in the case of the Foundling Hospital to avoid attracting applicants for apprentices who were concerned to make a quick financial gain).³² For some going to domestic service the second class status was given further emphasis. When Judith Tomerlin was apprenticed to Thomas Bown in St Nicholas parish, Leicester in 1781 her new occupation was at least to be dignified as 'the Art of all manner of Housewifery'. Ann Maria Collins, however, sent from the Birmingham Blue Coat School in 1783 was, more mundanely, 'to learn all the necessary Business of an Household servant'.³³ Apprentices from the School assigned to Birmingham small trades such as button and buckle-making, jewellery, toy-making and ivory comb making (to name but a few) were to learn 'the Art Trade or Mystery' of their master's trade. Domestic service was in almost all cases denied this more elevated description. Stamp duty was also lower for parish or charity apprentices who 'shall be stamped with a sixpenny stamp only'. This contrasted with the 7s imposed on 'regular' apprenticeship indentures.³⁴ The lower rate, however, was intended to encourage masters to take charity and pauper children rather than to act as an indication of status.

Given the many manifestations of domestic service and the constraints imposed by the indenture, it is not surprising that numerous children, boys and girls, became

³² There was some departure from this policy during and after the period of the General Reception (1756-60); the Governors were under pressure from parliament to receive a much larger number of children and therefore in subsequent years to find more placements for apprentices. Premiums were also given to those taking apprentices with disabilities.

³³ Indenture for Judith Tomerlin, 27 April 1781, ROLLR, 23D52/10/28; Indenture for Ann Maria Collins, 5 February 1783 Birmingham City Archive (hereafter BCA), MS1622/2/6

³⁴ Bird, *Masters and Servants*, 29

household servants by means of less extensive arrangements. Such contracts were less uniform or formulaic than the indenture but the similarities are clear. In James Barry Bird's example of an agreement between a master and menial servant William Styles undertook to provide Walcot Man, his live-in servant, with 'meat, drink washing and lodging'. Agreements such as those Frances Hamilton wrote down in her diary or which appear in the accounts section for the diary of the Reverend John Longe of Coddensham-cum-Crowfield in Suffolk, closely reflected the language and terms of official documents. Longe's commitment to John Brunwin, 'no wages as I cloath him' echoed very much the terms for a pauper apprentice since the cost of his food and lodging was taken for granted for a live-in servant and subsumed in the total servant bill for the year.³⁵ The entitlements of the child in these private agreements were most often shared between master/mistress, parent or kin, as in the case of Parson Woodforde's boys, but the basic provisions remained much the same. Often a small annual fee was included and sometimes an extra reward or service which reflected the particular circumstances of the child or followed local practice. The usual pay for Woodforde's boy was 2 guineas a year - a sum which remained the same in 1798 as in 1768. John Walkden who entered a second employment in his late teens got the usual meat, drink washing and lodging, a wage of £3 and in addition 'Tailors board and thread', that is to say the cost of repairs to his clothes.³⁶ Sometimes payment came only after the first year of service.

The absence of any written record of agreement, so often the case when children were placed by parents or kin, could lead to much contention or at least confusion (another reason why charities opted for an indenture). Thomas Claverly, appearing before a settlement examination in Berkshire in November 1770, testified that aged about eleven he had been hired out to serve Sir George Willy at Devizes in Wiltshire. The arrangements of the hiring had been made by his father who was now dead; Claverly, himself, had no knowledge of the details or even the length of time spent with his master (crucial information in settlement cases).³⁷ The poor, however, were often well versed in the legal niceties of settlement; individual labourers defended

³⁵ Michael Stone (ed.) *The Diary of John Longe 1765-1834*, Suffolk Record Society, 51 (2008), 179

³⁶ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 49, 559; R.W. Hoyle, 'Farmer, Nonconformist Minister and Diarist: the World of Peter Walkden of Thornley in Lancashire', *Northern History*, 47. 2 (2011), 279

³⁷ Settlement examination for Thomas Claverly, 19 November 1770, cited in Durant, *Berkshire Overseers*, 158

their claims effectively and Carolyn Steedman found examples in the accounts of solicitors' notes of feisty domestic workers who presented informed accounts of their settlement rights.³⁸

Feeding the child servant: 'meat and drink'

The promise to feed the incoming apprentice was the first and most pressing of the responsibilities taken on by the master or mistress. For some poor law officials this was indeed the chief *raison d'être* for the placement since it relieved the parish of the most expensive element of expenditure (provided the child was not seriously unwell); even with the cost of clothing and the premium it was judged to be an economic expediency in the long-term.³⁹ If nothing else, it released money to provide food for the poor children who continued to arrive – a particular problem in the late eighteenth century. Such considerations were not absent in the case of charities: they were not under pressure or censure from rate-payers but funds were often dwindling and subscribers keen to know how their money was being spent. Poor parents with several children, or widows, who could not afford a formal apprenticeship, might find a place in domestic work for an elder son or daughter because, even if the child got no wages, the family had one less person to feed. The corollary was that just as some were relieved of a financial burden, those taking the children were shouldering an addition to household costs which was often unwelcome.

The indenture and the individual contracts which mirrored the indenture provided a point of reference, however imprecise, for the needs of growing children. There was a remarkable consistency in the wording as well as the format of indentures used by poor law officials, charities or in private arrangements: typically the commitment was to provide 'sufficient' meat and drink with, in some cases, the additional caveat that these should be 'fit for an apprentice'. Frances Hamilton mentioned 'cloathes' first in the diary entry which recorded her contract with George Shattock, but the

³⁸ See Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, especially chapter 3; Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 111-28. It was through settlement disputes that the poor laws affected so many late eighteenth-century lives, 110

³⁹ See Joan Lane, *Coventry Apprentices and their Masters, 1781-1806*, Dugdale Society, 33 (1983), x

items were otherwise the same and concerned a basic standard of living.⁴⁰ Here, of course, the consistency ended since these were terms which could be implemented in countless ways and with positive or negative interpretations. Was a sufficiency 'for an apprentice' rather less than that for the rest of the household? Captain Vernon's stable boys, for example, recruited chiefly from poor London boys, were sure to receive a generous 'sufficiency' (indenture or not) since only this would give them the stamina needed for their exacting regime and Vernon's racing reputation.⁴¹ But were girls, charged with less physically demanding tasks (or so it was argued), in need of less sustenance than boys? Those resentful of having to take a pauper apprentice, those hoping to get the maximum benefit from a cheap maidservant, could pare down 'sufficiency' to bare subsistence. Even worse were cases like that of Mary Culverhouse, a parish apprentice who died from starvation (and ill-usage) in 1768 in the hands of her mistress.⁴²

Much, of course, depended on the economic resources of the host establishment. This, as we have seen, varied enormously. Thomas Holcroft's account of his breakfast as a thirteen year old Newmarket stable boy in the late 1750s provides some guide to the kind of ingredients which a growing child was believed to need, at least before the price rises of the 1790s: milk porridge, cold meat, cheese, bread with 'plentiful draughts of beer'.⁴³ This came in a greater abundance, variety and quality than could have been provided by many households, especially in urban areas, even before the price rises. Captain Vernon could sustain the cost of his impressive breakfast and more besides. Boys with genial masters like Parson Woodforde and the Reverend Cole of Bletchely (Buckinghamshire) who kept a generous table were also likely to fare well as were those of employers like John Longe the Suffolk clergyman and wealthy landowner. His household expenditure (of which £730 was for bed and board for ten servants in 1813) would have been barely affected by the appetites of the girls taken in from the local house of industry however much they ate. He reckoned to spend 4s a day (so £1 4s a week) on bed and board for his servants in

⁴⁰ Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 69

⁴¹ Thomas Holcroft, *Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft Written by Himself and Continued To the Time of his Death From His Diary*, Vol. 1 (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1816), 109

⁴² R.F. Hunnisett (ed.), *Wiltshire Coroners' Bills, 1752-1796*, Wiltshire Record Society, 36 (Devizes, 1981), Case 569, 29 January 1768, 34. Mary's mistress was acquitted.

⁴³ Holcroft, *Memoirs*, 109-10

1813 which may be contrasted with the weekly cost of 1s 6d for supporting a child in a Coventry parish in the period up to 1805.⁴⁴ Even allowing for the price rises of the Napoleonic War era, this suggests a startling contrast in the quality and quantity which a child servant might receive and parishes seeking out masters to take apprentices could hardly insist that poorer households provide higher standards than their own. Longe's parish operated a system whereby children from the house of industry were taken in by rate-payers on a rota basis.⁴⁵ Other such children would have been sent to far less wealthy rate-payers with less to spend on food and drink.

The insistence on 'meat' in the indenture shows an attempt to set a certain standard whatever the means of the household. Meat was considered an important element in diet and one which carried status. Gregory King's belief that in the late seventeenth century meat was absent from the diet of half the population is frequently noted.⁴⁶ Craig Muldrew argues, however, that by the second half of the eighteenth century meat was eaten regularly by a much wider section of the population, including labouring families when the male bread-winner was in employment.⁴⁷ There were also many ingenious ways in which poor families, especially in the country-side, supplemented bread, potato and oatmeal diets with meat items of the kind which never made their way even to lower middle-class tables in urban areas.⁴⁸ Children from Charity Schools and workhouses would usually have been given meat, at least in the form of gruel, once or twice a week. Samuel Bamford, whose father supervised the manufacture of cotton goods in a Manchester workhouse, noted with approval, that boiled beef was included in the dinner time meal of the inmates. The Foundling Hospital served meat dishes three times a week with roast meat on Sundays.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, 55, 205, xxxix; Lane, *Coventry Apprentices*, 10

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 55

⁴⁶ See e.g. Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England, 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 120; Lorna Weatherill (ed.) *Account Book of Richard Latham 1724-1767*, Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), xxii

⁴⁷ Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), passim

⁴⁸ Crawford, *Parents*, 120-1

⁴⁹ Muldrew, *Food*, 91-3; W.H. Chaloner (ed.), *The Autobiography of Samuel Bamford*, Vol. I. *Early Days* (London, Frank Cass and Co., 1967), 74; Ruth McClure, *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 196-7

Muldrew believes that servants can be included in this generous meat-eating culture. Parson Woodforde's household of seven people, which included five servants, consumed between 7lbs and 10lbs of meat a week. Frances Hamilton managing a more modest income, still provided each of her household of seven with 4.25 lbs of meat per week. Her household usually contained at least three young people including pauper apprentices engaged in a predominantly domestic role. There is no indication in her diary or accounts that they fared less well than the others when it came to eating.⁵⁰ Meat was so abundant in the Bargeny estate in Lowland Scotland that twelve year old John MacDonald was able to persuade the kitchen staff to give him some for the wild creature menagerie he nurtured in his spare time.⁵¹ Charity institutions and parishes had reason, therefore, to expect, meat to be included in the diet of the children they placed out. Poor parents who could not provide meat for children themselves might have hoped that its provision would be one of the benefits of placing their child in a higher income household, at least before the serious price rises of the 1790s. Muldrew's figures, however, do not account for the food consumption of the poorer households or precarious small businesses to which many pauper children were assigned.

As food prices rose and charities addressed financial difficulties in the 1790s, diet, including meat was an obvious target for economies. By 1800 the Foundling Hospital, had replaced solid meat with cheap rice dishes and more gruel. Then – as now – a convenient theory arrived to endorse the new policy: beef, and also cheese, were not good for the delicate stomach of a child.⁵² Most families taking in servants from the parish or charity agencies (poor law rate payers, small businesses as in Birmingham, gentry families) were doubtless unaware of the latest wisdom on nutrition but would have been affected on a smaller scale by food prices. Some, perhaps, took comfort from the knowledge that their apprentices had become less accustomed to meat and, as price rises continued, much more besides. At the Foundling Hospital, for example, wheat-barley had replaced wheaten bread and in

⁵⁰ Muldrew, *Food*, 88, SRO, DD/FS/5/9; DD/FS/7/5 citing Steedman, *Master and Servant*, 17

⁵¹ John MacDonald, *Travels in Various Parts of Europe, Asia and Africa; During a series of Thirty Years and Upwards* (London: printed for the author, 1790), 48

⁵² Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 181

times of scarcity was omitted altogether.⁵³ Apprentices leaving the Foundling Hospital, however, might have missed in their new households the occasional fresh fruit and vegetables which they had helped to grow in the Hospital grounds.

‘Meat and drink’ could, of course, be given a Biblical interpretation as it was by unscrupulous or impoverished employers. Mary Ashford, an orphan who had entered service when she was thirteen, was shocked by the wretchedness of the diet she was allowed by the pious daughter of a ‘Scotch earl’ who had fallen on hard times. Mary’s main source of meat came from the left-over chops and steaks on the lodger’s plate which she used ‘to eke out my very frugal dinners’. Her mistress remained unsympathetic to complaints, promising instead to teach her to play the spinet which, she assured Mary, was best learnt on an empty stomach. Mary could contrast this with an earlier and far from wealthy household where, ‘I was well-fed – living just the same as they did, and partaking of whatever they had’.⁵⁴ Whatever the general abundance of meat in the population it was rare enough in poorer homes at any time, but continued to be highly prized. This explains the attraction for twelve year old John Bezer, in the 1820s, when his new employment came with ‘victuals’. His employer, a superintendent of Sunday Schools, kept two ham and beef shops ‘and eating meat was such a novelty’.⁵⁵

An affluent household did not, of course, guarantee a good standard of living. The ‘genteel’ daughter of a Scotch earl who kept Mary Ashford perpetually hungry might have come down in the world but she had enough money to maintain an exotic menagerie of the kind popular with eighteenth century households and which was but possible only for the fairly affluent.⁵⁶ William Cobbett, who had a comfortable income and was generally sympathetic to the plight of the poor, resented in 1816 the imposition of Jane Collins, a ten year old pauper apprentice, and not least because he had to feed and clothe her.⁵⁷ There is no suggestion that she was either badly treated or underfed but she was hardly a welcome addition to the Cobbett family who

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 181

⁵⁴ Ashford, *Victualler’s Daughter*, 29-30, 23

⁵⁵ Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism*, 165

⁵⁶ Christopher Plumb, *Georgian Menagerie: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century London* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 43-57.

⁵⁷ Barbara Biddell, ‘The Jolly Farmer: William Cobbett in Hampshire, 1804-1820,’ *Hampshire Papers*, 15 (1999), 16

happily passed her on to a new household when they left for America. As a general rule, however, it is probably safe to conclude that the economic resources of a household were the main factors determining the diet of children placed as servants. Regional variations complicate the picture and there was probably always more food available in the country-side and more variety in urban households.⁵⁸

Some children developed their own strategies for getting more to eat. As well as getting meat for his menagerie, John MacDonald won access to extra food by endearing himself to the kitchen staff. He helped out in the evenings (beyond the call of duty for a postilion) and the biggest treat came when the first and second cooks were out and he could make pancakes.⁵⁹ For MacDonald these were ‘extras’ which the Hamilton household could well afford. John Carter’s tactics were similar when hired in a much less affluent draper’s family. As there was never enough food at home, he befriended the maidservants, ‘very worthy persons’, who had access to the kitchen and ‘very frequently gave me what was very acceptable to a hungry boy’.⁶⁰ A perpetually hungry Mary Ashford secretly ate, bit by bit, the lodger’s special cheese stored in the larder. His anger, however, was directed towards the mistress, from whom he claimed compensation, ‘for if the girl had been properly fed, he did not think she would have taken his cheese.’⁶¹

Thomas Kingston, a household servant for the Reverend Lendon, was less fortunate. Returning from an errand ‘he had some halfpence to return to his Master of which he detained the penny to buy some apples’. Lendon took Thomas to the Public Office in Bow Street where he was briefly imprisoned. The story has a heartening conclusion. The incident (which had occurred five years earlier) came to light in 1819 when Kingston was petitioning the Foundling Hospital for the gratuity granted to

⁵⁸ In 1797 Sir Frederick Eden promoted the ‘northern’ diet of home-baked oaten or barley bread against the bought wheaten bread which he associated with the south of England’s ‘lazy’ and indulgent lifestyle amongst the poor. Recent research suggests that other circumstances were involved; the effect of enclosure; the availability of dairy produce; the pattern of working women’s lives. An analysis of male convicts going to Australia, shows that those from counties with the more nutritious ‘northern’ diet were taller than those from elsewhere. Children placed in poorer households would have been affected accordingly. See Sarah Horrell and Deborah Oxley, ‘Hasty pudding versus tasty bread: regional variations in diet and nutrition during the Industrial Revolution,’ *Local Population Studies*, 89 (2012), 9-30

⁵⁹ MacDonald, *Travels*, 48-9

⁶⁰ A.F.J. Brown (ed.) *Essex People 1750-1900, from their Diaries, Memoirs and Letters* Essex Record Office Publications 59 (Chelmsford: 1972), 106

⁶¹ Ashford, *Victualler’s Daughter*, 32

apprentices who successfully completed their terms. Lendon withheld his support citing the earlier episode. The visiting Hospital secretary, however, was not without sympathy or concern for the boy, finding his work load and the nature of the tasks he was expected to do, to be unreasonable. The prevaricating and fiercely moralistic letters written by Lendon can only have helped his apprentice's case. In the event, the Hospital Committee decided to award Thomas Kingston four of the possible five guineas – perhaps understanding his craving for his lost Foundling Hospital apples as well as his unjust work load. Meanwhile, they found him a position in another household.⁶²

For some there were occasional treats: James Newton gave his two boy servants Giles and Will 'each of them a Plumb Cake' on a trip to Oxford.⁶³ Treats for Parson Woodforde's already well-provided-for household were of a different kind. On the evening of November 29th 1798, following the defeat of the French at Alexandria, he gave his servants 'some strong-Beer and some Punch to drink Admiral Lord Nelson's health on his late grand Victory'⁶⁴ There is no suggestion that his current boy, Barnabas Woodcock, (then aged between thirteen and fourteen) was excluded from the celebration. Here, as at other times, Woodforde was keen to encourage respect and loyalty in his household and did so by methods likely to win favour. John MacDonald enjoyed occasional family celebrations on the Bargeny estate when the servants were given wine, punch and gin.⁶⁵

From time to time the voice of the child does sound out on the question of food even if it comes to us through a later autobiography or memoir. For many children it was a daily and vital preoccupation. Memories of an inadequate or unsavoury diet rankled years after the apprenticeship or contract ended, just as occasions of unexpected bounty were cherished. 'I was sure I would always think of a famine when I thought of her place' Mary Ashford said, maintaining that her mistress's pet monkey had fared better than had she.⁶⁶ John MacDonald savoured the memory of the meat and

⁶² Application for gratuities, Thomas Kingston, 1818-1821, London Metropolitan Archive (hereafter LMA), A/FH/A12/7/11/1-

⁶³ Gavin Hannah (ed.), *The Deserted Village: The Diary of an Oxfordshire Rector, James Newton of Nuneham Courtenay 1736-86* (Stroud: Allan Sutton, 1992), 27 April, 1761, 98

⁶⁴ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 570

⁶⁵ MacDonald, *Travels*, 55

⁶⁶ Ashford, *Victualler's Daughter*, 29

broth he ate in Leith because, at that point in his existence, it was so rare a treat.⁶⁷ Jane Humphries considers food to have been an important force motivating the working boys whose autobiographies she discusses.⁶⁸ Some, like John Bezer, moved on to new work in pursuit of better food or the means by which they might obtain it. Many children were also well aware that they were better fed in domestic service than ever they had been at home or in their institutions. For the most part it was the poorest of children – orphans and the children of widows and other single women who, lacking the funds for more prestigious apprenticeships, were likely to be found in domestic work; hunger had often been a constant feature of their earlier lives. Thomas Holcroft noted the general enthusiasm for the stable boy's breakfast, adding 'what then may not be said of mine, who had been so long used to suffer hunger, and so seldom found the means to satisfy it?'⁶⁹ John MacDonald could contrast the abundance of Lady Hamilton's kitchen with the diet of pottage and milk which he could sometimes beg on his journey from the Highlands to Dundee or the 'stinking venison', he ate in a gentleman's house in Edinburgh where, before the age of nine, he was engaged to turn the spit.⁷⁰ John James Bezer was aware of how much better fed he was by his ham and beef shop owner than when he lived with his mother on his warehouse wages supplemented by 3s from the parish.⁷¹ John Castle, a silk weaver of Colchester, believed that the poverty of his childhood had conditioned him to the meagre diet which was all he could provide in the early years of his second marriage; it was hard, however, for his young wife 'who had been used to plenty at service'.⁷²

Clothing the child servant

Clothing was an item of considerable importance for those entering domestic service. It fulfilled a practical need but also indicated respectability or its absence. Pauper and charity children usually began their apprenticeship with a new set of clothing provided by the authority responsible for placing them. Boys left the London

⁶⁷ MacDonald, *Travels*, 12

⁶⁸ Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 244

⁶⁹ Holcroft, *Memoirs*, 109-10

⁷⁰ MacDonald *Travels*, 21

⁷¹ Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism*, 165

⁷² Brown, *Essex People*, 122

Foundling Hospital with a coat, waistcoat, breeches, three shirts, two pairs of stocking and two pairs of shoes. Girls set out with a coat, two petticoats, three shifts, three day caps, two bibs and aprons two pairs of stockings, two pairs of shoes and a hat.⁷³ This was generous, if utilitarian provision, designed to maintain the Hospital's concern for cleanliness and sobriety as well as to set a standard for the receiving household. It was probably one reason why employers were prepared to take foundling apprentices without a premium. Clothes were expensive items to purchase and boots and shoes particularly so. Thereafter, in accordance with the terms of the indenture, these became the master's responsibility, but they were spared the initial outlay. Other charities generally sent children away with less but it was 'less of the same'; girls from the Leeds Charity School had an almost identical set of clothes but with, for example, only one petticoat and one pair of stockings and shoes.⁷⁴

Poor law overseers were accused of ruthlessly cost-cutting expediencies; they had, of course, less to spend and were under pressure to keep costs down. They seem, nevertheless, to have provided one each of the same items except that coats or cloaks were thought to be unnecessary for girl apprentices on the grounds that they were generally employed indoors.⁷⁵ This is further evidence that the great majority of girls sent out by parish officials were destined for domestic service and to roles distinctly different from boys. Steven King has suggested that the reputation of overseers for parsimony, when clothing the poor, was not always deserved. He argues that some parishes could show a 'generous and sensitive' approach when providing clothing. A sense of civic concern, especially after 1750 encouraged them to spend a significant percentage of the poor law rates on clothing and shoes (sometimes a fifth) allowing them to purchase well-made articles of good quality materials and to replace them frequently.⁷⁶ The vestry minutes for Wimbledon in the 1750s suggest that children, no less than others, benefited from what was a generally accepted standard of decent clothing.⁷⁷ Wimbledon was certainly not exceptional. For example, the inventory for the Workhouse Memorandum Book for Market Harborough, gives details of 'wareing apparel' purchased for eleven year old Sarah Hill in June 1791 which

⁷³ McClure, *Coram's Children*, 193-4

⁷⁴ Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 29

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 29

⁷⁶ Steven King, 'Reclothing the English Poor, 1750-1840', *Textile History*, 33. 1 (2002), 37-47

⁷⁷ King, 'Reclothing the English Poor,' 42

resemble very closely the outfits which were standard for pauper apprentice girls of much the same age; 3 shifts, 2 peddlecoats (sic), 2 gowns, 1 pair of stockings and 1 pair of shoes.⁷⁸

John Styles' examination of the clothing policy in Wimbledon (1745-48) finds, indeed, evidence of a special concern for children: 85 per cent of the clothing provision went to them. The particular preference, however, was for those aged from ten to twelve - a policy which leads Styles to consider the motives behind the more generous provision for this age group. Far from altruistic, it was often, 'driven by rate-payers desire to place them in employment' he believes - 'a conscious parish policy' designed to make poor children of the parish more acceptable to masters and so relieve the burden on the rates.⁷⁹ Other evidence from the Wimbledon records strengthens Styles' interpretation: it was not unusual for masters and mistresses, hoping to reduce their own costs, to make their acceptance of an apprentice dependent on the provision of clothing. In 1755, for example, a woman living in Cleare Market was prepared to take Elizabeth English into service provided the parish would provide her with clothes 'in a decent Christian-like manner'.⁸⁰ This presented the overseers with a powerful incentive to come up with the goods - and perhaps those of a better standard if these comments implied a criticism of the regular issue. The vestry, in turn, imposed its own conditions in negotiations with parents: in 1748 Ann Lewer was to be allowed '2 shifts, 2 aprons, 2 caps, and a petticoat', but only if her mother consented to Ann being bound out for a year. Without this consent she was 'not to be allowed anything'.⁸¹ This seems on a par with the policy towards parents in Wimbledon and elsewhere, who were denied relief if they refused to allow their children to be apprenticed.⁸² Whether driven by financial constraints or ruthlessness, this looks like strategic bargaining. Styles' conclusion (based on an extensive study of numerous parishes), that poor law policy officials were, for the most part, far from generous or sensitive in their clothing

⁷⁸ Market Harborough Workhouse Memorandum Book, ROLLR, DE1212/6, 4

⁷⁹ John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 267-9

⁸⁰ F.M. Cowe, *Wimbledon Vestry Minutes, 1736, 1743-1788*, Surrey Record Society, 25 (1964), 4 May 1755, 29.

⁸¹ Cowe, *Wimbledon Vestry Minutes*, 13 March 1747, 9

⁸² Cowe, *Wimbledon Vestry Minutes*, John Lucas, 25 November 1750, 18; see discussion in Crawford, *Parents*, 157, 215 and Pamela Horn, *Flunkeys and Scullions: Life Below Stairs in Georgian England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), 116

policy, serves only to underline the importance attached to clothing for apprentices for whom an exception was made. Parishes had to balance the demands of decent clothing with the need for long-term economies and apprentices benefited from both expediencies. If apprentices were sent to their placements in drab, utilitarian clothes these were nevertheless more abundant and often made of better materials than those issued to their parents and younger siblings.

A more positive interpretation is to see the new clothing as an attempt to symbolise a new start for the children and to set a standard for the receiving household. Most parish indentures committed the employer to providing ‘double Apparel of all sorts’, ‘(that is to say) a good new suit for the Holy Days, and another for Working Days’ at the end of their term of service. This was intended to be ‘good and new; it completed the master’s side of the apprenticeship bargain and allowed the newly qualified worker to move on in a respectable outfit. Masters were sometimes reluctant to fulfil this obligation but it was a well-established convention. Failure to fulfil its obligations offended against the unofficial ‘decency of apparel’ code and could reflect adversely on the reputation of a master. It might invite a challenge from his departing apprentice, by now old enough to be less in awe of him and armed with knowledge of the commitment made in the indenture.⁸³ Blue Coat governors responded readily to appeals from younger apprentices; ensuring that decent clothing was maintained for those known to be their apprentices was important to their reputation. Charities were usually in a better position than poor law authorities to implement such measures and might have helped to maintain general standards for pauper apprentices too in locations where their own apprentices were conspicuous.

Those requesting help from poor law authorities to find placements for their children could not, however, assume that the parish would provide clothes. Phoebe Joice of Ingatestone, Essex, attempting to strike a bargain with the overseer James Read, wrote in 1824 requesting help for her 10 year old son, ‘You will try and furnish the Boy with a Light Place to go with Errands and Make himself Useful and I will buy

⁸³ Blue Coat Committee Book, Michael Broome, 22 October 1787, 59; William Bradley, 18 April 1791, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4. Both boys referred to the commitment in their indentures to new clothing ‘at the expiration of their time’

him what Cloaths I possibly Can as may stand in need of.’⁸⁴ Such letters indicate how important clothing was for children whose parents sought places for them in service and who could not rely on help from an affluent or well-disposed employer. In December 1818 Isaac Milbourn of Great Wakering in Essex wrote to the overseer of Great Dunmow to explain his dilemma:

I have got One of my Girls a place & I cannot buy her no clothes and I hope you Will be so good as to buy some for her, if she has no Clothes her mistress Say she Must come away for she cannot do without Cloths and I am not Able to buy any for her’⁸⁵

David Rivenall’s request to the overseer of Chelmsford in 1828 was more specific but expressed the same concern, ‘I could get my two Girls Places if you will send them a pair of shoes a Peace’ A similar request was made to Wimbledon parish in August 1824 by another would-be mistress, a Mrs Palmer of Romford, on behalf of Mary Ardley. She could, she said, take Mary into her service if the Chelmsford overseer provided for her clothes. The records show that Mary was allowed £1 ‘on going into service’. The successful outcome must have prompted a Mr Thompson of Romford to write on behalf of Mary’s sister, Sarah, in December 1825 with the same request. In an additional comment, calculated to win the approval of the poor law authorities, Thompson noted that Mary ‘has now procured a Settlement by her Service in her own right’. (She had qualified by serving a complete year in continuous service which one might do from the age of fourteen). Not only had Mary proved to be a steady worker – she had also relieved the Chelmsford authorities of responsibility for her upkeep should she become destitute. Thompson’s unwritten suggestion was that Sarah would do the same. Soon after, the overseers sent £1.⁸⁶ In clothing as in other matters, applicants became well-versed in the best way to secure poor law assistance.

While in private arrangements clothing might be the responsibility of the parent or a negotiable item for which responsibility was shared, children securing employment

⁸⁴ Thomas Sokoll (ed.), *Essex Pauper Letters 1731-1837*, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 30 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 192-3

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 513

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 268, 170

in wealthier households could usually be sure of generous provision by the master. The ability to demonstrate rank and income through livery was a source of considerable pleasure to those who could afford it: the Reverend Cole of Bletchley in Buckingham, the first in his family to provide livery, was delighted that he ‘might chuse what I pleased’ for style, colour and materials.⁸⁷ Boys were amongst those who benefitted since postilions and personal servant boys were public manifestations of the household status; much of John MacDonald’s appeal lay in the sight of a small boy, dressed in eye-catching livery, handling the family horses with consummate skill. Tailors made frequent visits to the Bletchley Parsonage of William Cole; on 10 April 1767 they were there to make Jem Wood, Cole’s boy servant, a coat and waistcoat.⁸⁸ In 1811 when the Reverend Longe agreed to clothe John Brunwin his supplier fitted out his liveried servants in brown cloth coats with orange cuffs, capes, waistcoats and black velveteen breeches. We cannot be sure that Brunwin qualified for livery – his tasks may have been too menial – but he had received a great coat the year before and probably a decent one because in 1815 Longe spent 16s 6d on a great coat for the servant lad who replaced him.⁸⁹ Other boys engaged in heavy outdoor work benefitted in the same way, where money permitted. Sometimes particular concern was shown for an especially young servant. Amongst the purchases for trout, pig, lobster, and the butcher’s bill in the household accounts for Lord Carnarvon’s Minchendon estate we find the payment of 7s for two pairs of stockings bought for ‘little Bob: your Lordships orders’. Shoes had already been bought for ‘Little Bob’ again at Carnarvon’s request and replaced or supplemented on two further occasions in 1760. On 21 March 1760 (this time alongside the muffins and raspberry puffs), ‘Buckells for little bob’ appear, presumably to set off the shoes and stockings.⁹⁰ No other items of clothing appear for servants or anyone else in this account: little Bob seems to have been the particular concern of the kitchen.

James Newton’s boys, at Sutton Courtenay were liveried. We know little about what form it took or its cost but his boys were clearly intended to symbolise his status.

⁸⁷ Francis Griffin Stokes (ed.), *The Bletcheley Diary of the Reverend William Cole 1765-67* (London: Constable and Cole, 1931), 71

⁸⁸ Stokes, *Bletcheley Diary*, 10 April 1767, 201

⁸⁹ Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, 179, xxxix, 190.

⁹⁰ Huntington Library, ST389, Box 14, 19 June, 1760, 31 December 1759, 22 March 1760, 5 June 1760, 21 March 1760

There are no details of arrangements for clothing made with parents; rather Newton took personal responsibility for any purchases. In January 1760 he bought a length of Russian Drab (a kind of red cloth) which he left with his tailor in Oxford to have made into a frock coat for his lad George Brooks.⁹¹ At the end of the month, in London, he spent time looking for a ‘green surtut’ (surtout or overcoat) for George but seems to have failed, as on other occasions, to find one to his liking. In August 1761 Giles, the new boy, was taken to Balden to be measured for a new livery and in October, while in London, Newton collected buttons for this same livery from a store in London. The following day he bought a velvet cap and a silver tassel also for Giles – all of which suggests that he took the question of clothing seriously and required elegance. At other times he bought shoes, stockings and caps for his boys and on another occasion, cloth to make items of clothing for Giles.⁹² In London, showing further concern for appearances, he ‘Had little John’s hair cut at the three Pigeons’ when he took him into his service in December 1759, presumably to make him conform to Newton’s ideas of what was presentable for a boy who would be accompanying him on his rounds.⁹³

For the employer, livery had other advantages: it was difficult for a runaway to sell or pawn, and more likely that a boy dressed in livery would be identified and caught. In 1764 an item in the 14th April copy of *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* sought the whereabouts of Edward Coleman a postilion who had run away from his post. He was to be identified by his brown livery coat trimmed with blue lace.⁹⁴ When George Brooks left Newton’s service in February 1760, before his contracted time was up his mother called to collect him and ‘took him away without a Coat’. There may have been some pre-arrangement with George’s mother, but a liveried coat would customarily have stayed with the household.⁹⁵ It would not have been much use to George outside.

Households with more modest incomes and aspirations also wished to maintain appearances. Even ‘a bare suspicion of poverty’ in the management of the

⁹¹ Hannah, *Deserted Village*, 80. This is presumably the cheap Russian cloth which Styles tells us was used almost exclusively for children’s clothing, Styles, *Dress*, 393, Footnote 19.

⁹² Hannah, *Deserted Village*, 138, 15, 134

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.73

⁹⁴ Cited in Styles, *Dress*, 292

⁹⁵ Hannah, *Deserted Village*, 82, 88

household, Hester Chapone warned the wives of professional men, would threaten a husband's reputation.⁹⁶ Unable to afford the 'logo' of livery they might nevertheless wish to uphold the badge of respectability, one sign of which was neat, clean and well-kempt servants. The author of *Domestic Management* advised mistresses appointing a new maid to 'enquire into her wardrobe' to ensure that she had 'proper change of linen' as well as stockings and dark coloured gowns.⁹⁷ Tracts and manuals intended for servants gave much the same message. Perhaps, too, there was some survival of the old Sumptuary Laws expressed in the fear that some servants were so finely dressed that they were mistaken for their betters.⁹⁸ Children from charity schools or poor law authorities were unlikely to offend in this respect, but it was possible for masters and mistresses who could afford it to impose their choice of (modest) clothing on a poor child placed by parents. John Trusler advised that the boy servant in a country household should be given no wages and 'cloathed from his master's old wardrobe'.⁹⁹ Trusler's chief concern was to keep costs down but passing down clothing to the servants (a common practice) helped to ensure quality and respectability. Again boys seem to have been favoured thanks to the public and outdoor nature of their work. When Jem Wood was sent by Reverend Cole to deliver cucumbers to Mrs Holt of Loughton, he returned with 'a very good Great Coat' which her son had outgrown.¹⁰⁰

Away from town influences there was probably less pressure to show striking examples of conspicuous consumption but the question of clothing remained important. The agreement, noted in Frances Hamilton's diary, when her plough boy George Shattock became her footman in June 1796 was that she was to provide his clothes as well as 'meat washing and Lodging'.¹⁰¹ Once again, in a private agreement, the provision of clothing was the responsibility of the employer. Despite

⁹⁶ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady*. By Mrs Chapone (London: J. Walter, 1786), 138

⁹⁷ Anon., *Domestic Management or Art of Conducting a Family with Instructions to Servants in General: Addressed to Young Housekeepers* (London: Symonds, 1800?), 24-5

⁹⁸ Defoe was said to have once kissed a chambermaid who was so well-dressed that he mistook her for the mistress. Cited in Dorothy Marshall, *The English Domestic Servant in History*, Historical Association Pamphlet, G13 (1949), 20

⁹⁹ John Trusler, *The Way to be Rich and Respectable: Addressed to Men of Small Fortune* (London: privately printed, 1780), 30

¹⁰⁰ Stokes, *Bletcheley Diary*, 14 July 1766, 70

¹⁰¹ Cited in Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 69

his new title, however, George's clothes were remarkable similar to the serviceable ones provided to apprentices and boy servants: a heavy coat and waistcoat, two shirts, three pairs of stockings and a pair of shoes. The practical and heavy nature of much of the work George continued to do (for example rat-catching around the farm), dictated a robust outfit, 'clothes more likely to be worn for outdoor work than a putative footman'.¹⁰² Later in his short career on the farm he got a number of additional items, including hose, but the only item resembling the elegance of a town footman was a pair of slippers. These were probably intended to protect the interior of Mrs Hamilton's house as much as to fit George for serving at table. Mrs Hamilton was careful to record the agreement about the clothing she had provided: George was 'to return his clothes to me if he turns out untoward'.¹⁰³

The bargains struck between Parson Woodforde and the parents of his boy workers varied somewhat depending perhaps on what Woodforde knew of the local families. The result for boys as far as apparel was concerned was much the same – a coat, waistcoat, shirt, breeches, hat and shoes – which, if provided by Woodforde, might indeed, pass from one boy to the next.¹⁰⁴ What varied was how the responsibility for supplying the clothes was shared (see chapter 1). Woodforde's concerns touching clothing, however, went beyond what formal or informal contracts specified. He treated all his servants, including his occasional workers, to new clothes on several occasions, purchasing them from the same dealers who supplied his own. Nor did he follow the dull strictures of the handbooks: amongst other items in April 1801 he bought 'Coloured Handkerchiefs' for his washerwomen and seventeen yards of pink and white cotton (the new and stylish material of the day) to be made into gowns for his two maids. His boy, Robert Case got 'a Waistcoat-Piece' and 'about a Yard of Woollen'.¹⁰⁵ It was a way of rewarding loyalty and good service as well as an attempt to ensure that the members of his household were presentable in appearance. Woodforde, as in so much else, seems to have been determined to have achieved this with some flair, but not extravagance.

¹⁰² Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 69

¹⁰³ Cited in Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 69

¹⁰⁴ Beresford, *Country Parson*, See for example, 6 April 1768, 49

¹⁰⁵ Beresford, *Country Parson*, 10 March 1801, 601-2

For all the careful specification on clothing it remained a source of contention and emotive reaction from parents and parish alike. Nevertheless, widespread consensus on what was and was not acceptable strengthened the hand of those working to maintain acceptable standards. Clothing was an issue in the saga of Elizabeth Fieldhouse who was sent from the Birmingham Blue Coat School to work as servant to the Reverend Downing and his wife. In September 1782 Elizabeth complained to the School Committee about her treatment in the Downing household. In a somewhat petulant defence of her treatment (his wife was the chief offender) Downing complained that the girl was ‘very dirty and lousy’ which, according to the committee ‘is not to be wondered at, so long as her dress is so mean and paltry’. A particular concern was that ‘she has been without a shift on her back for a month together, greatly to our disgrace.’ Elizabeth was returned to her employers but with the caution that she must be treated well and clothed ‘in a decent manner as a servant ought to be.’ Downing insisted that Elizabeth had taken off her decent clothes before turning up to make her complaint (a frequent claim in disputes taken to court), while the committee continued to insist that her clothing was deficient observing in a letter, ‘it appearing that she has had for some time past only one pair of shoes and those so bad as to be hardly fit to be worn. Other parts of her clothing we hope will not escape your notice.’ A drawn-out correspondence continued but was brought to an end by Elizabeth herself when she left Downing’s service in February 1784 and the School found her a new place with a Mrs Kempson.¹⁰⁶ One might argue that a more concerned committee would have acted more swiftly on Elizabeth’s behalf but the episode shows that the school was insistent that adequate and clean clothing was part of the commitment the receiving household had taken on. It was important too, for its own reputation, to be seen to be enforcing measures to protect the well-being of those for whom it still had responsibility. The Foundling Hospital was even more forthright in dealing with such cases. In December 1787 Sarah Middlesex appeared before the Committee to complain that her mistress (as well as mistreating her), had failed to provide her with ‘proper apparel’. Believing Sarah’s complaint to be well-founded the governors insisted that her master provide the requisite clothes or face

¹⁰⁶ Blue Coat Committee Book, 1782-1784, 5 September 1782, 16 February 1784, CBA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 9-29 passim

prosecution – a reminder that the indenture, which he had accepted on taking a Hospital apprentice, was a document with legal force.¹⁰⁷

Clothing inevitably reflected the great range of servant-employing households, but girls, confined to the house, were particularly prone to suffer inadequate clothing. Elizabeth and Sarah had a body to whom they could appeal. Constance Frost, a pauper apprentice in Westminster who went to fetch water each day in the cold winter of 1783-4, was less fortunate. According to a witness, William Rolls, she was ‘without shoes and stockings . . . for there was neither sole to her shoes or foot to her stockings’ Her clothes ‘were worn off her back almost, and appeared to be very cold, and very dirty and nasty’.¹⁰⁸ She died before any appeal could be made to the promises made in her indenture. Examples may be found of boys in similar circumstances, but the public nature of much work done by boys in domestic service – running errands, cleaning stables, working as pot boys and carrying out the range of duties expected of a foot boy – gave employers and masters cause to dress them at least reasonably well. Francis Place, a tailor’s apprentice in the 1780s, was professionally observant about young men’s fashions. Apprentices, he noticed, all wore breeches, stockings and shoes.¹⁰⁹ Children dressed by charities and poor law providers might be distinguished by the coarse quality of their clothing but for the most part boys apprenticed and hired as servants were kitted out to be part of their street-wise world.

In fiction Humphrey Clinker’s experience confirms several of the practices and perceptions which made decent clothes essential to a servant’s livelihood, especially when in the public eye. Losing his full term apprenticeship as a blacksmith, through the death of his master, Clinker had become a helper and extra postilion in a landlord’s stable but, ‘ill of the ague’ for several months, he was compelled to sell or pawn his clothes to pay for medical treatment. He was dismissed by the landlord because ‘such a miserable object [as he had become] would have brought a discredit upon my house’. When first encountered by the travelling Bramble household (he was by then about twenty) he acted as their ‘stand-in’ postilion but, having ‘ne’er a

¹⁰⁷ Correspondence, 5 December 1787, LMA/A/FH/A03/002/016

¹⁰⁸ *OBP*, version 7.2, 26 April 2016) February 1784, trial of William Wade (t17870225-63), hereafter, *OBP*

¹⁰⁹ Thrale, *Francis Place*, 71, 80

shirt to his back', could not avoid offending Mrs Tabby by 'shewing his bare posteriors'. After receiving a guinea from Matt Bramble, Clinker redeemed his clothes and, 'metamorphosed' as 'a smart fellow, with a narrow brimmed hat, with gold cording, a cut bob, a decent blue jacket, leather breeches and a clean linen shirt'. When, soon after, he was taken on as their footman, he awaited, as befitted his new role, 'a new suit of livery'¹¹⁰

John Styles identifies children as the most outstanding 'involuntary consumers' of clothes in the eighteenth century, but it is difficult to discover what they themselves thought about their clothing.¹¹¹ James Newton's boys were often with him when he bought their clothes but there is no evidence that they could express a preference for their appearance or comfort. Children from poor homes had little or no choice about what clothes they wore, dependent as most were on hand-me-downs from siblings or what their mothers could acquire from the flourishing market in second-hand clothing. The Reverend Isaac Watts believed charity children (including those sent out as apprentices) had little reason to like their clothing which he described as 'of the coarsest kind, and of the plainest form'.¹¹² Much the same could be said of parish hand-outs to apprentices as we have seen. But if children had little say in the choice of their clothing, it does not mean they were indifferent to what they or their companions wore, or that they did not aspire to something better. Catharine Cappe recalled many years later the chagrin she felt when, in the 1750s, fellow pupils at her boarding school were shocked to discover that the outfits she brought with her did not include 'a gauze suit of linen'¹¹³ Returning to the countryside after an illness in Manchester, Samuel Bamford was dismayed to find that his 'trindled shirt', 'all white and nice with the collar and ruffle on my shoulders' caused envy amongst his poorer friends.¹¹⁴ Cappe was a clergyman's daughter and Bamford belonged to a family of respectable artisans; neither reflected the feelings of child servants. All the

¹¹⁰ Tobias Smollett, *Humphrey Clinker*, first published 1771 and equated with third edition, 1783 (London: J.M. Dent, 1961), 77-82

¹¹¹ Styles, *Dress*, especially chapters 15, 16 and 17

¹¹² Cited in Styles, *Dress*, 271-2

¹¹³ Mary Cappe (ed.) *Memoirs of the Life of the Late Mrs Catharine Cappe, Written by Herself* (London, 1822), 46

¹¹⁴ W. H. Chaloner, *Autobiography of Samuel Bamford*, Vol. I (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1967), 78

same we have some idea here of peer pressure and the sense that clothing ‘loomed large’ in the lives of children, including poor children.¹¹⁵

Young servants, not bound by apprenticeship, soon acquired a degree of independence, thanks to their mobility and single status, which was often expressed in the purchase of new clothes. The speed with which girls and young women threw off the sensible outfits imposed on them (either by poverty or their employer’s wishes) or at least attempted to embellish them as soon as they were earning any money, suggests a degree of dissatisfaction. In 1791 Alice Hutchinson ended the year in debt, having spent 92s on items of clothing (her annual wage was 78s). On the evidence of haberdashery sales to servants these might have included hats, stockings and ribbons of silk and satin.¹¹⁶ If worn in post these would have been an affront to the dress code laid down by the household advice writers but the frequency with which masters and mistresses complained of extravagantly dressed young servants suggests that Alice’s purchases were not unusual. Her own employer, the Yorkshire worsted manufacturer Robert Heaton, encouraged such indulgences by providing the credit for her purchases and also for many of the other twenty-eight servant girls who passed through his service between the 1760s and 1790s; all but one of them spent more on clothing than any other commodity.¹¹⁷

The power of servants as consumers, however, was limited and Alice Hutchinson and her fellow servants were not representative of servants as a whole. Money wages (especially for children and those in their teens) were modest or non-existent and in some cases were collected by their parents. Heaton was unusual in allowing his employees easy credit – perhaps his trade gave him an interest in promoting the clothing industry. Employers in lower income households would not have found such a service possible. There also existed a ‘currency of cloth’ in Yorkshire and other cloth manufacturing areas where coinage was in short supply.¹¹⁸ Here, child servants might be paid in clothing, and were even more unlikely to be able to

¹¹⁵ Styles, *Dress*, 322

¹¹⁶ R.C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 107

¹¹⁷ John Styles, ‘Involuntary consumers? Servants and their Clothes in Eighteenth-Century England’ *Textile History*, 33, 1 (2002), 9-19. See also discussion of Heaton’s household in Styles, *Dress*, 280-95 and Richardson, *Household Servants*, 106-7

¹¹⁸ Pat Hudson, ‘The Currency of Cloth’, *Industrious Women*, one day conference to celebrate the life of Katrina Honeyman, 13 September 2012.

exercise any control over what they wore. Unpaid apprentices, dependent on their masters for replacement clothing, had also to wait a good deal longer than hired servants to have any chance of escaping the uniform dreariness of their sartorial shackles or even to express any individual flair in their dress.

For those outside charity and poor law conventions memories of service clothes were often more cheerful, for example, John MacDonald's affection for his postilion's outfit and his recognition of its importance to one of his youth and size. Rather later, when eight year old Hannah Culwick left her charity school in Shifnal to go into service, it was her mother who bought her, ' . . . a new print lilac frock from Birmingham which I thought was the loveliest could be and so it was, for I remember it well and have never seen a better or prettier one since'.¹¹⁹ Thomas Holcroft contrasted his life as a well-dressed stable boy with the deprivations of his early life, 'Now I was warmly clothed, nay gorgeously so, for I was proud of my new livery and never suspected that there was disgrace in it.'¹²⁰ Mary Ashford, 'never given to fine living', nevertheless gave up her trial period as a nursemaid because the poor wages 'would never find me in apparel'. By the age of fifteen she was pleased to have acquired 'a good stock of useful clothes'.¹²¹ By the early nineteenth century things were looking up even for charity and poor law children. In 1816, not so very far behind fashionable trends, boys at the Birmingham Blue Coat School replaced leather breeches with lined corduroy ones, which were more comfortable and hygienic; presumably they went to their apprenticeship placements dressed in the same way.¹²² It was not, however, until the mid-1820s that poor law authorities used cotton clothing to replace uncomfortable, unfashionable, woollens and worsteds for paupers and apprentices, so that to an extent they removed 'what amounted to local sumptuary regulations'.¹²³

Clothing mattered to young servants whether for practical reasons or show. Youth was the opportune time (sometimes the only time) for poor working people to

¹¹⁹ Liz Stanley (ed.), *The Diaries of Hannah Culwick* (London: Virago, 1984), 35. This was in 1841

¹²⁰ Holcroft, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, 111. By the end of the century older men claimed that livery was demeaning.

¹²¹ Ashford, *Victualler's Daughter*, 52, 24

¹²² John D. Myhill, *The Blue Coat. A History of the Blue Coat School* (Warley: Meridan, 1991), 43; Apprenticed to a leather breeches maker in the 1780s, Francis Place witnessed the change to cotton, corduroy and velveteen, Thrale, *Francis Place*, 80

¹²³ Styles, *Dress*, 127, 271

achieve a smart and stylish appearance. What is remarkable is that even those with limited means devoted so much time and ingenuity to acquiring new outfits styled in their own choice, colour and material. Alice Hutchinson's passion for fine accessories led her into debt. Others took more drastic action: the first items purchased by fourteen year old William Wilson with the £16 he had stolen from a house in Yorkshire were a coat, waistcoat, stockings, a silk handkerchief and a wig. Perhaps William hoped to disguise his appearance with new clothes but the silk handkerchief and wig (costing 4s) suggest that his concern was not an entirely practical one.¹²⁴ It is not unreasonable to suppose that many of the ten to fourteen year olds working as servants were much exercised over the issue of their dress and waited with impatience for that 'brief gaudy hour' when they too could hope to make some change to their appearance.¹²⁵

Accommodation and washing

The obligation on the part of the master or mistress to provide lodging and washing services for an apprentice seems to have provided fewer problems than food or clothing for those on either side of the indenture contract. The same was true of less formal arrangements outside of apprenticeship although not all such agreements made the clear commitment found in Frances Hamilton's diary to 'washing and Lodging during [my] pleasure'.¹²⁶ An agreement to take a 'living-in' servant of whatever age was, nevertheless, understood to include the provision of a place to sleep (if not actually an individual bed) and cleaning of clothes unless, as sometimes happened, alternative arrangements were made for a child's parents to be responsible for laundry.

Lodging involved inhabiting the available living space with the rest of the household. If we look at a range of households and domestic spaces from different social groups and income levels, a varied picture emerges concerning both the provision of sleeping accommodation and the extent to which accommodation was

¹²⁴ Styles, *Dress of the People*, 161

¹²⁵ Styles, *Dress*, 323;

¹²⁶ Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 69

shared. Inventories suggests that in large households sleeping accommodation was allocated according to status which means that apprentices and the youngest servants were last in the queue which meant a bed on the floor, sometimes to be folded away each day.¹²⁷ Architectural design and the extension of larger houses indicate a growing concern to segregate servants from the ‘natural’ family in order to protect their privacy. New wings were established to house servants and separate stairs and passages designated for their use. The device of bells to summon servants from afar facilitated this separation.¹²⁸ Child servants, like all others in such establishments, were affected by these developments.

By the mid eighteenth century when servant keeping had reached further down the social scale, accommodation arrangements were more varied and depended, for the most part, on the function of the household and on rank and wealth. For the majority of households, employing no more than one or two servants in crowded domestic spaces, the very concept of privacy or separation, except in the most intimate aspects of life, was unthinkable.¹²⁹ It was in such households that child servants and pauper apprentices could most often be found. In 1776, when John Moss, a thirteen-year apprentice gave evidence against his master at the Old Bailey, he mentioned that he ‘lay in a small bureau bed in the shop’ which he shared with a fellow apprentice. Moss had much to complain about but there was no sense that his sleeping arrangements were any part of his complaint. A bed to oneself was unusual and a ‘locking-box’ the best many could hope for to safeguard what few possessions they had acquired. Privacy ‘turned on the possession of a key’ carefully guarded about the body.¹³⁰

For more prosperous establishments the practical problems of accommodating an extra child should not have been too great. When John MacDonald joined Mr Gibb’s service at the age of nine (where John ‘lived well’), the estate carpenter was called

¹²⁷ See Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: at Home in Georgian England* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), 38

¹²⁸ See discussion of this evidence in Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow and London: Longman, 2000), 76-83

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 75-81

¹³⁰ Amanda Vickery, ‘An Englishman’s Home is his Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth Century House,’ *Past & Present*, 199 (2008), 172

upon to make a bed for him.¹³¹ The Reverend John Longe, who carefully calculated the maintenance costs of his domestic staff, made no specific reference to their sleeping arrangements or cost of bedding.¹³² In 1822 his spacious house in Shrubland Park, Suffolk, could probably have found space for Elizabeth Shilcot, allocated to him from the local house of industry, with little difficulty. A decision as practical as where she should sleep was probably left to his housekeeper; there is no suggestion that Longe himself saw a problem. Life for the eleven or so servants was ‘below stairs’ and certainly more crowded than for (at its highest) the seven family members above. The constraints may have seemed unremarkable, however, to Elizabeth and the two apprentice girls to whom his Servants Wage Book refers in the same year; whether they came from local families or the workhouse they might well have been accustomed to sharing beds.¹³³ As a general rule children were easier to accommodate and less likely to complain than adults.¹³⁴

Parson Woodforde, a clergyman of far more modest means than Longe, also had adequate space to house his servants including the very youngest. On the night of 10th May 1796, his boy, Tim Tooley, who was supposed to have gone to bed, was nowhere in the house. Tim, Woodforde later discovered, had spent the night in the barn in order to be up early enough to go unseen into Norwich to enlist as a soldier. Sleeping in the barn, therefore, was the exception to the normal practice at the parsonage. On occasions the parsonage could accommodate additional servants as in 1786 when Mr Jeanes’s servant lad George England (‘about 15 Years of Age’) ‘dined supped and slept here.’ Some reallocation of rooms was necessary if visitors stayed (as on this occasion Mr and Mrs Jeans did) but there seems little doubt that while servants ate separately in the kitchen, only the horses were assigned to the barn.¹³⁵ Neither Longe nor Woodforde, despite their concern for their servants’ clothing, provide evidence of expenditure on beds or bedding. In 1807, however, Anna Grenville recorded spending £18 6s 8d on the purchase of ‘linen for servant’s

¹³¹ MacDonald, *Travels*, 24

¹³² Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, xxxix

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹³⁴ John Skinner’s new (adult) servants stayed for only one day in July 1802 complaining that the beds were more like farmhouse beds than what was expected in a gentleman’s house, Howard Coombs and Arthur N. Bax (eds), *Journal of a Somerset Rector, John Skinner 1772-1832* (London: John Murray, 1930), 172

¹³⁵ Beresford, *Country Parson*, 522, 291

(sic) beds'. This was an exceptional item of expenditure in a much wealthier household and suggests that bed linen was an expensive item which in many households must have been purchased rarely, mended often and handed down from one generation to another.¹³⁶

At the Birmingham Blue Coat School it was again Reverend Downing who might have been deficient in the provision of acceptable accommodation for the unfortunate Elizabeth Fieldhouse. A letter to Downing from the Governors of the School in 1782, suggested that Elizabeth might be expected to 'behave as well as other servants in general do' if he treated her with 'humanity and tenderness'; this included allowing her 'a good bed to lie on'. This was, perhaps, no more than a re-statement of the apprenticeship bargain rather than a rebuke to Downing and his wife but it does indicate that the school expected this side of the apprenticeship agreement to be fulfilled.¹³⁷ In January 1808 Samuel Vail of Churcham (Gloucestershire) was fined 20s for turning his apprentice, Joseph Barnes, out of his house and refusing to provide for him. Joseph was not thought to be at fault since the fine was applied as his 'recompense'. In the settlement of the issue, reference was made to Joseph's indenture, then in the possession of the Newnham attorney.¹³⁸ Clearly Vail was being held to account for more than his failure to provide accommodation, but the indenture provided the justification for action against him on this as on the other matters.

Elizabeth, like other Blue Coat apprentices, had access to an authority to whom she could appeal; Joseph was supported by the parish officials who wanted to send a message to masters who might in future fail to honour their commitments. There were other apprentices for whom help arrived too late. In 1784 the parish overseer of St Margaret's in Westminster found Constance Frost, household apprentice to William Wade, accommodated in a cold, wet cellar on a bed balanced on rabbit hutches. She died soon after. Her circumstances came to light only because Wade

¹³⁶ *Diary of Anna Elizabeth Grenville*, February 1807, Huntington Library, ST110 v.1; The Reverend Cole regularly maintained the household bed linen, on one occasion asking his tailor to make two quilts 'anew' and calling in local women to 'make and mend my linen', Stokes, *Bletchley Diary*, 280, 275, 278

¹³⁷ Blue Coat School Committee Book, 5th Vol from 1781, 16 September 1782, 10, CBA, MS1622 1/1/1/4

¹³⁸ Irene Wyatt (ed.), *Calendar of Summary Convictions at Petty Sessions 1781-1837*, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 22 (2008), 27/A/6, 7 January 1808, 75

had asked the parish authorities to take the girl back.¹³⁹ From time to time other cases came to light of servant girls confined to cold garrets or cellars with almost no amenities and pitiful provision of bedding. All the same, for those who could draw attention to their circumstances, the indenture was there to remind the master of the apprentice's right to decent shelter - if not exactly a bed. In this respect, at least, apprentices were advantaged when compared to 'free' servants whose legal position was uncertain.¹⁴⁰

Lack of space and overcrowding was a logical reason why poor law rate-payers resented an obligation to take a pauper child under their roof. When William Cobbett complained of his responsibility for Jane Collins he lived in his farm in Hampshire where he already had a houseful of children of his own.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, the cramped and least affluent of servant-keeping households were not necessarily oppressive for either householder or servant. Like Samuel Bamford, who shared a bed with a family servant, Thomas Wright remembered fondly his nursemaid in the 1740's 'with whom I slept in a close or ceiled bed'.¹⁴² The concept of family extended easily to include servants particularly within small units and where servants became involved in household trades. If accommodation was crowded and beds shared it was the same for the rest of the household. Fourteen year old Mary Ashford, took comfort from the fact that, while her work when living with a Hoxton family was hard and far from comfortable, she was 'living just the same as they did' from which we should conclude that this included her sleeping arrangements.¹⁴³

Living quarters remained cramped and uncomfortable for many servants. In 1837 William Tayler, who at the age of twenty-nine was a servant in comfortable accommodation in the house of a prosperous widow in London, recorded in his diary the circumstances of young arrivals to the capital, forced to sleep downstairs,

¹³⁹ *OBP*, 25 February, William Wade, (t17840225-63)

¹⁴⁰ See discussion in Joanne McEwan, 'The Lodging Exchange: Space, Authority and Knowledge in Eighteenth Century London,' in *The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, 1600-1850*, ed. Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 55

¹⁴¹ Barbara Biddell, 'The Jolly Farmer? William Cobbett in Hampshire, 1804-1820', *Hampshire Papers*, 15 (1999) (Hampshire County Council, 1999), 15-16

¹⁴² Chaloner, *Autobiography of Samuel Bamford*, 42; Thomas Wright (ed.), *The Autobiography of Thomas Wright of Birkenshaw, 1736-1797* (London, J.R. Smith, 1864), 24

¹⁴³ Ashford, *Victualler's Daughter*, 23

which is jeneraly very damp . . . One mite see fine blooming young men come from the country to take services, but after they have been in London one year, all the bloom is lost and a pale yellow sickley complexion in its stead.¹⁴⁴

Taylor's observations are instructive; they suggest that by the 1830s the injustice of such conditions were felt more keenly and a servant thought it worthwhile to record them.

The washing of servant clothing seems to have been a condition of apprenticeship and hiring agreements which again provoked little resentment on either side of the bargain. Certainly, the washing and laundry event in larger establishments was expensive and disruptive: soap was subject to tax and washer women were often brought in at extra expense to help in a process which lasted several days.¹⁴⁵ Even Thomas Turner's shop-keeping household (himself, wife, a maid and boy) had to buy in extra help from time to time as, on 15 February 1757, when Dame Vidal was there 'washing half the day'. In 1764, after his wife's death, Turner paid Dame Akehurst 18d for two days washing.¹⁴⁶ George Woodward, parson of East Hendred in Berkshire, found washdays 'so very inconvenient' that he used the cost and chaos to discourage a visit by his step-mother and her children, 'as it would keep the family in a continued scene of hurry and confusion'. His reluctance to host the visit surely led him to exaggerate the disruption; his arguments, nevertheless, carried force with his step-mother who at first offered to pay for soap and washerwomen before finally agreeing to cancel the stay.¹⁴⁷ The arrival of four extra children with their nurses and servants amidst the disruptions of washday presented a challenge. Including a few more items into an already heavy task in order to fulfil the indenture agreement or arrangements made with a parent, on the other hand, involved little extra cost or effort. Only linen under garments formed part of the regular wash; the coarser outer clothes could be sponged down occasionally.

¹⁴⁴ Dorothy Wise (ed.), *Diary of William Taylor, Footman 1837*, St Marylebone Society Publication Group (1962), 62

¹⁴⁵ Six soaps purchased for the Marquis of Carnarvon's household for cleaning the house in 1761 cost 3s 6d the same as for 12 ¾ lbs. cheese, Household Accounts of the Marquis of Carnarvon, 15 January, 19 February 1761, Huntington Library, ST389; and see Styles, *Dress*, passim

¹⁴⁶ Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 15 February 1757, 85, This was entered as a Sunday which seems unlikely; Turner must have added this reference on Monday under Sunday's entry

¹⁴⁷ Donald Gibson (ed.), *A Parson in the Vale of the White Horse: George Woodward's Letters from, East Hendred, 1753-1761* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1982), 44-5

The importance a household attached to wash-day tells us something about the about the level of care accorded to those it sheltered. Mary Hardy, the Norfolk farmer's wife, organised the household wash once a fortnight, calling in, for example in June 1789 a day maid and 'Goody Ram' to assist.¹⁴⁸ This was a household of around ten people, including Mary's own three children; once again the additional washing for 'the boy' would hardly have imposed either burden or expense supposing that it was an obligation she had taken on. At Woodforde's Longeville parsonage washing days were less frequent but consequently (as in the East Hendred household) something of an event,

Washing Week with us this Week. We wash every five Weeks. Our present Washer-Women are Anne Downing and Anne Richmond. Washing and Ironing generally take us four Days. The Washerwomen breakfast and dine the Monday and Tuesday, and have each one Shilling on their going away in the evening of Tuesday.¹⁴⁹

Laundry for the boy (at this date fourteen year old Barnabas Woodcock) would not have caused the washerwomen much grief nor added significantly to Woodforde's bill. When John Secker was engaged in 1785 he was to be allowed 'something for being washed out and mended'.¹⁵⁰ It is not clear whether this was routine or peculiar to Secker but does show that this was something for which Woodforde expected to take responsibility of some kind. But if washday was a disruptive event, Woodforde's account suggests that it could be something of a convivial occasion. The women were regular visitors who were known to the household servants and joined them for breakfast and dinner. In his more egalitarian household, Thomas Turner happily sat down to lunch alongside washerwoman Dame Akehurst.¹⁵¹ Certainly there were exceptions. Yet another charge against the Reverend Downing and his wife was that Elizabeth's clothing was unclean (see above). We know little of the washday regime or how often wash-day took place at the vicarage but there is

¹⁴⁸ Basil Cozens-Hardy (ed.), *Mary Hardy's Diary*, Norfolk Record Society, 37 (1968), 73

¹⁴⁹ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 10 June 1799, 586. Presumably Woodforde's own maids completed the task by doing the ironing.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, January 25 1785, 242

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1799, 568; Vaisey, *Diary of Thomas Turner*, 28 March 1764, 317

little evidence of concern for the well-being of the household.¹⁵² Scant attention to cleanliness in families with the means to pay for soap and washerwomen could be damaging to reputations, but Downing and his wife were evidently unconcerned.

Living quarters probably contributed to contention between servants holed up together in close contact and any extra expense or constraint on family life might be resented in households which had taken pauper apprentices reluctantly or where there was doubt about the competence of a child worker. Few children in service, however, whether from institutions or poor families, had high expectations when it came to washing. We should not assume that poor families dispensed with washing days – many mothers of apprentices took on the responsibility of supplying them with clean clothes. Nevertheless, the costs, lack of amenities and the vagaries of weather imposed real constraints. One cost-cutting device was to hold washdays less often and for all the rhetoric about cleanliness commonly associated with charities they may have adopted the same economy. In 1783 the Birmingham Blue Coat School had to deal with a complaint that the children were wearing stockings for too long before they were washed, ‘it being thought prejudicial to their health’. It was recommended that they be changed as often as conveniently possible and ‘once a month at farthest’.¹⁵³ Charity and workhouse children were well used to communal living and sharing beds. Those in smaller households were content to jog along with the rest (as Mary Ashford did) as long as they shared the good as well as the down side. For many, conditions were cleaner and more comfortable in their new household. The Reverend Woodward noted the large sum of £6 which his step-mother paid to get rid of bed bugs adding, ‘I verily think she never laid out such a sum to a better purpose; for a good night’s rest is no small satisfaction to people of all conditions.’¹⁵⁴ It was a sum beyond the reach of the families from which most child servants came.

¹⁵² The Committee did not accept Downing’s claim that Elizabeth had ‘pulled off’ her good clothes before going to see them, Committee Book, 21 August 1783, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/420,

¹⁵³ BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 2 June, 1783, 18

¹⁵⁴ Gibson, *Parson in the Vale of the White Horse*, 91

Training the child servant

The last obligation of the master or mistress according to the indenture was to instruct the apprentice in the occupation to which s/he was assigned or, to 'cause to be taught and instructed'. In most households it was the master's wife who was responsible for training in what was described variously as 'Housewifery' or 'all the necessary business of an Household Servant', the 'The Art of Good Housewifery' or, as in the case of Anne Toach, 'about thirteen years', the more dignified 'Art or Mystery of good Housewifery.'¹⁵⁵ In larger establishments training would be assigned to a high-ranking servant: in John Longe's household it was almost certainly the housekeeper who instructed both the pauper apprentices and Elizabeth Shilcot, the 'servant girl of all works'.¹⁵⁶ However simple or impressive the description might be, the role was, as chapter one has indicated, invariably physically demanding and multi-faceted. Writers of household manuals presented detailed descriptions of the many aspects of household management including cooking, washing, laundry work, nursery duties, kitchen cleaning etc.¹⁵⁷ These were positions and skills to which young servants might aspire within a (large) household or by moving on. At the start of her career, however, a young girl servant was likely to be a scullery maid in a large household or the 'maid of all work' in a one to two servant family and to be prepared to turn her hand to whatever came along. Most girls learnt alongside the mistress and were unlikely to have read one of the several works of guidance for servants such as Mrs Anne Barker's *The Complete Servant Maid: or young Woman's Best Companion* (1770). Much of this guidance was moral rather than practical but much, too, (for example on removing stains from silk dresses, or suitably delicate diets for young children) would have been of little use in the skilled and semi-skilled Birmingham households where most of the girls from the Blue Coat School were placed or in the wool-comber and frame work-knitters' families where Leicestershire pauper girls found themselves.

The Blue Coat School took seriously claims that its apprentices were being inadequately trained, but housewifery was too widely and loosely defined for such a

¹⁵⁵ Indenture for Ann Toach, 1763 St Nicholas Parish Leicester, ROLLR, 23D52/10/14

¹⁵⁶ Stone, *Diary of John Longe*, 205

¹⁵⁷ For example, Anon., *Domestic Management, or, The Art of Conducting a Family* (London: H.D. Symonds, 1800?), 23-83

claim to be easily made. Who could say that scrubbing the steps or emptying the chamber pots was not in some sense a household task within the remit of the indenture, nor any of the other tasks that the ‘maid of all work’ was routinely asked to do? For many, housework was anything but a ‘mystery’ and hardly qualified as a craft. On the other hand there was nothing in the indenture to say that an apprentice ought to be taught the finer accomplishments of housekeeping – butter-making, fine sewing or baking - useful for those who wished to find employment after their apprenticeship or hoped to marry. The Reverend Downing compelled the governors of the Birmingham Blue Coat School to clarify the respective responsibilities of the charity and masters. In 1782 Downing complained that Elizabeth Fieldhouse lacked the necessary skills to fulfil her role in his household. The response of the School Committee was unequivocal: ‘You say that she can neither brew nor bake, which is entirely your fault by not having her instructed in that business, as brewing and baking are no part of the education of our Charity School.’¹⁵⁸ Once again the School showed that it cared about its reputation. It is not clear from the correspondence which followed whether Downing addressed this point; Elizabeth’s own concerns were of another kind. Girls from the Birmingham School and the Foundling Hospital more often complained that the work was too hard or the demands of the family were unreasonable, than that the training was inadequate.

Parish overseers, who had difficulty in placing children, were said to be less assiduous than other authorities in finding out masters who were likely to take training seriously. According to the Webbs, overseers were little concerned with training, ‘the worst possible master in another parish was preferred to the best residing in the parish’.¹⁵⁹ Close attention to parish records has shown that not all parishes were so ruthless. Marginal notes in apprenticeship registers demonstrated that some poor law officials took on long-term responsibility for young pauper apprentices.¹⁶⁰ Overseers were also mindful of the traditional poor law principle of placing children where they might be taught a trade which enabled them to live and support a family without resort to parish relief. Poor law rate-payers expected no less, as pauper petitioners were aware. William Trudget wrote to the Steeple

¹⁵⁸ Committee Book, 16 September 1782, 10, CBA, MS1622/1/1/1/4

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Honeyman, *Child Workers*, 24

¹⁶⁰ Honeyman, *Child Workers*, 25-6

Bumstead overseer in Essex asking for a £12 premium to apprentice his son to a shoemaker ‘so that he will be no more expense to your parish.’¹⁶¹ Domestic service was less likely to be seen as a trade but the argument still had force; it was a means by which girls could earn a living and become good managers of their own households. The training received by many pauper girls was certainly inadequate for any purpose which poor law agencies had traditionally identified, but overseers were at least strengthened in their attempts to enforce proper training by the insistence in the indenture that this was part of the master’s obligation.

Boys sent out as domestic servants by the Foundling Hospital (usually described as personal servants or footboys) were promised training in the same way as those sent to other occupations. The different demands of households again made it difficult for the Hospital to be too prescriptive about training. The General Committee, nevertheless, had certain expectations. In 1818, William Langley, well-grounded in the work ethic of the Foundling Hospital (but also perhaps, with an eye on his future prospects) complained to the inspector of being ‘kept in idleness at his Master’s Chambers’ instead of being employed in household business.¹⁶² William was given a new placement which fulfilled the requirements of the Hospital and with which both William and his new employer were satisfied.¹⁶³ The Committee also responded to suggestions of inappropriate as well as inadequate training. Given the ethos of their institutions, the importance attached to obedience and the emphasis on their humble origins, foundling boys accepted that a good deal of routine cleaning, boot polishing, errand running and gardening would be their lot rather than the sophisticated services of a liveried valet. Occasionally, however, there were complaints by boys placed in skilled trades that they were not being trained in the trade for which they had been apprenticed.¹⁶⁴ Thomas Kingston *was* apprenticed as a personal servant but to a family of seven persons which kept only one female servant; consequently he had

¹⁶¹ Sokoll, *Pauper Letters* 211. The high premium is explained by the boy’s disability.

¹⁶² Petitions for gratuities, 25 April 1818, William Langley apprenticed to John Mitford, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/11/1-. A note on the outside of the document added that William’s behaviour in his new placement was, ‘highly creditable’

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, Inspector’s note written outside document.

¹⁶⁴ For example Samuel Inman apprenticed to learn the art of engraving expressed uneasiness about his master employing him so much in the shop rather than teaching him the trade; Robert Atchinson complained that he was ‘chiefly employed in the meanest domestic offices’ rather than working as a grocer. LMA, A/FH/A12/7/5/1-, Petitions for gratuities, Rudolf Ackerman for Samuel Inman (1804-5); LMA, A/FH/A12/7/12/1- (1812-23), James Ibery for Richard Atchinson,

been doing ‘women’s Work such as sweeping & scouring Rooms and washing Towels Stocking and this constantly’. In the view of the Hospital inspector, E. Livesley, this was inappropriate and one reason for Thomas’ low spirits.¹⁶⁵ The gender bias is clear and also the demeaning nature, for a boy, of domestic duties customarily undertaken by women. William Parker, on the other hand, apprenticed, aged thirteen, as footman to Mr Frankin in Penn, (Buckinghamshire) received training which equipped him for an ‘acceptable’ male role in domestic work. By 1790 he was established as a coachman.¹⁶⁶

It was rare, however, for boys from the Birmingham Blue Coat School to be placed in domestic service. (See discussion in chapter four). Claims about deficient training which were made by them, or on their behalf, concerned too little opportunity to practise their apprenticed trade (as in the case of the foundling boys above); none complained of being compelled to spend time undertaking domestic chores. Many of the boys had come to the school from small artisan and trading families themselves; perhaps they took it for granted that workshop activity for the youngest involved a good deal of cleaning, sweeping and errand running. The same gender ideas, however, seem to have prevailed: their activities were confined to the workshop and they were not called upon to undertake ‘women’s work’ beyond its aegis.

The routine nature of household work may explain why the commitment to instruct a child is less often seen or mentioned in private agreements which were not sanctioned by an indenture; the nature of the work to be done lacked ‘mystery’ and no great esteem was attached to its accomplishment. Fathers and kin protested when boys were not given adequate training, but the traditional wording of the indenture seems to have been no more than a convention for many girls. Employers said more about what servants would be expected to do than about any obligation to train. The exacting author of *Domestic Management* gave new maids a detailed list of their role which they were expected to have by heart within a week. ‘Training’ took the form of a formidable list of forbidden actions; the chamber maid (likely to be the youngest girl), for example, was ‘never to throw foul water out of the window’, never ‘obtain

¹⁶⁵ LMA, A/FH/A12/7/11/1-, Petitions for gratuities 1818-1821, Richard Lendon for Thomas Kingston (1818-1821). On the question of gender attitudes to domestic work at the Foundling Hospital, see Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁶ Cited by Durant, *Overseers’ Papers*, 168

the assistance of a man servant' and to take care not to make the warming pan too hot. The mistress was in charge of 'supervision' and 'direction' rather than training. If required too often, it became a task 'worse than that of a galley slave'¹⁶⁷

Other household manuals gave similar advice on practical matters but it is difficult to know how much was passed on to servants.¹⁶⁸ Training a child required additional time and energy as discussed in chapter one but few works dealt with the particular problem of an unsophisticated ten to twelve year old unaccustomed to household routine and pushed unhappily into her role through family necessity.¹⁶⁹ Clearly many mistresses did take their training role seriously whether by 'hands-on' action or by proxy. Nanny Nutter who entered Elizabeth Shackleton's service in 1772 at the age of twelve (and for whom Mrs Shackleton cared with an almost parental concern) was able to leave three years later to take up the more specialised role of a chamber maid.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, this was the problem for some mistresses with hired servants: having expended a good deal of time training a maid for a specific purpose she moved on. Some mistresses attempted to forestall this: Mary Ashford believed that her Hoxted mistress, the wife of a coffee-house waiter, deliberately confined her to undemanding, menial tasks, 'This was done that I should not leave her nor think myself qualified for a better place.'¹⁷¹

Reference to the training of boys in private agreements was no more in evidence than in the case of girls. For John Longe, it was sufficient to say 'no wages as I cloath him' when summarising his bargain with his servant boy John Brunwin –although there must have been some local understanding of what he was expected to learn in Longe's employment since his boys went on to more responsible positions.¹⁷² Woodforde committed himself only to wages and payment in kind (some clothing as well as board and lodging) which might or might not have included washing services. His boys, however, were from local families and probably knew from their

¹⁶⁷ Anon., *Domestic Management*, 10-11

¹⁶⁸ For example, Anne Barker, *The Complete Servant Maid: or Young Woman's Best Companion*, 6th edition (Dublin: J. Cooke, 1770), 62-9

¹⁶⁹ An exception was Henry George Watkins, *Hints and Observations Seriously Addressed to Heads of Families in Reference Chiefly to Female Domestic Servants* (London, 1816)

¹⁷⁰ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London), 143-4

¹⁷¹ Ashford, *Victualler's Daughter*, 23

¹⁷² Stone, *Diary of John Long, 1811-21*, 179

predecessors or local tradition what was involved. They were not intending to make a career in domestic service; it was a ‘stop-gap’ before leaving to become a plough-boy or, more adventurously, like Tim Tooley, a soldier. Woodforde attempted to teach his boys to avoid idleness, to be punctual and polite which would, at least, have earned him credit with the household manuals of his day and given him reason to send the boys on with a good ‘character’.

For those who did intend to make a career of domestic service there was a keen awareness of the importance of enhancing skills and extending experience at an early age. Mary Ashford believed her hopes of advancement were threatened by lack of experience in her second family. Thomas Dunning stressed the value of his four years as a footman at Hoole Hall near Chester which he began at the age of thirteen. The ‘cross old butler’ was, ‘a rigid disciplinarian but a good trainer of servants’. Thomas cherished the testimonial acquired on leaving which recommended his ‘good abilities and quickness of learning everything he undertakes’¹⁷³ William Tayler’s experience was different but his conclusions were the same: he began working in the household of a local squire near his family home in Oxfordshire,

I was four or five years in finding out the way of service, having no one to show me . . . There is money to be made in service, but the person must be lucky enough to get in good places and begin services when very young. I was very much too old when I began service.¹⁷⁴

The self-proclaimed champion of the career servant (though not its genuine representative), the anonymous author of *The Footman’s Looking-Glass*, also stressed the importance of instruction in the early years. Experience and good training, he argued, were as good as the seven year term served by many apprentices and would help to restore the image of a profession which, ‘contemptible as it is, is not inferior to many trades’. On one level the emphasis on early and sustained training was an employer’s stratagem to discourage young servants from moving on

¹⁷³ Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism*, 123

¹⁷⁴ Wise, *Diary of William Tayler*, 7, 63. Tayler does not reveal how old he was when he first entered service in Oxfordshire.

but it was also sound practical sense for anyone with a serious domestic service career in mind.¹⁷⁵

John MacDonald's experience is again instructive. He began working as an assistant to coachmen at a very young age and was a postilion at the age of nine. By the age of fifteen he had experience of working for several notable families in Scotland and had acquired a range of skills and an education which equipped him for domestic service as footman and groom. There is much to suggest that MacDonald's autobiography exaggerates his success and follows a pattern too close to popular accounts of heroic male servants to be altogether credible.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, there seems little reason to doubt the value of his boyhood experience in Ayrshire. He went on to a lengthy, varied career as a personal servant, survived dismissal and found new employment because he could offer a range of household services.

Conclusion

Indentures were intended and designed to provide the apprentice with the essentials of life: food, drink, clothing, shoes, bedding and washing were all identified in the agreement between master and those responsible for placing the child he took into his household. These basics, at least, were pledged even to those entering one of the less prestigious of apprenticeships - which domestic service was generally held to be. The undertaking to train the child was intended to secure a livelihood for the future. That the indenture had some force was evident from the way in which, at times, a master attempted to escape its obligations; by creating conditions which led the apprentice to run away; by accusations about their work or behaviour which were grounds for ending the agreement. William Hunter, accused in 1825 of stealing four sovereigns and some loose silver from his master (who was also his brother-in-law), alleged that he had been treated 'with the greatest of barbarity' because he had refused to transfer to another master. The prosecution was false, he claimed, but had

¹⁷⁵ Anon., *The Footman's Looking-Glass; or, Proposals to the Livery Servants of London and Westminster, etc. for Bettering their Situation in Life* (London, 1747), 6-7. The work bears the characteristics of other pamphlets of the time stressing the importance of morality, loyal service, honesty and forbearance. It is, however, a good deal more aware of and sympathetic to the adverse aspects of service.

¹⁷⁶ See critique of MacDonald's memoirs in Kristina Straub, *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism and Violence between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 178

been brought forward ‘in order to cancel my indentures’. William must have presented a convincing case in court since he was found not guilty.¹⁷⁷ Some rate payers opted to pay a fine (usually £10) rather than take an apprentice and the responsibilities and costs thereby incurred by the sealing and signing of an indenture. Runaway apprentices could be returned to their workplace households on the grounds that they too had violated the terms of the indenture. Changes to an indenture had to be sanctioned by a magistrate. The indenture also acted as a template for agreements involving children placed in domestic work by parents or kin. Such agreements were more variable, more influenced by custom and local practice but their closeness to the terms of the common indenture suggests that a consensus existed concerning behaviour and obligations on both sides. Court cases, out-of-court disputes and a growing concern about the children of the poor helped to make these terms more widely known.

Individual cases illustrate the very different outcomes of indentured apprenticeship into domestic service. Elizabeth Jennings, ran away from her master, a frame-work knitter in St Nicholas parish in Leicester in 1797. She was found by the constable of Hartshorne, in Derbyshire, which she believed to be her father’s place of settlement, ‘running up and down the country’. She had first been apprenticed in Leicester five years earlier when eleven years old. The court’s decision, following a settlement examination on 13 April 1797 to return her to St Nicholas, was a cruel outcome for Elizabeth who was surely homesick for the place of her early childhood as well as unhappy in her master’s household.¹⁷⁸ The coroners’ bills for North Wiltshire in 1789 recorded the death of Michael Alford, said to have died from starvation and ill-treatment by Edward and Phyllis Carpenter to whom he was apprenticed.¹⁷⁹ As Margaret Pelling has observed, apprentices might depend on their master ‘for very survival’.¹⁸⁰ Settlement cases and coroners’ reports tend, however, by their very nature, to provide us with dismal examples of children’s lives. Other experiences were positive and indicated a hopeful future: at the end of his apprenticeship in 1817

¹⁷⁷ Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 08 April 2013) April 1825 trial of William Hunter (t18250407-150)

¹⁷⁸ Examinations as to Settlement, Elizabeth Jennings, ROLLR, 13 April 1797, 23D52/5/4, 23D52/5/5

¹⁷⁹ R.F. Hunnisett, *Wiltshire Coroners’ Bills, 1752-1796*, Wiltshire Record Society, 36 (1981), case 1619, 20 January 1789, 103

¹⁸⁰ Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (Harlow and London : Longman (1998), 123

William Arbourt, a Foundling apprentice, said that his master and mistress had treated him 'more like a child than a Servant'. He wished to continue to live with them 'as they desire', as part of their household.¹⁸¹ Jem Wood, boy servant to Reverend Cole, 'Cried all Night' when told that Cole 'did not think of keeping' him on. Five months later Jem was still with him and attending school for four hours a day at Cole's expense until an apprenticeship could be found for him.¹⁸²

The efficacy of the indenture and parallel agreements, therefore, varied greatly and sometimes failed altogether. Yet, however imperfectly implemented, they remained a rude guide to the life a child servant ought to lead and a point of reference for disputes. They reinforced prevailing attitudes which, at least in their intentions, were essentially humane. The next chapter will consider aspects of a child servant's life which were outside the terms of the indenture and rarely mentioned in private agreements. Consequently these were issues, about which there was much uncertainty, which led to conflicts which were difficult to resolve and about which it was also difficult to appeal.

¹⁸¹ Apprentices' petitions for gratuities, 8 April 1817, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/9/1-,

¹⁸² Stokes, *Bletchley Diary*, 10 July 1767, 239, 14 December 1767, 300

Chapter 3: Other Dimensions of a Child Servant's Life

The previous chapter indicates that the indenture, for all its imperfections and limitations, was designed to secure the basic needs of the apprentice. Once a parish child had been placed with a master or mistress, the responsibility for providing essentials (food, drink, clothing and shoes, accommodation and washing) lay with the master or mistress, as was made clear by the injunction at the end of the indenture that ‘the said Apprentice . . . be not any way a charge to the said Parish or Parishioners of the same’ – or words to that effect. Charities and parents in their private arrangements placed similar obligations on those taking their apprentices. Private agreements made by parents or kin, might be more flexible and involve negotiations over clothing, the purchase of clothes and washing arrangements.¹ This did not mean, however, that those taking a child as a live-in domestic servant were believed to have no other responsibilities towards them or that those placing the children did not have concerns about additional areas of their lives as servants, for example, the conditions in which they would work. In many cases these were agreed verbally or determined according to tradition and household custom to the satisfaction of both sides. On such issues, however, the obligations of the master and mistress were not set out and the absence of clear guidelines left much open to dispute not only between child (or parents) and employer but also between master or mistress and the agency responsible for placing the child. The custom of taking a servant or apprentice for a month ‘upon liking’, dealt with some potential areas of conflict but a month was insufficient to test all possible sources of contention. In the last resort it would be the courts which dealt with these disagreements – but the isolated and ‘behind closed doors’ existence which characterised the lives of many children in domestic service, made them peculiarly vulnerable to exploitation where doubt and obscurity existed, and also poorly placed to take action.

This chapter will discuss four key areas in the apprentice/master relationship which were not usually set out in the indenture other than being subsumed in the obscure

¹ See discussion of such arrangements in Christopher Brookes, *Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 376; Peter Walkden, a Lancashire farmer, arranged ‘Tailor’s board and thread’ for his son, so called because it included the cost of tailor’s repairs to his clothes, R.W. Hoyle, ‘Farmer, Nonconformist Minister and Diarist: the World of Peter Walkden of Thornley Lancashire 1733-34’, *Northern History*, 48. 2 (2011), 279

reference to ‘all other Things necessary and fit for an Apprentice’; hours of work; time allowed for leisure; responsibility for treatment during sickness or injury; punishment. The same issues will be considered in the case of child servants engaged privately by a master or mistress; while these were items which were sometimes covered in such agreements they were rarely written down, often unmentioned, or left to be resolved at a later date. An additional section will discuss the issue of sexual abuse, from which, it will be argued, children working as domestic servants were particularly at risk. As in previous chapters the position of pauper apprentices, charity children and those placed by individual arrangements will be compared and contrasted in order to discover the implications for each of the absence of clear guidelines. The final section affirms the value of the indenture in the light of the complexities and uncertainties arising from these other areas which were ill-defined or obscure.

Hours of Work

. . . if any would not work, neither should he eat.

St. Paul, The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, Chapter 3, verse 10

Contemporaries had a good deal to say about work and leisure; calling on a long tradition of writers they held that if labourers and artisans were not compelled by necessity to work, the economic health of the country (and also, perhaps, the lifestyle of the writer) was threatened. High wages, according to this line of thought, encouraged complacency amongst the poor, a lack of enthusiasm for work - or worse - an inclination to take time off altogether. Work and leisure were intrinsically linked and the latter to be discouraged (for the poor) not only in the interests of morality but also according to economic theory.² In 1751, Henry Fielding, in his legal capacity, lamented the frequency (by the poor) of visits to the alehouse and other places of pleasure not only because of their ‘ungodly’ nature but also on account of ‘the loss

² For eighteenth-century attitudes to work, leisure and the economy, see John Hatcher, ‘Labour, Leisure and Economic Thought before the Nineteenth Century’, *Past & Present*, 160 (1998), 64-115 and Emma Griffin, *England’s Revelry: A History of Popular Sports and Pastimes, 1660-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

of time and neglect of business.’³ The work/leisure equation was not a straightforward one nor as the century progressed was it uncontested. It was, however a pervasive one and at some level the poor themselves recognised its force; artisans might rest on ‘St. Monday’ at times when earnings were sufficient to get them through the week; children of the poor knew that they were set to work at an early age so that younger brothers and sisters could eat. Certainly children were not exempt from St Paul’s harsh ruling; many poor law authorities believed that it was reasonable for children to begin contributing to their upkeep from the age of seven.⁴ William Cobbett said he ‘could not remember a time when I did not earn my living’⁵ Young apprentices, in domestic work, or other occupations, were indirectly affected by these economic forces; it was their master or mistress who determined both pace and hours of work. Long hours were widely practised in most trades and it seems generally to have been assumed that the apprentice would work the same shifts as other workers, even if this involved working late into the night.⁶ The indenture for William Lyons, bound to Thomas Nagger in 1792 to learn the art of a surveyor and builder was unusual in defining William’s hours very precisely: he was to work from 9a.m. to 7p.m. with two hours allowed to dine. This was an arrangement for a prestigious apprenticeship involving parents who paid £100 for their son’s training and thereby had strong bargaining powers.⁷ Charity and parish apprentices would have envied so neatly truncated a working day, but it was difficult to be prescriptive on the ‘one-size fits all’ parish or charity indenture when trades operated at different paces at different times of the week or year according to market forces. Those finding placements for children in domestic service were aware that masters would be discouraged by limitations on their use of labour in an occupation which traditionally involved long hours at all times.

³ Henry Fielding, *Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase in Robbers*, 6-7, quoted in Hatcher, ‘Labour, Leisure and Economic Thought’, 79-80

⁴ Patricia Crawford shows that in practice there was great variation in the age at which parish children were placed out and that parents often resisted the removal of children at such an early age. Nevertheless, parish children, especially orphans, were at least liable to placement when very young, *Parents of Poor Children*, 137

⁵ William Reitzel (ed.), *The Autobiography of William Cobbett* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 11

⁶ Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 95-8

⁷ James Barry Bird, *The Laws Respecting Masters and Servants, Articled Clerks, Apprentices, Manufacturers, Labourers and Journeymen* (London: W. Clarke, 1799), 66-7

Charity children were, of course, well-schooled in the virtues and reality of work. Countless sermons reinforced this lesson and it was a popular message to be laboriously worked on to a sampler. In 1831 Janet Milne's advised:

Make much of Precious Time
While in Your Power
Be Careful well to Husband Every Hour
The Time will come when You
Will sore Lament
The useful moments you have misspent.⁸

Few parish children entering an apprenticeship can have expected other than a pretty relentless round of toil. The indenture committed them to service 'in all lawful business according to his/her wit and ability' – an elastic phrase intended to take into account the age, stamina and education of the child but open to wide interpretation by an unscrupulous master or mistress. Other apprentices, like Joseph Burdett, would be pushed into overcrowded, hard-pressed occupations, in his case stocking-making: in Jane Humphries' words 'cheap and captive labour shoring up a trade in decline'.⁹ William Hutton does not tell us his hours of work but thought himself hugely overworked when apprenticed from the age of fourteen to his uncle, also a stocking-maker; he believed other apprentices were in much the same position.¹⁰ William Lucas, an apothecary's apprentice in eighteenth-century London worked a regular twelve hour day but also took turns with others in the business to work shifts from 7a.m. to 11 p.m.¹¹ Francis Place, on the other hand, thought himself fortunate to have

⁸ Sampler made by Janet Milne, Rebecca Quinton, *Patterns of Childhood: Samplers from Glasgow Museums* (London: the Herbert Press, 2005), 70-1. Janet's Sampler was not made in a charity school but its message is typical of many such.

⁹ Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 199

¹⁰ William Hutton, *The Life of William Hutton, F.A.S.S. Including a Particular Account of the Riots at Birmingham in 1791. To which is subjoined, the History of His Family Written by Himself* (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1817) republished with an introduction by Carl Chinn (Studley: Brewin, 1998) 12-3

¹¹ Lawrence Brockliss and Heather Montgomery, 'Apprenticeship in Northwest Europe, 1300-1850' in *Childhood and Violence in the Western Tradition*, ed. Lawrence Brockliss and Heather Montgomery (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 174

more time to spend outside the workplace than when he lived at home; this needs to be considered, however, in the light of his father's exacting and controlling regime.¹²

While mills and factories generally kept records of apprentices' hours of work, households and small workshops usually operated on the basis of 'tasks' to be done. Factory children worked long hours but usually within a more formal framework. Frances Hamilton's apprentice, Edward Williams might wash turnips, beat the cow dung, clean the pig sty, mulch the raspberries, heat the oven, wait at table and much more besides; but this was work to be done when the need arose not part of a time contract.¹³ Variety of practice, as well as lack of documentation, make it difficult to draw general conclusions but it seems clear that custom and practice, compounded by economic pressures could place heavy demands on the youngest workers.

How did apprentices and children hired into domestic work fare in the hours of work stakes? Much depended on the number of servants employed as well as the particular demands or practices of the household. There is much to suggest, however, that young girls especially those placed by the parish, were particularly subjected to both hard work and long hours; many, as we have seen, went to relatively poor households where one girl was 'general housemaid' or, revealingly, the 'slavey'. The mistress might work alongside her but we know that in some cases the girl was there to release her mistress to take up paid work and supplement the family income.¹⁴ It is difficult to see how the work required from one servant could be achieved without her continuing until late at night. 'I have scarce time allowed to Eat drink or sleep' Joanna Clift told her brother when she worked as the lone servant for a Plymouth family.¹⁵ Samuel and Sarah Adams warned that where only one servant was kept her situation became 'one continual round of activity'¹⁶ Dark winter evenings could

¹² Mary Thrale, *The Autobiography of Francis Place, 1771-1854* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 34-9, 60,78

¹³ Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 72. Louie Everest, Virginia Woolf's daily maid in the 1930s, was to recall that she, like other maids 'did not think of [their] day in terms of hours', Alison Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants* (London: Penguin, 2007), 231

¹⁴ See discussion of this practice amongst Spitalfield silk workers in Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, Vol. II (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 402

¹⁵ Pamela Horn, *Flunkeys and Scullions: Life Below Stairs in Georgian England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), 222-3

¹⁶ Ann Haly (ed.), Samuel and Sarah Adams, *The Complete Servant* (Lewes: Southover Press, 1989), first published, (London, 1825), 105

bring some respite for apprentices involved with close work – embroidery, tailoring or shoemaking – but whatever the time of the year, children had still to be put to bed, meals served and cleared away, preparations made for the household next day.

Agricultural work might ease off in winter, but domestic servants in Frances Hamilton's farmhouse in Somerset carried on much as usual. She 'understood what they did on a daily basis and did not have to write down instructions for household work in the way she did for farm work'.¹⁷ At times work could be even more intense, as when the regular 'extras' of washing and brewing occurred, when a baby was born or visitors arrived, because the regular routines continued.

Some employers took advantage of the absence of any limits on the hours which could be worked by apprentices. In the early years of the nineteenth century, Thomas Nicholls and his wife had no compunction about employing their parish apprentice Mary Rendalls (bound to them at the age of eight) to tend to the cows as early as 2.30 or 3.00 in the morning. That was only the start of her working day inside and outside of the house. 'Master made me do everything' she later told the Poor Law Commissioners. Even if Mary had appealed to the magistrate there was nothing in the indenture to give clear support to her case. She escaped only by running back to her father who then feared he might himself be in trouble with the law.¹⁸ An approach to a magistrate with an appeal to custom and practice might have come to Mary's aid but the poor frequently lacked confidence in the willingness of local J.P.s to dispense the law justly.¹⁹ At the other end of the day Mary Cave, a servant apprenticed to a pawnbroker in Shoreditch, was responsible, age thirteen, for putting out the candles when the rest of the house had gone to bed.²⁰

Household apprentices might be sent on errands at all hours of the day but also on dark evenings which were prime time for petty thieving. Children and young people were easy victims. When Ann Roch, a former foundling, was sent out by her mistress 'about half an hour after six' for two yards of three-penny ribbon it was

¹⁷ Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 75

¹⁸ *Reports of the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners into the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* PP 1843, Vol. XII, Report on the Counties of Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon and Somerset by Alfred Austin, No.44, 112-3, quoted in Pamela Horn, *Flunkeys and Scullions*, 114

¹⁹ See Peter King, 'The Summary Courts and Social Relations in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, 183 (2004), especially 164-5

²⁰ Old Bailey Proceedings Online (hereafter, *OBP*) (www.oldbaileyonline.org.version7.0 19May 2013), January 1784, trial of Mary Cave (t17840114-66).

December and dark. On her return, Bartholomew Fanton tried to prise ‘six penny-worth of halfpence’ from her closed hand. Despite ‘menaces, oaths, and imprecations’ and being pushed to the ground, Ann held on to all but one halfpenny. According to a witness, Martha Wintles, the girl had a lump on her head ‘as big as an egg’.²¹ Thomas Bromwell, was attacked sometime after 5.15 p.m. in December 1792 when Valentine Middleton robbed him of goods worth 4s 1d which he was carrying to his master. Thomas was not yet ten when given this responsibility.²² Nine-year old John Bezer complained that his working day, as boy servant to a warehouse man in the 1820s, was supposed to extend from six to eight. He claimed that he might, nevertheless, be out on errands until eleven at night, returning home, ‘foot-sore and ready to faint’.²³

Charity children, as we have seen, were in a better position than parish apprentices to draw attention to the shortcomings and injustices of their circumstances. Food and clothing were particular sources of grievance for apprentices from the Foundling Hospital and complaints or admonitions to the employer could be couched in terms which echoed the indenture.²⁴ William Bradley’s complaint in April 1791 that his master had failed to provide the double apparel ‘agreeable to the covenant of his indenture’ was an indication of how well acquainted he was with its terms.²⁵ Protests alleging overwork, however, lacked force without the backing of a legal document; who could say what constituted excessive hours when few adults in pre-industrial occupations worked within set hours? Who could claim that a punishing work schedule was beyond ‘the wit and ability’ of a child when so many were seen to fulfil such roles alongside adults? Thirteen-year old Robert Stevens fell out with his master, but the complaint was of the labour (as a sawyer) being ‘too heavy for him’ not of the hours being too long.²⁶ Queries by the Hospital about the suitability of masters petitioning for apprentices focused on their respectability, the reputation

²¹ *OBP*, December 1768, trial of Bartholomew Fanton (t17681207-57).

²² *OBP*, 13 January 1792 trial of Valentine Middleton (t17920113-37)

²³ David Vincent (ed.), *Testaments of Radicalism: Memoirs of Working Class Politicians 1790-1885* (London: Europa, 1977), 162-3

²⁴ Alys Levene, “‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence’: Master-Apprenticeship Relations in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England”, *Social History*, 33:2 (2008) 183-200

²⁵ Blue Coat Committee Book 1781-95, 18 April 1791, Birmingham City Archive (hereafter BCA), MS1622/1/1/1/4, 80

²⁶ Apprentices’ petitions for gratuities, Robert Stevens, London Metropolitan Archive (hereafter LMA), A/FH/A12/7/2/1-

of the family, the viability of the business, rather than hours of work – although the preference for small, well-ordered families may have been part of an attempt to secure a reasonable workload.²⁷

That is not to say that the Hospital had no concerns about their apprentices being overworked: in 1787 the Hospital steward made clear his disapproval of Mrs Smith's pin making business in Southwark where apprentices worked from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. and rejected it (for this and other reasons) as a place suitable for Hospital apprentices. The Governors had, therefore, clear ideas about what amounted to unreasonable hours and chose their masters accordingly. Once (and if) they were aware of excessive demands being made by the employer they were prepared to take action, but the absence of a clear reference point on hours of work must have been a difficulty.²⁸ Just as often, masters like Richard Phillips in 1793, complained to the Blue Coat School, of an apprentice who was said not to do his full share of work. In this case Phillips himself was found to be 'reprehensible' (though the reason is not given) but both masters and apprentices were on shaky grounds on this issue.²⁹ Legal action was avoided wherever possible (apprentices found to be justly accused of idleness were brought back to be reprimanded), but the ability to remind those involved of their legal obligations as expressed in the indenture could make a difference. Mr and Mrs Bond refused to co-operate with the Blue Coat School when found deficient on several counts in their behaviour towards Charlotte Barton, but changed their mind when an indictment was issued against them.³⁰

For much the same reasons - the uncontained, multi-faceted nature of domestic service and prevailing attitudes to work - parents making arrangements to put their children to domestic work were unlikely to negotiate the hours to be undertaken. Parson Woodforde struck bargains over clothes and washing arrangements but it was assumed that his boys had, in the same way as his adult workers, surrendered their labour in return for food, keep and wages. The flexible nature of much of the work Woodforde 'bought' is seen in the engagement of Cobb of Mattishall, 'for to kill all

²⁷ Applications for apprentices for 1775, London Metropolitan Archive (hereafter LMA), A/FH/A12/1/24/1-

²⁸ Correspondence, 16 June 1787, LMA, A/FH/A12/023/001

²⁹ Blue Coat School Committee Book 1781-95, 18 November 1793, City of Birmingham Archive (hereafter CBA), MS1622/1/1/1/4, 90

³⁰ Committee Book 1781-95, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 49-60, *passim*.

my Rats at one Guinea Per Annum . . . He is to come as often as there is Occasion for him'.³¹ George Shattock, Frances Hamilton's very young boy assistant was paid ½d for making a score of matches and 6d for catching rats, as these were tasks over and above the work for which he was engaged and unrelated to the hours he worked. When she occasionally bought in his labour for 3d a day she made no note of how long the day should be, this being determined, presumably, by what needed doing that day and the hours of light which made it possible.³² Sarah Girling left John Longe's service as a scullery maid in 1813, 'her health not admitting her continuing in a place of so much work'. Later that year, Phoebe Caldwell left too, making much the same complaint but Longe's book makes no mention of what 'so much work' entailed either in terms of hours or tasks.³³ In 1788 a servant wrote to the *Chelmsford Chronicle* to protest at the injustice done to a fellow servant who had been sentenced to a whipping when he refused to start another task at the end of an exhausting twelve-hour day. The master's reply in defence of the action, which appeared in the paper a week later, suggests the absence of any consensus on what constituted a reasonable work load. The incident also helps to explain why servants might be reluctant to set their grievances before local magistrates.³⁴

Leisure and Free Time

The Fourth Part of Temperance concerns Recreations, which are sometimes necessary both to the Body and the Mind of Man, neither of them being able to endure a constant toil, without somewhat of refreshment between; and therefore there is a very Lawful use of them?

The Whole Duty of Man (London: E. Pawlet, 1718), p.205

Despite the religious and economic forces which drove the need for constant toil, most children in service could look forward to some respite from their work. Even

³¹ John Beresford (ed.), *James Woodforde: The Diary of a Country Parson 1758-1802* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931) reprinted 1979, 16 November 1782, 190-1

³² Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 69, 98

³³ Michael Stone (ed.), *The Diary of John Longe 1765-1834*, Suffolk Records Society, 51(2008), 185-6

³⁴ King, 'Summary Courts and Social Relations' 163

The Whole Duty of Man, that most daunting of works which accompanied so many parish and charity children to their first placement, allowed that some diversion from daily toil was desirable.³⁵ For sure the author went on to qualify this licence, reinforcing the ban outlined in the indenture on all forms of gambling and any recreation which drew the apprentice into swearing, envy or anger. Nevertheless, while the indenture said nothing of permitted games or leisure it did identify the apprentice as ‘a child’; parents negotiated agreements on behalf of offspring, went with them to buy clothes and sometimes collected their earnings - an acknowledgement that they had not quite left behind a culture which involved a distinctive set of childish games or diversions. There is much in fiction and in autobiographical accounts to indicate what this involved as well as a widespread recognition of its importance. In the anonymous novel, *The Fortunate Blue-Coat Boy* (1789) Benjamin Templeman’s interests were said to be ‘such as are usual with other boys of spirit’: he was a dab hand at ‘marbles, chuck, huzzle-cap, jumping, and the like boyish exercises.’³⁶ When William Hutton visited the real-life Blue Coat School in Birmingham in the 1780s he was pleased to see an area behind the school set aside for the ‘amusement’ of the pupils which he believed to be as ‘necessary as their food’. His attitude to play was not an isolated one: Thomas Wright had fond memories of his own childhood play and could ‘never see children or youth at play, but I partake in a degree of their joy’.³⁷ In the 1790s Samuel Bamford played with the pauper children at the Manchester workhouse where his father managed the production of cotton goods, ‘The big boys carried me on their backs; with the girls I played at ball or hide-and-seek. Or the old-fashioned game of ‘Blackthorne’. This was less pleasing than his time in the countryside where he enjoyed wading parties in streams, bird-nesting, moss gathering, and primrose picking in the open air; it shows, nevertheless, that play could flourish in the gloomiest environment.’³⁸

³⁵ Alys Levene identifies ‘the expectation of leisure’ for young children to be one of the ‘common set of assumptions’ which became more entrenched in this period, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 173

³⁶ Anon. *The Fortunate Blue-Coat Boy or Memoirs of the Life and Happy Adventures of Mr Benjamin Templeman*, first published 1789, reprinted (London, Christ’s Hospital, 1987), 7

³⁷ William Hutton, *An History of Birmingham* (London: 1783) reprinted Birmingham: E.P. Publishing Limited, 1976), 212; Thomas Wright, *An Autobiography of Thomas Wright of Birkenshaw 1736-1797* (London: J.R. Smith, 1864), 18

³⁸ W.H. Chaloner (ed.), *The Autobiography of Samuel Bamford* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967), 69, 52-3

Bamford may have romanticised his childhood and Wright been over anxious to counter the unfavourable reputation he had with his extended family, but David Vincent found that positive memories of childhood games, even amongst the poorest, were a notable feature of working class autobiographies. Their loss and the occasion they provided for contacts with other young people when the time came to be sent out to work or take up apprenticeships, was mourned.³⁹ Some employers and masters recognised the need for diversion and the argument in favour of time for leisure which carried most force was, as discerning household guidance manuals argued, that servants worked more efficiently when given time for rest and play.⁴⁰ Soon after Harry Wilkinson began working for Peter Walkden as his 'live in' lad, his younger brother called 'for Harry to go and play with him'. Walkden consented 'that he might go with him and be with him until Saturday next', recognising that the fourteen year old boy was still attached to his former life and had found it difficult to adjust to a heavy round of farming and domestic duties. Mary Hardy may have felt much the same when she sent her youngest maid and 'the boy' off with her own children to see Gingell's Puppet show in 1779.⁴¹ Thomas Holcroft described how Newmarket stable boys were at liberty to play once their first round of duties was completed. Thomas, who was then thirteen claimed to excel at fives, marbles, and spinning tops. 'Spell and null', chuck farthing and 'holes' also featured in their games, showing a marked similarity to the games favoured by Benjamin Templeman and suggesting the existence of a certain pattern to childish play, at least for boys.⁴²

Not all boys favoured or had the possibility of such boisterous play: James Watson entered the service of a clergyman in Yorkshire when he was twelve and spent the long winter nights reading histories of England and Europe – perhaps there was not much else to do. He would have welcomed the addition of cheap books, newspapers and periodicals, but reading provided some relief from his household and farming work - occupations, which he found, 'not very favourable to mental development'.⁴³

³⁹ David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography* (London: Europa, 1981), 90-1

⁴⁰ See, for example, Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (London: J. Walter, 1786), 95-7

⁴¹ Basil Cozens-Hardy (ed.), *Mary Hardy's Diary*, Norfolk Record Society, 37 (1968), 33

⁴² Thomas Holcroft, *Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1816), 116

⁴³ David Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism* 109

Thomas Holcroft complained of having too little to read at Newmarket until his father's friend lent him *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Spectator*. He also mentioned Bunyan and *The Whole Duty of Man*.⁴⁴ By the age of fifteen, Mary Ashford had acquired a 'large parcel of books' when she moved to her fourth domestic post on the City Road. She did not tell us what she read but reading may have sustained her a little during the loneliness she complained of as a maid in one-servant households.⁴⁵

But reading does not seem to have been a much favoured leisure pursuit for young servants. Mary Ashford had received about eight years of indifferent teaching and James Watson was taught by his mother, a Sunday-School teacher; both, like Holcroft, could read tolerably well. Others, like Robert Story had left school too early: he learned only 'to read badly, and to write worse.'⁴⁶ Apprentices from charity schools or institutions were generally well able to read but books, even cheap chapbooks, were beyond the reach of most young servants. Opportunities to read in daylight hours were limited and candles restricted by cost and availability. The *Whole Duty of Man*, which accompanied so many children to their apprenticeships, may have featured as reading matter only because little else was available. In Sheridan's, *The Rivals*, Lydia's maid, Lucy, uses her weighty copy to 'press a few blondes' (pieces of silk lace), rather than to improve her mind or morality.⁴⁷ In some households, however, reading aloud was a regular event. In the East Hendred living of the Reverend William Woodward the readings included religious and improving works but his son George read novels, including *Tom Jones* to the assembled servants which included the youngest.⁴⁸ For the most part, however, novels and 'Romances' were suspect and girls were warned against them. Lady Sarah Pennington conceded that they might contain some worth, but finding it was 'like searching for a few small Diamonds among Mountains of Dirt and Trash'⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Holcroft, *Memoirs*, 134-40

⁴⁵ Mary Ashford, *Life of a Licensed Victualler's Daughter, 1787-1859, Written by Herself, 1787-1859* (London: Sanders and Otley, 1844), 26

⁴⁶ Ashford, *Victualler's Daughter*, 11-14; Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism*, 109; Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*, 97

⁴⁷ Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 19

⁴⁸ Donald Gibson (ed.), *A Parson in the Vale of the White Horse: George Woodward's Letters from East Hendred, 1753-1761* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1982), 26-7

⁴⁹ Lady Sarah Pennington, *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters* (London: S. Chandler, 1761), 39

Household manuals, as well as charities placing young children, reminded employers that Sunday was the designated day of rest and that they had an obligation to allow servants to attend divine service. The problem for children in many of the more respectable households was that their Sunday leisure might be prescribed or severely restricted. Kristina Straub draws attention to the increasing concern in the eighteenth century to ‘police’ the Sundays of servants but most especially the young offspring of the parish poor. Girls were particularly likely to experience carefully directed ‘leisure’ of this kind; church provided respite from weekday routines, but thereafter Sunday leisure might translate, as Hester Chapone advised in 1786, into ‘reading and reflection at home’ (meaning the household) with no opportunity for any real escape even for visits to family.⁵⁰

Boys were thought to be prone to corruption from outside influences. Henry Watkins advised masters and mistresses not to permit boys to go home on Sundays lest they meet with ‘dissipated young men in parties of pleasure’.⁵¹ The Reverend Skinner warned of ‘improper acquaintance in the village, which has ever been the ruin of my domestics’.⁵² This fear of the ‘contaminating’ influence of peer groups was not without some justification. On his first free Sunday Thomas Bewick fell into a fight with fellow apprentices in Newcastle; thereafter his master insisted that he attend church twice on Sundays, and in the evening read from the Bible or another ‘good book’.⁵³ In the 1790s the Blue Coat School added a hand-written note to the printed indentures for their apprentices forbidding them to ‘absent themselves from the House of God on the Sabbath Day’.⁵⁴ This can only have meant that many (boys and girls) were doing just that and finding alternative ways of spending their Sundays without too much concern on the part of their masters. The same must have been true

⁵⁰ Chapone, *Letters*, 155

⁵¹ Kristina Straub, *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism and Violence between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2009), 27; Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 155; Henry George Watkins, *Hints and Observations* (London, 1816), 20-1

⁵² Howard Coombs and Reverend Arthur N. Bax (eds), *Journal of a Somerset Rector: John Skinner 1772-1839, Parochial Affairs of the Parish of Camerton, 1822-1832* (London: John Murray, 1930), 158-9

⁵³ Thomas Bewick, *The Autobiography of Thomas Bewick*, BL Add.MS 41481, Catalogue ADD. 41, 481, 44

⁵⁴ See, for example the indenture for Phoebe Collins placed out as a household servant in Wednesbury, Apprenticeship indenture, Phoebe Collins, 30 January 1794, CBA, MS1622/2/6/25

for the girls Eliza Hayward warned against walking in the fields, tea-drinking and sleeping when they should have been in church.⁵⁵

In his general advice on suitable amusements for servant girls, Jonas Hanway preferred spare time to be spent on needlework, walking or good books. He sanctioned attendance at weddings and christenings ‘cheered by cakes and ale’.⁵⁶ His disapproval of card games was hardly realistic when it was a frequent pastime, not only in kitchens where servants spent their evenings, but in many of the most respectable servant-keeping households. Thomas Turner was occasionally ashamed of the amount of time he spent in this way, but Parson Woodforde cheerfully kept account of his (modest) winnings at loo and cribbage. Even in the rather austere household of the Reverend Holland cards were allowed at times: some days after little William was recovering from a fall from his horse his father was pleased to see him ‘in high spirits playing cards with his Mama’⁵⁷

The Reverend Cole’s kitchen was a frequent centre of social life including celebrations for the end of Hay-making when Jem Wood, his boy servant, took part in the procession ‘dressed out in Ribbands’. Cole gave ‘a good supper’ to his thirty hay-makers ‘who staid ‘till one’.⁵⁸ Kitchen life could be warm and stimulating in more modest households and here girls might join in with the gossip as well as anyone else as Mary Ashford found when her mistress took her to Brighton.⁵⁹ Some employers arranged more ambitious outings. In the 1770s Elizabeth Shackleton, living in Lancashire, took her youngest maid, Nanny Nutter on trips into Yorkshire. In 1783 Woodforde took his servants, including the youngest Jack Warton (then about thirteen), to see the procession held in Norwich for the city’s patron, Saint Bishop Blaise. It was a memorable event ‘I never saw a Procession so grand and well

⁵⁵ Eliza Hayward, *A New Present for a Servant Maid* (London: G. Pearch, 1771),

⁵⁶ Jonas Hanway, *Virtue in Humble Life; Containing Reflections on the Reciprocal Duties of the Wealthy and Indigent, the Master and the Servant* (London: J. Dodley, Brotherton and Sewell, 1774), 423-5

⁵⁷ D. Vaisey (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) reprinted: East Hoathly, 1994. See, for example, Friday 26 January 1759. It was not an activity hidden from the servants; Turner and his wife often gave the winnings to the servants of their hosts; Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, e.g. June 5 1783, December 30 1783, 204, 218; Jack Ayres (ed.), *Paupers and Pig Killers: The Diary of William Holland: A Somerset Parson 1799-1818* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984), 106

⁵⁸ Francis Griffin Stokes, *The Bletcheley Diary of the Reverend William Cole, 1765-67* with an introduction by Helen Waddell (London: Constable and Co., 1931), 22 July 1766, 75

⁵⁹ Ashford, *Victualler’s Daughter*, 40-1

conducted' Woodforde said, 'We were all highly delighted with this Days Sight.'⁶⁰ Motives on such occasions were, perhaps, mixed with masters and employers seeking to promote loyalty and efficiency in their work force as well as to care for their well-being. Nevertheless there is much to suggest genuine desire to please his servants, especially the youngest.

Events under the direction of the employers did not, of course, afford the opportunities for the 'rough and tumble' with contemporaries that Thomas Holcroft enjoyed. We do not know what Nanny Nutter felt about the trips (she was in general rather disenchanted with her lot) nor if Jack Warton was as delighted as Woodforde claimed. Mary Ashford enjoyed the gossip and companionship of her Brighton contacts so much that she could no longer endure the habitual loneliness of her single-servant household when she returned to London. Hannah Cullwick, however, recalled that as a fifteen year old nursery maid 'I was took to the seaside – to Southport, a long ride, and a wonderful thing I thought it.'⁶¹ Of course not all young domestics had opportunities to travel and meet fellow servants – but it was a bonus for those who could; few children in other occupations could hope to enjoy such interludes in the routine of working life. William Hutton, the stocking-weaver, reached Birmingham (a city he came to love) only by running away from his master in Nottingham. Thomas Bewick never got further than Newcastle and its immediate surroundings until his apprenticeship term was over; he then set off 'like a bird which had escaped from the cage'⁶²

With no guidance from the indenture (apart from the prohibitions), with the wide range of views which prevailed about the merits or otherwise of leisure and the many different types of household in which children were placed, it is difficult to reach any general conclusions about opportunities for free time. In dry summers children in textile work sometimes enjoyed periods of play when the mill pond ran dry.⁶³ Did apprentices share the benefits of days taken off when earnings were relatively high,

⁶⁰ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999) 144; Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 198-200

⁶¹ Ashford, *Victualler's Daughter*, 40; Liz Stanley (ed.), *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick* (London: Virago, 1984), 38

⁶² Hutton, *Life of William Hutton*, 17; Bewick, *The Autobiography of Thomas Bewick*, BL, Add. MS.41481, 68

⁶³ See, for example, Hutton, *Life of William Hutton*, 10. Hutton mentions the leisure which mill children enjoyed as a result of the dry summer of 1735.

or sleep late when trade was poor and there was less to do? Some children in domestic work may have gained greater freedom, at least in grander establishments, when the family took off for London, Bath or a succession of family visits, leaving a small core of servants to cope with maintaining the house. Boys in particular, showed much enterprise in finding time for all kinds of diversion and escaping the routine of domestic work as well as the surveillance of their masters. In between his duties as a postilion and time spent in school, John MacDonald built up a menagerie of wild animals which he fed from kitchen scraps. Thomas Holcroft's games on Newmarket took place between punishing work routines which began at 2.30 a.m. in spring and 4 a.m. in winter. The Reverend Skinner coaxed his 'boy George' into assisting at Sunday School with a payment of 6d – but George contrived to turn this into light-hearted entertainment with the village children.⁶⁴

More fun was to be had by boys in grander establishments where, according to the anonymous author of *Domestic Management*, they diverted themselves 'by writing their names etc. on the ceiling of the hall or kitchen with the smoke of the candle'.⁶⁵ Running errands was a well-known opportunity for time-wasting or meeting up with other boys. Reverend William Holland complained of Farmer White's apprentice 'with his basket in his hand talking to another for a very long time', while *Domestic Management* accepted that 'boys may be induced to play by the way for want of thought'.⁶⁶ This proved irresistible to Jem Wood when working for the Reverend Cole of Bletchley, even though it was likely to result in a whipping.⁶⁷ Such strategies favoured boys who, despite the fears of high-minded clergymen and moralists, were generally felt to be in less danger than girls, less in need of supervision and invariably had more opportunity to get about.

Sickness

⁶⁴ Holcroft, *Memoirs*, 105; Howard Coombs and Arthur Bax (eds), *Journal of a Somerset Rector, John Skinner 1772-1839: Parish Affairs of the Parish of Camerton, 1822-1832* (London: John Murray, 1930), 5 June 1828, 160, 10 January 1830, 228

⁶⁵ John MacDonald, *Travels in Various Parts of Europe, Asia and Africa* (London: printed for the author, 1790), 48; Holcroft, *Memoirs*, 105; Coombs and Bax, *Journal of a Somerset Rector*; Anon. *Domestic Management or the Art of Conducting a Family* (London: H.D. Symonds, 1800?), 20

⁶⁶ Ayres, *Paupers and Pig Killers*, Saturday November 30, 20; *Domestic Management*, 19

⁶⁷ Stokes, *Bletchley Diary* 95, 115, 118, 153,

More problematic and contentious than work and free time issues was the treatment of children who fell ill while in service or completing their apprenticeship. Once having calculated the likely cost of maintaining an apprentice, masters might well have given thought to dealing with those who fell ill. Poor law rate-payers were obliged to take apprentices if deemed able to do so and if the child was over the age of thirteen; they might, however, refuse a child who could be said to be too weak or ill to carry out the required work.⁶⁸ Children, however, even when fit and well when taken in, fell ill with alarming frequency as numerous entries in diaries and correspondence show; they were also the most likely victims of the virulent diseases of the day and prone to accidents.

The phrase ‘in sickness and in health’, on some sixteenth-century indentures, had committed masters to care for their apprentices even when they continued to be too ill to work. As well as paying for medical attention and nursing they risked losing the economic benefits of a child’s services during a period of sickness. By the eighteenth century, however, indentures were usually silent on the question of who was responsible for either the cost or care of an ill apprentice. There was a general consensus that a master was responsible for any injury sustained while the apprentice was engaged in work for him (whether he was so engaged could be challenged as when the Foundling Hospital was obliged to pursue Nicholas Hare’s master when he refused either to take responsibility or take the boy back after an accident) but commitment to care for the sick seems to have come under threat in the seventeenth century.⁶⁹ The many issues arising from sickness which came before the Mayor’s court in London suggest that masters found this obligation irksome and attempted to throw responsibility back on parents, kin or ‘friends’ of the apprentice.⁷⁰ Christopher Brooks refers to indentures in which responsibility in the event of sickness was clarified and so, perhaps, had become an item to be negotiated.⁷¹ Most often, however, such agreements explicitly relieved the master or mistress of responsibility for the medical care of an apprentice. In four contracts for Oxford City apprentices,

⁶⁸ Bird, *Laws Respecting Masters and Servants*, 26-7

⁶⁹ Committee Minutes, 12 April 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/03/002/012

⁷⁰ Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (Harlow and London: Longman, 1998), 124

⁷¹ Christopher Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 236

for example, a parent or close relative agreed to provide for the apprentice in time of sickness. In Samuel Vallis's indenture (1745) a note added in the margin made it clear that his father was to provide 'apothecary and physician', should his son fall ill.⁷² Margaret Pelling suggests that the dramatic impact of smallpox and the fear it engendered in the eighteenth century encouraged this development since it was an illness which was seen to target children (who were less likely to have acquired immunity), with particular force and deadly effect.⁷³ Some indentures, especially for urban apprenticeships, removed the employer from any responsibility for costs in the specific event of smallpox. In 1737 when Sam Bayly was apprenticed to William Wheeler, it was agreed that 'if [the] apprentice be visited with smallpox during the term then the charges thereof shall be borne by John Thatcher of Oxford, baker, his uncle and William Bayly his brother'.⁷⁴ Such clarification, however, was unusual and the uncertainty led to tension and dispute.

In the private sphere individual families might work out their own solutions. The Purefoys, of Buckinghamshire, made newly appointed servants sign a paper in which they agreed to leave if they contracted smallpox.⁷⁵ Children seem to have been a particular source of concern. In 1743 Elizabeth Purefoy wrote to Edward Fell instructing him to arrange the appointment of Jo Sheppard with the boy's mother. Mrs Purefoy detailed the wages, clothing and boots Jo would receive but added, 'and if hee shall be visited with the small pox hee must quitt his service'.⁷⁶ In 1759 the Reverend James Newton showed much the same concern when he placed an advertisement in an Oxford newspaper for a livery servant who could be

⁷² Malcolm Graham (ed.), *Oxford City Apprentices 1697-1800*, Oxford Historical Society, 31 (1987), 139. See also, Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 127

⁷³ Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 127. It is difficult to exaggerate the fear engendered by small pox during the long eighteenth century. It appears as a constant threat or blight in the writings of all sections of society in this study – in diaries, correspondence, autobiography, charity records, poor law records and the fiction of the period. John Bezor was disfigured and blinded in one eye, Samuel Bamford's mother, a sister aged three and one year old brother all died of small pox. Mary Hardy nursed two small children through small pox. The Reverend Woodward consulted friends and relatives before deciding to have his children inoculated in 1757. The Reverend Skinner sent 'Little Goid', a servant's daughter suffering from small pox, 'some children's books for her amusement'. And see Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 124 and Michael Bennett, 'Inoculation of the Poor against Small pox in Eighteenth-Century England,' in *Experiences of Poverty in Late Medieval and Early Modern England and France*, ed. Anne M. Scott (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 199-223

⁷⁴ Graham, *Oxford City Apprentices*, 124

⁷⁵ George Eland (ed.), *Purefoy Letters 1735-1753* (London: Sedgewick and Jackson Ltd, 1931), indemnity for Priscilla Matthews, 444

⁷⁶ Eland, *Purefoy Letters*, Elizabeth Purefoy to Edward Fell, 310

recommended for his ‘Honesty, Care and Abilities’; Newton’s first concern, however, was that he ‘hath had the Small Pox.’⁷⁷

When inoculation first promised hope of protection from smallpox it was children, including many intended for household service, who were among the first to benefit. The practice was pioneered as early as the 1720s but was slow to be taken up as it continued to be a hazardous undertaking involving much discomfort and anxiety, a period of isolation and considerable expense.⁷⁸ The London Foundling Hospital, however, which was notable for the involvement of medical men in its organisation, began its first inoculations in 1743 in this instance providing protection from smallpox for children who were no more than two years old (The first foundlings were received by the Hospital in 1741). It soon became routine practice to inoculate the very young when they returned from their foster mothers. The decision reflected Enlightenment concerns for empirical observation (much could be learned of the effects of inoculation) and humane treatment of the sick. It had, in addition, the practical possibility of overcoming fears about smallpox (and the costs it might incur) on the part of masters/mistresses, thereby giving foundling children an advantage over other children seeking apprenticeships.⁷⁹ Juliana Dodd, a Foundling Hospital inspector in Berkshire, was explicit on this point. In a letter to the Hospital Committee in 1767 she reported that she had paid for two children to be inoculated along with eighteen others ‘having promised it to their masters at the time of their being apprenticed’.⁸⁰ Dodd may have been aware of advertisements of the kind James Newton had placed in *Jacksons* in Oxford a few years earlier. Given the greater vulnerability of children to the disease, those taking in apprentices or very young servants would have been even more anxious to have proof of immunity.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Gavin Hannah (ed.), *The Diary of an Oxfordshire Rector James Newton of Nuneham Courtenay 1736-86* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), 51. The newspaper was *Jacksons*, 11 August 1759.

⁷⁸ For example, a surgeon in the 1740s charged 40s for each person he inoculated – not much less than the annual wage of many live-in servants, Bennett, ‘The Inoculation of the Poor,’ 206

⁷⁹ 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), 145-74 and passim; Michael Bennett, ‘Inoculation of the poor,’ in *Experiences of Poverty in Late Medieval and Early Modern England and France* ed. Anne M. Scott (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012) 215

⁸⁰ Correspondence, LMA, A/FH/A/6/1/20/4/32, 16 October 1767, quoted in Gillian Clark (ed.), *Correspondence of the Foundling Hospital Inspectors in Berkshire 1757-68* Berkshire Record Society, 1 (1994), 228. Other inspectors made the same point.

⁸¹ Recent research indicates that by the 1770s children over the age of ten had usually gained immunity from smallpox, Romola Davenport, Leonard Schwarz, and Jeremy Boulton, ‘The Decline

Other institutions responsible for apprenticing children were slower to take up inoculation, balancing its advantages against the high cost, the continued risks and popular prejudice. The Blue Coat School in Birmingham did not insist on inoculation until 1788 but this may have been because they were relying on the parish or parents to bear the cost before the children reached the school at the age of at least seven. In that year there were only two children who had not been inoculated; the School was to arrange for this and pay for all expenses.⁸² The School's general concern for the health of children being sent out as apprentices (see below) suggests that they, too, were aware of the need to reassure employers on the matter of their apprentices' health. By the 1760's most London parishes for whom we have the relevant records appear to have made fairly routine arrangements for the inoculation of pauper children.⁸³ The immediate need seems to have been to find nurses to take poor law children into care, but poor law officials must have been aware that masters welcomed the removal of the smallpox hazard. Robert Blincoe, the orphan boy brought up in St Pancras workhouse in the 1790s, remembered being inoculated at the London Smallpox Hospital before being apprenticed to a Derbyshire textile mill; sometimes the mill owners, themselves, paid for these inoculations.⁸⁴ As so many of the girls placed out by parish officials were apprenticed as 'household servants' - involving close contact with family life - those contemplating apprenticing a parish girl may have been in particular need of reassurance.

Parish provision of inoculation, however, varied enormously. A note in the Banbury Vestry Minute Book for 1765 excused the governor of the workhouse 'from all charges attending the Small Pox which may happen in the said Parish' although the reason is not clear.⁸⁵ Individual masters, however, took their own action to protect servants along with the rest of the household, appearing to give special attention to the youngest. It is a striking feature in many households and indicates something of the fear small pox engendered. Matthew Flinders, inoculated his servant maid and

of Adult Smallpox in Eighteenth-Century London,' *Economic History Review*, 64. 4 (2011), 1289-314. However contemporaries would have been aware of the general vulnerability of children.

⁸² BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 21 January 1788, 61

⁸³ See discussion in Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor*, 86-7

⁸⁴ See Bennett, 'Inoculation of the poor', 217

⁸⁵ Banbury Vestry Minute Book, 14 August 1765, Oxfordshire Archives, Oxfordshire Record Office, PAR21/2/A/1. I am grateful to Rosemary Leadbeater for this reference.

boy at the same time as his daughter Susan when small pox hit Donington in 1783.⁸⁶ In April 1793, having nursed her own children with small pox a few years earlier, Mary Hardy brought in Mr Bartell to inoculate her boy servant.⁸⁷ Parson Woodforde arranged for Dr Thorne to inoculate his servants – Ben Legate and ‘little Jack Warton’ in November 1776. Jack was then ‘about ten or eleven years of age’. When he first arrived to be the new ‘boy’ he did not sleep in the house ‘as he has not had the smallpox’. At a later date his ‘New Boy Jack Secker’ arrived to join the household after getting his inoculation from the same Dr Thorne as if this was a regular procedure when boys began Woodforde’s service.⁸⁸ When small pox spread in the parish 1791 Woodforde wrote of his relief that the children of two local families had been inoculated, but added ‘It is a pity that all the Poor in the Parish are not inoculated also. I am entirely for it’.⁸⁹

Many masters and mistresses were unable to routinely make such arrangements for their servants – not all were either as enlightened or prosperous as those mentioned above. As early as 1750, however, the *Gentleman’s Magazine* suggested that inoculation offered at a low cost would be acceptable to many poor. They singled out servants because they risked ‘losing their good place’ on account of not having had smallpox.⁹⁰ By the 1770s, inoculation was, indeed, more widely available. Medical practices had been established specifically to address the problem of smallpox. Some, such as that of Robert Sutton and Sons of Suffolk, made special arrangements for groups and charities, including parishes to be inoculated. Much of the early prejudice had been overcome and the cost had been greatly reduced.⁹¹ In 1768 Parson Woodforde believed that in his parish, Dr Clarke would administer inoculation ‘for a mere trifle’.⁹² The 10s 6d, which Woodforde paid Thorne for his two servants the year before was not ‘a mere trifle’ for a poor man but Woodforde seemed to be suggesting that Dr Clarke would adjust his fees in the interests of the

⁸⁶ Martin Beardsley and Nicholas Bennet (eds), *Grateful to Providence: the Diary and Accounts of Matthew Flinders, Surgeon, Apothecary and Man-Midwife, I, 1775-1784*, Lincoln Record Society, 96 (2007) 140

⁸⁷ Basil Cozens-Hardy, *Mary Hardy’s Diary*, 83

⁸⁸ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, I, 3 November 1776, 190, 3 August 1776, 186, II 27 April 1785, 250

⁸⁹ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 7 March 1791, 396-7, 395

⁹⁰ Cited in Bennett, ‘Inoculation of the poor’, 214-5

⁹¹ Bennett, ‘Inoculation of the Poor,’ 207

⁹² Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, I, 14 July, 1768, 76

well-being of the locality. Those seeking posts as servants for their children had more reason than most to take advantage of the wider availability of inoculation.

If fear of smallpox had led masters to evade responsibility for sick apprentices and servants (particularly child servants), then these developments must have helped to make householders less fearful of taking them into their homes. Even so, small pox or not, a sick apprentice or young servant could still present a master with unwanted costs and set-backs which small traders could ill afford - and the uncertainty about responsibility remained. In 1799 James Barry Bird was still asserting that an apprentice could not be discharged for illness even if the disease seemed incurable, but without the force of an indenture this was difficult to insist upon.⁹³ In Hampshire, in 1816, William Cobbett also believed that he was obliged to see that a sick pauper apprentice was 'doctored' - though he resented both cost and responsibility.⁹⁴

Even such grudging acceptance was welcome to parishes who presumed that responsibility for an apprentice who fell ill belonged to 'all other Things necessary and fit for an apprentice' and put pressure on masters who insisted otherwise. This represented an appeal to the indenture - but of the most tenuous kind. As in much else in poor law practice there was uncertainty and much regional variation.⁹⁵ The position of apprentices was in many parishes, a grey area: in March 1766 the officers of the Wimbledon Vestry were to 'take opinion of counsel on Geo. Scarnell's indenture, if the master is not entitled to maintain him in time of sickness during his apprenticeship'⁹⁶ As numerous court cases in the Mayor of London's court showed, the uncertainty meant that the duty to care for a sick child became all too often 'a contest between the master and his parish'⁹⁷

Charities seem to have been more willing to take on some responsibility for sickness amongst their apprentices, although they also took measures to make this less likely.

⁹³ James Barry Bird, *The Laws Respecting Masters and Servants* (London, W. Clarke 1799), 34

⁹⁴ Barbara Biddell, 'The Jolly Farmer?', *Hampshire Papers* No.15 (1999), 15

⁹⁵ Steven King, "'Stop this overwhelming Torment of Destiny'" Navigating Financial Aid at Times of Sickness under the Old Poor Law', *Bulletin of Medical History*, 79, 2 (2005), 228-60

⁹⁶ F. M. Cowe (ed.), *Wimbledon Vestry Minutes 1736, 1743-1788*, Surrey Record Society, 25 (1964), 43

⁹⁷ Pelling, 'Child health' 132 and see discussion in Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750; Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow and London: Longman, 2000), 88-91

At point of entry the Blue Coat School refused admission to any pupil who was not in good health. Sarah Parsonage, for example, was found to be an ‘improper’ object for admission in 1785 on account of her poor health.⁹⁸ Sick pupils were occasionally removed (usually to care elsewhere) usually to be replaced by another (healthier) one: in February 1782, for example, Thomas Challener replaced his brother John who suffered from fits. Charles Barton, ‘not in fit state of health to be in service’, was to remain in the school until he improved before being found a placement.⁹⁹ In general, the school’s record on health reflected genuine concern: the Committee Book for 1781-1795 records the school taking exceptional measures on behalf of fifteen children in the school who were injured or seriously ill. The governors acted in co-operation with the parents and on occasions made arrangements for hospital treatment and recuperation in the country-side, although it is not always clear how, or if, costs were shared.¹⁰⁰ Once apprentices were in their workplaces the governors were prepared to take action in the event of illness but seem to have responded to each occasion according to circumstances rather than on the basis of established principle. Richard Jenkins had been apprenticed to Messieurs Whitworth in an arrangement whereby the firm paid for him to be boarded with his parents. When he fell ill and Whitworth refused to pay for his board, Richard’s mother applied to the School for help with maintenance. The committee, however, ‘referred the matter back to the Masters, it being their duty’.¹⁰¹ The Committee took a more active role in the investigation into Charlotte Burton’s (sometimes Barton) allegations of cruel treatment by her master (1786-7) when the state of the girl’s health was one of several points at issue. Dr Johnson was sent to report on her health. He found her in good health but at a later date she was taken back into the school until her health improved. This was not, however, a straightforward case of sickness: public knowledge and various rumours about the case made it necessary for the School to defend its position and act swiftly.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Blue Coat School Committee Book 1781-95, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 18, April 1785, 41,

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7 February 1785, 36-7, 12 February 1782, p.5, 31 December 1787, 61,

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 26 July 1784, 29 November 1784, 7 February 1785

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 22 November, 1784, 35

¹⁰² Blue Coat School Committee Book, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 23 July 1786, 55-61. This was a complicated case as the school received ‘acrimonious’ letters about Charlotte’s treatment which compelled them to take action on other matters besides her health. They later transferred Charlotte to another placement.

Such interventions or costs on the part of the school Committee on behalf of their sick apprentices were, however, unusual in the 1775-1804 period. Either young apprentices were rarely unwell (unlikely given the number of cases of sickness which occurred inside the school), or masters/mistresses and sometimes parents generally accepted that sickness was their responsibility once the children left the School. Caring for a sick apprentice was probably less difficult in the integrated Birmingham community to which the children were returned and where parents or kin were close at hand. Some pupils were apprenticed to their parents so that parent and 'master' were one and the same and the problem of deciding responsibilities did not arise. In 1775, for example, Ann Hadley was apprenticed as a household servant to her father and in 1776 Nehemiah Tonks went to his father to learn the trade of toy-making.¹⁰³

The Foundling Hospital also seems to have operated on an *ad hoc* basis rather than from any clear set of rules. Samuel Adams was returned to the Hospital because his affliction, the 'violent running in his ears', made him unsuitable for work in a gingerbread shop; the Hospital committee accepted his master's claim that he was suffering from the complaint before being apprenticed. Samuel was taken back and cared for until found a new post. John Trevor was held back from his apprenticeship until he had recovered from his 'diseased heel', but his master was assured that John would be received back if the condition returned and left him unable to cope. When this proved to be the case arrangements were made by the Hospital to send John to Margate infirmary.¹⁰⁴ In both cases the Hospital had been aware of the illness before placing out the apprentice and accepted that the boys were unable to carry out the roles to which they had been bound. The Governors, however, do not seem to have considered that all the required action lay with them when an illness occurred after the placement and seem to have become less accommodating by the end of the eighteenth century.

The fudged nature of responsibility for sickness was apparent in the response to the mental breakdown of William Seal, serving out his apprenticeship as a household

¹⁰³ Indenture for Ann Hadley, 16 November 1775; indenture for Nehemiah Tonks, 13 April 1776, BCA, MS1622/2/6

¹⁰⁴ General Committee Rough Minutes, 3 May 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/03/002/012; 19 October 1796, LMA, A/FH/A03/002/018; *Ibid.* 1 February 1797

servant in Jersey. In 1790 William found his way back to the Hospital and was clearly unwell. The Hospital cared for him for several weeks but was reluctant to provide all the support needed. Having failed to obtain a place for him in the parish hospital the steward applied to a magistrate for an order to return William to his master whom they held responsible for his upkeep as well as the cost of his care. The response of the sitting magistrate, Mr Balamane, seems admirably balanced and humane: he advised bringing an action against the master for causing William to become chargeable to the Hospital but at the same time ‘wondered they should think of sending him back’ given the distance involved. Rather, he urged them, ‘as Guardians of the children (who have no other Friends) to take the best care of him in his present unhappy state’. The added complication, as the Hospital was quick to point out, was that since British laws had no force in Jersey, they could not compel the master to reimburse the expenses. The master, Jean Fillieul had, in correspondence in May of that year stated his willingness to pay William’s ‘charges’ in London, pointing out, not unreasonably, ‘that we have not in this place any house wherein to confine persons in this situation.’ Perhaps Fillieul reneged on his promise but it seems more likely that he had not expected to pay for both medical costs and maintenance which the Hospital now demanded. Efforts were made to put William ‘into a place of confinement’ provided for parish paupers but in the meantime William remained with a Mr. Harrison at Hoxton for which the Hospital paid 8s a week.¹⁰⁵

Other masters/mistresses sought to compromise over expenses: when Laetitia Keen was ‘in a declining way’ her mistress asked that she be received back into the Hospital until she recovered, but offered to pay for her maintenance during that time.¹⁰⁶ The outcome is not recorded but when in 1794 Sam Brady proposed to return his sick apprentice (now so weak ‘that he was useless to him’) to the Hospital but to pay for his maintenance he was sent a copy of the Resolution passed the previous Wednesday (3 September 1794) ‘that as the committee never receive back any children after they are once apprenticed on account of ill Health they cannot

¹⁰⁵ General Committee, 6 October 1790, LMA/FH/A003/002/016; Correspondence, 11 May 1790 LMA, A/FH/A12/4/851

¹⁰⁶ Correspondence, Letter from Mrs Cole (wife of Charles Cole, silk dyer) to the Hospital, n.d. but likely to be within a few years of 1787 when Laetitia was apprenticed to Cole, aged thirteen, LMA, A/FH/A12/023/001

deviate from that Resolution'. Yet just such an arrangement was made in 1797 when John Wood was taken into the Hospital 'to be cured of a bad leg', but his master paid five guineas towards the cost of the treatment. John remained in the Hospital until a new placement could be found for him.¹⁰⁷ By the late 1790s the Hospital had amended its indenture to charge the master/mistress with responsibility for maintaining their apprentice 'in sickness and in health' presumably hoping to end ambiguity on this point.¹⁰⁸ The issue of sickness amongst apprentices had perhaps been the cause of too much uncertainty and dispute at a time when the finances of the Hospital were under strain.

There was even less clarity in privately negotiated arrangements about responsibility for domestic servants who fell ill which was complicated by uncertainty on this and other issues about whether domestic servants could appeal to the laws of masters and servants. Authors of household manuals urged employers to care for their servants who fell sick but their argument was a moral and practical one (well-cared for servants stayed in place for longer and were loyal) rather than a reminder of legal obligations. In 1780 John Trusler believed that an annually hired servant could 'not be discharged by reason of sickness, or any other disability by the act of God; nor may his wages for those causes be abated'.¹⁰⁹ That Trusler found it necessary to assert this point may mean that it was not widely observed – but in any case such an assertion left uncertainty about other categories of servants. Regional and traditional custom, which often guided issues not covered in formal agreements and with which parents of child servants might be familiar had less force by the end of the century and were complicated by additions to the laws on this and other matters.¹¹⁰

Something survived of the principle that servants were entitled to wages if an accident occurred while on the master's business, but this was irrelevant to many children in domestic service who might not receive wages in the early years of work.¹¹¹ In 1816, Henry George Watkins could only appeal to the better nature of the heads of families; 'All the care that our opportunity and pecuniary ability will

¹⁰⁷ General Committee, 8 February 1797, 15 February 1798, LMA, A/FH/A003/002/018

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, indenture for Penelope Vaughan, 2 December 1802, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/095

¹⁰⁹ John Trusler, *The London Adviser and Guide* (London, privately printed, 1780), 50

¹¹⁰ Douglas Hay and Paul Craven, 'England, 1562-1875: The Law and its Uses' in Douglas Hay and Paul Craven (eds), *Masters, Servants and Magistrates* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 59-116

¹¹¹ Pelling, *Common Lot*, 125

allow is certainly due to our servants in time of sickness', but he added, only if they had been 'acceptable' in their role.¹¹² Some households might have argued, and with reason, that their opportunities and funds allowed very little whether or not servants were 'acceptable'.

In practice both apprentices and privately employed children were generally thrown upon the mercy or whim of the employer and at the same time on the vagaries of eighteenth-century medicine. Cases of kindness and care for sick children in service co-existed with appalling indifference and neglect. The cost of medical care goes some way to explaining this disparate response to sickness and there were other expenses besides. In November 1762 Robert Redford, a boy groom in Lord Carnarvon's household in Minchendon, contracted small pox. (This may have been 'little Bob' for whose welfare Carnarvon had shown some special concern two years earlier.) The nurse attending him received £3 13s 6d with 2s 6d for tea and 10 ½d for six pints of porter plus an extra 5s, perhaps as a perquisite. A man to assist the nurse was paid 8s and Edward Marshall (presumably the doctor or apothecary), 18s 4d, 'Expenses for Robert Redford in small pox.' A boy who substituted for Robert for the four weeks and two days of his illness earned £1 10s.¹¹³ If Robert was a live-in servant this payment amounted to an expense over and above the normal labour costs. This means that the overall cost for Robert's illness was £6 13s 2 ½d – hardly a problem for Lord Carnarvon whose expenditure on food and servants' wages for half a year in June 1763 was £157 6s 4½d - but an impossible amount for a stretched artisan household which had taken an apprentice or child servant to save on labour costs.¹¹⁴

Lord Carnarvon left such practical matters to others. Sarah Fox, the Plymouth Quaker and diarist, gave personal attention to Ned – 'a little innocent negro boy about 12 years old', who had been sent from the West Indies to be a servant to her brother, a prosperous porcelain manufacturer. The boy fell ill soon after his arrival and was boarded out to be cared for. Sarah visited and nursed him on several

¹¹² Henry George Watkins, *Hints and Observations Addressed to Heads of Families in Reference Chiefly to Female Domestic Servants* (London, 1816), 51,73

¹¹³ The House Bill of the most Honourable Marquis of Carnarvon, Huntington Library, ST389, Box 13, 31 January, 1763, 4th January 1763

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5th July 1763

occasions between March 1777 and January 1778 when he died. Fox's telling of the story of 'Poor little innocent Black Ned' may reflect a style of contemporary diary writing designed to promote 'an idealised self', but the story remains a sad one. The boy had appeared to be getting better and arrangements were made to send him to a warmer climate (perhaps the West Indies) to assist his recovery. The idea, however, caused him concern: he feared that if he died aboard ship, crabs would eat him 'which would prevent him going to Heaven, where he believed he should go to God and see his mother again'.¹¹⁵ Fox tells us little otherwise of Ned or his intended service with her brother. The 'boarding out' removed the boy from the immediate care of her brother's family, but they recognised an obligation to a sick servant which must have been quite costly.

Parson Woodford's concern for his boys' health was also evident, if somewhat eccentric,

My Boy Jack had another touch of Ague about noon. Gave him a dram of gin at the beginning of it and pushed him headlong into one of my Ponds and ordered him to bed immediately and he was better after it and had nothing of the cold fit after, but was very hot.¹¹⁶

In August and September 1783 Jack fell ill again with a complaint that troubled others in the household in the late summer of that year. On 9th August Woodforde first recorded Lizzy Greaves to be 'taken very ill with the fever'. She was his lower maid (and very young since her wages were only £2 0s 6d a year). On 14th August she was 'worse than ever, and kept to her Bed most part of the day'. Woodforde had called in Dr Thorne who prescribed 'Bark' (quinine). He noted the treatment prescribed and arranged for Betty Claxton, his head maid, to sit up with her at night to administer the medicine. That Lizzy's condition was serious, is indicated by the arrival of her mother at the parsonage on 26th August where she stayed for three days taking breakfast and dinner with the household. Woodforde continued to record the progress of all his servants but singled out Jack and Lizzy in his observations

¹¹⁵ Madge Dresser (ed.), *The Diary of Sarah Fox, nee Champion, Bristol 1745-1802*, Bristol Record Society 55 (2003), 51, 56. The boy was not a slave but brought to be a servant. The Fox/Champions were Quakers and Sarah became involved in the abolitionist movement.

¹¹⁶ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, 22 May 1779, 154

and, at times, supervised Lizzy's medication himself. On 27 September he noted, 'Will and Lizzy still very poorly, my other servants brave'. Finally on October 6, 'All my Folkes continue better'.¹¹⁷ Thereafter, the commentary ends presumably because all made a reasonable recovery. Woodforde's response suggests that his concept of family applied to all under his roof but also that he felt a special responsibility for the well-being of the youngest. They might have felt grateful to receive Thorne's treatment, derived from observation and experience, rather than the parson's favoured treatment for a multitude of ailments: generous doses of 'Rhubarb and Ginger'.¹¹⁸

Woodforde's homespun remedies proved innocuous but children in service in poor households were shockingly exposed to dubious remedies no less than when they were in their parental homes, simply because these were cheap. They might also face the hazards of self-appointed medical men. In 1826 seventeen-year old Camp Collins, an apprentice in Clerkenwell, died as the result of an overdose of a fox-glove preparation intended to cure his attacks of giddiness. This was administered by his concerned mother and master but prescribed by a *soi-disant* herbalist, Jacob Evans. The surgeon at the Old Bailey put the blame entirely on Evans: 'Nothing but complete ignorance could have led to such a dose being given'.¹¹⁹ Of course much 'routine' medical treatment was not always successful, including 'bleeding' - the eighteenth-century panacea for just about everything - but at least an adult was in a position to refuse. The indenture as well as most private arrangements committed a child, once in their new household, to unquestioning obedience to 'all lawful Business'.

All too often children, lacking resources of their own, had simply to survive illness as best they could. Two years into his warehouse work and still only eleven years old John Bezor caught typhus fever which kept him from work for three months. He was grateful for the respite but aggrieved that his employer gave him only 1s of his 5s wage. Bezor believed he was entitled to 2s, which suggests either that he had an agreement with the employer concerning sickness, or that a London custom and

¹¹⁷ Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, Vol. II, 85-96

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.386.

¹¹⁹ *OBP* October 1826, trial of Jacob Evans (t18261026-215)

practice existed even if the employer failed to honour it.¹²⁰ Mary Ashford became ill soon after she moved to a new mistress in City Road, London. The doctor attributed the haemorrhage from her ear to a violent cold caught on a cold, wet day in December when she made the move. How the doctor was consulted and who paid his bill is not revealed. It seems unlikely that her new mistress, ‘penurious in the extreme’, who kept Mary seriously short of food, would have been willing to spend money on a doctor’s fee. Mary, who was barely fifteen, remained in pain for some time and not a little alarmed by the dramatic nature of her complaint. Fortunately her condition improved over time without further medical treatment.¹²¹ She might otherwise have echoed the fictional Humphry Clinker’s dismal trajectory following his fever: loss of savings, the need to pawn clothing and eventually the loss of his job.¹²² Illness for many in such circumstances meant dismissal since the legal status of sick servants, including children, was even less secure than that of apprentices. Like Clinker, Mary was an orphan, with few friends or relatives to help her.

Sometimes a dose of sound common sense or consideration was enough. Recording his journey from Oxford to Nuneham Courtenay with his boy servant in June 1759, the Reverend Newton noted, ‘George not being very well rode with me in the Landau part of the way’. The next day George was working as usual in the glebe with Newton and a fellow servant.¹²³ Dr Bailes (Bayles), brought in from Newcastle to attend Thomas Bewick when unwell and in low spirits a few weeks into his apprenticeship, eschewed all current medical ‘cures’ in favour of a balanced diet, fresh air and exercise - which evidently did the trick.¹²⁴

The above examples suggest, unsurprisingly, that in sickness as in much else, the most fortunate children were those in the more prosperous households as well as those who could appeal to the charities who had placed them. This may, to some extent, reflect the nature of surviving sources which are more abundant for wealthier households and for charities and more likely to record favourable treatment.

Surviving records for the poor (court cases, coroners’ records) are likely to contain

¹²⁰ Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism*, 163-4

¹²¹ Ashford, *Victualler’s Daughter*, 26-8

¹²² Tobias Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, first published 1771, equated with third edition 1785 (London and New York: J. M. Dent, 1961), 78-9

¹²³ Hannah, *The Deserted Village*, 15 June 1759, 16 June 1759, 37

¹²⁴ Bewick, BL, Add. MS. 41481, 56

the very worst examples. A major consideration, however, was the cost of medical care which left many children in service with no care at all or, perhaps worse, pushed them into the hands of charlatans. Even those who returned to a caring parent could not usually overcome the inability of a poor household to call upon the assistance of a qualified doctor. One positive development was the establishment of voluntary general hospitals which provided free treatment for children, despite regulations intended to exclude them. Dispensaries reached many more people, including children. Child servants belonged to a category likely to benefit from such provision, depending on their proximity to such institutions and the willingness of their masters or mistresses to seek their services.¹²⁵

Discipline, Punishment and Abuse

The indenture left few uncertainties about the behaviour expected of the apprentice. S/he was enjoined to obedience and loyalty to their new household with respect to persons, business or trade secrets. For many, including the Birmingham Blue Coat School the code of behaviour, echoing seventeenth century indentures, included a ban on all forms of gambling as well as a further check on frivolity in that the apprentice should not ‘haunt’ taverns, inns or alehouses.¹²⁶ If we take at face value the frequent complaints about the riotous behaviour of certain apprentices (males at least) this was more honoured in the breach than the observance. Francis Place, not yet fourteen when he became an apprentice tailor, recorded roaming the streets to join other apprentices in a dissolute night life involving rough clubs and fighting. His master, Joe France, ‘had in fact no control over me neither did he care much about me, or what became of me’.¹²⁷ Domestic servants, as the discussion on work and leisure has indicated, were probably in a different category: they had less scope for night life since darkness did not bring an end to their work in the way that it did for tailoring or other trades involving close work. Masters in London who took children from the Foundling Hospital sometimes boasted that their apprentices remained

¹²⁵ Alysa Levene, Jonathan Reinartz and Andrew Williams, ‘Child Patients, Hospitals and the Home in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Family and Community History*, 15, 2 (2012), 16-33

¹²⁶ For example, indenture for John Marden, 18 January 1792, BCA, MS1622/2/2/6

¹²⁷ Thrale, *Autobiography of Francis Place*, 78

uncontaminated by the corruption of city life because they (especially girls) had never been allowed out of the house.¹²⁸ Few masters, however, were as lax or unconcerned as Joe France, nor were all apprentices (including young servants) as accommodating as the indenture promised: they came before the courts for various breaches of the indenture; absence from their place of work; disobeying or disregarding orders; insubordination; and running away.

On the question of punishment within the household for breaches of the apprenticeship code of conduct (or others beside) the indenture again provided little guidance, probably because it was assumed that there was some general understanding of what was permitted. In the seventeenth century it was common for indentures to permit the master/mistress to correct and chastise an apprentice 'in due and reasonable manner' adding, as some sort of safeguard, 'and not otherwise'.¹²⁹ Rather than the indenture, Blackstone provided the legal position in the eighteenth century and gave much the same licence: a parent '... may lawfully correct his child, being under age, in a reasonable manner: for this is for the benefit of his education.'¹³⁰ A master standing *in loco parentis* was held to have the same authority or obligation. A rare reference to punishment occurs in the indenture for Mary Young apprenticed as maid servant to Thomas Scotton in St. Nicholas parish in Leicester in 1741. The overseer has added, in his own hand, that Scotton was to bring her up 'with due and reasonable chastisement'.¹³¹ No other surviving indenture from this parish at this time makes any reference to discipline. Was Mary considered a particularly difficult girl or did Scotton have a reputation for harshness? Or was this overseer particularly anxious to see discipline maintained?

What exactly was 'reasonable' remained open to wide interpretation; so much so that a parent, who killed a child in the course of administering punishment, could hope

¹²⁸ Despite the reputation of apprentices for rowdy, delinquent behaviour, Alys Levene argues for the need to appreciate 'the wide variety of experiences of apprenticeship and how this might change over the course of a relatively long period of service'. Many of the apprentices she discusses were domestic servants and subject to the constraints discussed as well as being drilled in the ideals such as honesty and obedience instilled by charities during their early lives, Alys Levene, 'Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence,' 183-4

¹²⁹ See indenture of Mary Lund, Jane Holmes, 'Domestic Service in Yorkshire,' D.Phil. York (1989), 315-16

¹³⁰ Cited in Anne-Marie Kilday and Katherine Watson, 'Nursery Crimes: Child Murder in Georgian England,' *History Today*, 55 (2005), 40-6

¹³¹ ROLLR, Indenture for Mary Young, 1741, 23D52/10/10

for lenient treatment in the courts by claiming misadventure, the intention, merely to reform the child, having been within the law.¹³² There are certainly many examples of corporal punishment cruelly inflicted upon the children in our sample. John MacDonald claimed that the coachman, under whose direction he worked in Lady Hamilton's household flogged him 'unmercifully', 'sometimes until the blood came out of my legs'¹³³ Joseph Mayett was beaten by his drunken master four or five times with a walking stick in the short time that he worked for him.¹³⁴ William Hutton described the response of the neighbours when his uncle, also his master beat him, aged sixteen, for inadequate work; it was they said, on hearing his cries, 'only old Hutton thrashing one of his lads.'¹³⁵ One can only imagine what was involved when Abigail Gawthern's neighbour died from a broken blood vessel, 'he being involved in a violent passion with his boy servant'.¹³⁶ The Reverend Newton recorded 'horse-whipping' his boys on isolated occasions and considered it his duty to do so.¹³⁷ One of his boys received a 'lashing' from Newton's housekeeper, thus, like MacDonald, becoming a victim of another servant's anger or abuse. These examples suggest, as does Tim Meldrum's work, that male servants were particularly subject to physical punishment and that the youngest were most vulnerable.¹³⁸ Certainly it was common for boy servants and apprentices who ran away to say they had done so because of beatings from their master. In 1776, thirteen year-old John Moss gave evidence at the trial of his master for the 'wilful murder' of a fellow apprentice; William Ringrose, he said, 'had rosy cheeks' on his arrival at the age of ten but had run away twice on account of the cruelty and neglect of his master. A neighbour added that he had seen the accused 'licking his boys with a bit of cord' and heard them both cry out.¹³⁹

¹³² See Bird, *Laws Respecting Servants and Masters*, 6. See also Crawford, *Parents*, 146; Kilday and Watson's work indicates that the courts treated women more harshly in such cases, considering such violence in women to be 'unnatural', Kilday and Watson, 'Nursery Crimes,' 40-1

¹³³ MacDonald, *Travels*, 48-51

¹³⁴ Ann Kussmaul (ed), *The Autobiography of Joseph Mayett of Quainton 1783-1839*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 23 (1986), 4-5

¹³⁵ Hutton, *Life of William Hutton*, 16

¹³⁶ Adrian Henstock (ed.), *The Diary of Abigail Gawthern of Nottingham*, Thoroton Society Record Series, 33 (1980), 73

¹³⁷ Hannah, *Deserted Village*, 140,151

¹³⁸ Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow and London: Longman, 2000), 92

¹³⁹ *OBP*, February 1776, trial of Stephen Self (t17760221-38)

But girls were not exempt as Mary Young's indenture shows. Although placed in a household considered suitable by the Blue Coat School, Elizabeth Fieldhouse was beaten and on one occasion received 'a violent blow in the Face, which almost cut her lip'.¹⁴⁰ Between 1782 and 1788, four other girls from the school (or their kin) complained of ill-treatment including being stripped of stays and shift to be whipped (Charlotte Burton), being hit with a walking stick (Anne Calley), unspecified ill-treatment as well as being turned out into the street (Mary Fletcher). No details are given for the fourth girl described only as the daughter of Widow Ford.¹⁴¹ In 1786 a serious case of abuse came to the attention of the governors of the Foundling Hospital. Mary L'Argent, who had been apprenticed to Priscilla Hawkes for household work three years earlier, presented herself at the Hospital covered with bruises and swellings having escaped from her apprenticeship household and made her way to the Hospital. Her injuries had been inflicted by John Warrington Rogers who had subjected her to continued brutal beatings ever since he had joined the household as her mistress's husband. Her injuries were so extensive that she spent three weeks in the Hospital infirmary.¹⁴²

There was certainly some dislike of the punishment of girls by masters. When Ann Love's mother complained of the treatment of her daughter by her master, an order was made for Ann to be corrected by his wife only; this seemed more natural and practical for the mistress, who worked alongside the girl.¹⁴³ A mistress, however, could be just as spiteful and harsh. It was the Reverend Downing's wife who struck the offending blow to Elizabeth Fieldhouse's face. It was a woman, Elizabeth Brownrigg who perpetrated one of the most appalling cases of eighteenth-century abuse: in 1767, her apprentice, Mary Clifford, a parish apprentice, died as the result of sustained cruelty and severe whippings¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Blue Coat School Committee Book, 1781-95, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 23 June, 1783, 21

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Charlotte Burton 11 June 1787, p.55; Anne Calley, 7 November 1783 p.26; Mary Fletcher, 4 February 1788, p.62, 1 January and 4 January 1782, pp. 3-4

¹⁴² Correspondence, LMA, FH/A/12/023/001, 1775-91, 24 November 1786. See also Alysa Levene for the discussion of Mary L'Argent and other cases of abuse involving Foundling Hospital apprentices, 'Honesty, sobriety and diligence', 183-200

¹⁴³ Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 118

¹⁴⁴ See accounts of this case in Steedman, *Labours Lost*, p.224-5 and Kilday and Watson, 'Child Murder', 40-6

But the Brownrigg case was only the most notorious of many cases of ill-treatment against apprentices and young servants, some of which resulted in death. William Ringrose (see above) died as a result of wilful neglect and harsh use when he was returned to his master after running away. Judging by the number of apprentices who came before the courts complaining of abuse by their masters, corporal punishment, sometimes of a savage kind, was deemed ‘reasonable’ only too often. We may also suppose that a large number of cases of ill-treatment never came to litigation. Girls were often hidden from the public eye by the very nature of their work and less able to seek outside help. It seems difficult in the face of so much evidence not to conclude that an acceptance of harsh discipline towards children was widespread and that those in service were peculiarly at risk. ‘All this for a Parish Girl!’ Elizabeth Brownrigg was alleged to have exclaimed when condemned to death for the murder of Mary Clifford.¹⁴⁵ Brownrigg was hardly typical, but her remarks convey something of the low status of pauper apprentices.

Yet there is need for caution in interpreting these accounts as well as some cause for a less dismal assessment of the lives of children in domestic service. Victims had reason to exaggerate their sufferings for legal or literary effect. MacDonald’s image of blood trickling down his legs is a trope found in other autobiographies, including accounts of life at public school, and may be something of a literary convention. Again, we should take care not to make the history of childhood the history of abuse. Accounts of cruelty and neglect made sensational newspaper stories and added pathos to autobiography but must have done so because they were regarded as outside acceptable behaviour. Nor was corporal punishment universally condoned. Catharine Cappe did not allow corporal punishment in her York schools and believed that ‘in any such institutions it never ought to be’.¹⁴⁶ Parson Woodforde, who tells us a good deal about his boys’ behaviour, lamenting at times their idleness and foul language, never records administering corporal punishment. Mary Hardy did not mention any need to discipline her servants in this way including ‘the boy’ and

¹⁴⁵ Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 225; Kristina Straub suggests that by focussing on one individual, the outrage such trials gave rise to had the effect of deflecting attention from the more fundamental evil of the system: parish children were apprenticed into domestic service without adequate attention to the suitability of their masters/mistresses. Straub, *Domestic Affairs*, 14

¹⁴⁶ Catharine Cappe, *Account of Two Charity Schools for the Education of Girls and of a Friendly Society in York* (York, 1800), 4

seems to have remained on good terms with them. William Hutton, once an apprentice himself, believed beating a child to be counter-productive to learning, ‘A lad is too much terrified to march that path, which is marked out by the rod’¹⁴⁷

Nor were neighbours or bystanders invariably indifferent to harsh treatment of young workers. Fellow servants of John MacDonald sympathised with his plight and urged him to appeal to Mr Hamilton. Lady Hamilton was said to be distressed when she heard of his treatment.¹⁴⁸ Joseph Mayett’s father remonstrated with his son’s employer and threatened him.¹⁴⁹ Neighbours in the William Ringrose’s case were prepared to give evidence against his master. His fellow apprentice was not cowed into silence, giving a lengthy and detailed account of Stephen Self’s callous cruelty towards Ringrose. The Blue Coat School took seriously the allegations of ill-treatment made by their apprentices, calling both apprentice and master to present their case and spending time sorting out the complaints. They issued warrants against offending masters and Elizabeth Fieldhouse and Charlotte Burton were found new placements. In both cases parents (or step-parents) had supported the girls’ claims. The fourth girl’s complaints, quickly dismissed as unfounded, were nevertheless investigated in the usual way. The Foundling Hospital showed the same concern and several of their abused apprentices were helped and supported by friends and neighbours. A passing coachman helped Mary L’Argent to return to the Foundling Hospital, urging her to make her condition known to the Committee. The Hospital took action against her abuser and found neighbours who testified to her ill-treatment. Mr Maintree of Chelsea took Harriet Wilkins into his house and wrote to the Hospital on her behalf when she begged protection from his next door neighbour who had ‘treated her very ill’.¹⁵⁰

The Blue Coat School tried to strike a balance in dealing with these issues and occasionally the Governors’ comments have a surprisingly modern ring. Replying to one of Reverend Downing’s complaints about Elizabeth Fieldhouse, the Committee wrote, ‘like other girls of her age she is impertinent enough and may sometimes

¹⁴⁷ William Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, 1783, republished (Birmingham: E.P. Publishing, 1976), 209

¹⁴⁸ MacDonald, *Travels*, 48-61, 66

¹⁴⁹ Kussmaul, *Joseph Mayett*, 4-5

¹⁵⁰ Correspondence, 1790, LMA, A/FH/A/2/021/001

stand in need of reasonable correction . . .’ but also sought to persuade him that when her behaviour was satisfactory ‘she will be treated by you and Mrs Downing with Tenderness and Humanity’.¹⁵¹ While this is hardly evidence of Rousseau’s Enlightenment influence (the Blue Coat School Governors and the Foundling Hospital sanctioned corporal punishment for serious breach of their code of behaviour) it does show that there was a body of opinion which was far from indifferent to the nature of punishment administered to children in service.

There was wider condemnation of sustained and unwarranted brutalities. On 1 February 1812 *The Warwickshire Advertiser*, left no doubts about its feeling towards Martha Cave of Stratford-upon-Avon, exposed in the pillory for ‘having committed many inhuman and wanton acts of cruelty upon a poor defenceless child, her parish apprentice. . .’ – a sentiment presumably endorsed by the local populace when she was ‘much pelted with mud and filth’.¹⁵² More than forty years earlier there had been outrage in the press at the Brownrigg case and a hostile crowd when she was hanged at Tyburn. Clearly there were limits to what was acceptable in the treatment of children.

All the same, the border line between a concept of reasonable punishment and abuse is not easy to discern. Few children in service were free from the threat, at least, of physical punishment and existed in a world where there was an unwillingness to interfere in events behind closed doors. Orphans, children without a parent within reach, or unable to appeal to a respectable charity or authority remained particularly helpless when faced with severe punishment when working in, and confined to, another’s domestic space. Of these, apprentices were most at risk, bound as they were to a long period of service. Two cases are instructive. Mary Jones, a foundling, was severely mistreated while apprenticed to the Brownrigg household (in Fleet Street) but managed to seek help. According to the account given to the Ordinary at Newgate she escaped by night and made her way back to the Hospital where she had reason to believe that her account would be taken seriously.¹⁵³ Mary Clifford – an

¹⁵¹ Blue Coat School Committee Book 1781-1795, CBA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 20-1

¹⁵² I am grateful to Sylvia Pinches for this reference. Email communication, 3 May 2012

¹⁵³ ‘The Ordinary of Newgate’s Account of the Behaviour, Confessions and Dying Words of Elizabeth Brownrigg,’ *OBP*, Ordinary of Newgate’s Account, 14 September 1767 (OA176709140). Mary Jones had been apprenticed in 1765.

orphaned parish apprentice was trapped with the Brownriggs and left to die in wretched circumstances. Only eleven years old, she had no-where to go and no-one to whom she could appeal. In 1771, Jemima Dixon, an apprentice from the Ackworth, branch of the London Foundling Hospital, was murdered by her master a Manchester linen weaver. Jemima may have been a casualty of the General Reception period (1756-60) when the Hospital was struggling to find suitable masters for the many hundreds of children. The record of her apprenticeship appears in a margin of the Committee Minutes book as if she was fitted in at a last moment. In Manchester she was much less accessible to inspectors.¹⁵⁴ In a sense this case proves the exception to the rule at least for the Foundling Hospital. Such cases were unusual amongst the thousands of children the Charity placed out. When children were close at hand and the Hospital aware of their circumstances, its representatives took action.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse belongs to rather a different category from the other eventualities we have considered. Protection from such a danger was, however, one of the 'needs' of a young servant and one which either master or mistress were best placed to secure. There can be little doubt that such abuse was outside the bounds of legality or moral rectitude. While opinions might differ on what physical punishment was merited, all the evidence suggests that all levels of eighteenth century society were intolerant of the sexual molestation of children.¹⁵⁵ Juries and magistrates took allegations of the sexual abuse of children seriously and could make clear their hostility towards those accused: magistrates referred to its 'wickedness' and 'villainy' and to 'foul' and 'odious' practices.¹⁵⁶ Popular expressions of hostility towards child abusers, sometimes taking the form of mob violence, were further evidence of prevailing

¹⁵⁴ For the Brownrigg case see Steedman, *Labours Lost*, 224-5. For Brownrigg and Jemima Dixon, see Levene, 'Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence,' 197; Record of Jemima Dixon's apprenticeship, General Committee Minutes, 12 September 1770, LMA, A/FH/A/003/002/010

¹⁵⁵ See Anthony E. Simpson, 'Vulnerability and the Age of Female Consent: Legal Innovation and its Effect on Prosecutions for Rape in Eighteenth-Century London' in *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*, ed. G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 197 and passim

¹⁵⁶ Martin Ingram, 'Child Sexual Abuse in Early Modern England' in *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society*, ed. Michael J. Braddick and John Walter (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), 80

attitudes.¹⁵⁷ At the same time there were legal obstacles (as well as humiliations) which children might face in court. There was no specific crime of sexual abuse against a child and therefore no distinct procedure in court and no special consideration (necessarily) of the feelings of the child. There was also a degree of ambiguity in the attribution of guilt which makes it difficult to detect the true nature of the abuse.

Abuse of this kind was a hazard to which charities were alert – hence the enquiries about households and the emphasis on the ‘character’ of the master or mistress by the more conscientious institutions. The reluctance by some charities to pay premiums also owed something to a fear of attracting an undesirable master. Parents were warned of the hazards to their children in service – though this was often in a disguised form. Perhaps because of such fears some parents resisted apprenticeship by the parish and found placements themselves although reticence about such issues makes it difficult to know if this was so.¹⁵⁸ Such caution suggests that while sexual abuse appalled contemporaries it was nevertheless a real and constant concern.

The indenture gave neither guidance nor reassurance on this point. However, ‘policing’ the sexual lives of the servants was a constant concern in some households. It was a source of much contention with adult servants but may have provided protection for the youngest. Mistresses, in particular, felt responsibilities towards young girls. Elizabeth Shackleton kept twelve-year old Nanny Nutter as her close companion and supervised her training.¹⁵⁹ Catherine Tullie’s mistress arranged for her to be returned to the Foundling Hospital when she was aware that her husband had behaved improperly towards her.¹⁶⁰ Not all employers were so vigilant or concerned. Living in cramped servant quarters with no private place to sleep,

¹⁵⁷ Discussed in Julia Gammon ‘“A Denial of Innocence”: Female Juvenile Victims of Rape and the English Legal System in the Eighteenth Century,’ in *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Stephen Hussey (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 90-1

¹⁵⁸ Crawford, *Parents* 158-63

¹⁵⁹ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (Yale, Yale University Press, 1999, 137, 143-5

¹⁶⁰ Levene, ‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence’, 198

young servants and apprentices were prey to other members of the household besides the master.¹⁶¹

If it is difficult to assess the scale of physical attacks on children in domestic service, the problem, in the case of sexual abuse, is compounded. Isolation and remote locations, as well as the closeted life of servants and the widespread sharing of beds made children easy victims but also unable to seek protection.¹⁶² Children from charity institutions were not always well-prepared for the hazards of life outside, not least sexual licence. In theory they could appeal to their parent body which should also have been the case for children placed by their parents. Yet fear of punishment (from family as well as abuser), crippling shame and fear of not being believed, inhibited their ability to seek help. Julia Gammon's examination of sixteen girls, under the age of fourteen whose cases came before the Old Bailey, 1735-1797, displays examples of all these circumstances.¹⁶³ The very young, bound to obedience from their earliest years, may have been too bewildered to protest. About one-seventh of all rape cases brought to the Old Bailey between 1760 and 1830 involved children under the age of ten, but many more must have gone undetected.¹⁶⁴ Even when evidence of abuse was clear and parents alerted, there was much to deter them from taking a case to court. Rather than contemplate the cost of litigation or find that their child's evidence was rejected in court as unreliable some imposed their own punishment on the offender.¹⁶⁵ Others were deterred by the high rate of acquittals for rape and sexual abuse of females which amounted, in the later decades of the eighteenth century, to 95 per cent.¹⁶⁶ Worse still was to be accused of complicity through flirtation or deceit. However, five of the sixteen cases involving the girls examined by Julia Gammon resulted in a 'Guilty' verdict, which does suggest a stronger reaction to abuse of children.

¹⁶¹ See Martin Ingram, 'Child Sexual Abuse' on the occupations of those found guilty of offences against children, 75-7

¹⁶² On cramped accommodation and the sharing of beds see Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, chapter 2.

¹⁶³ Julie Gammon, 'A Denial of Innocence,' 74-92

¹⁶⁴ Calculations based on Simpson's figures for 1730-1830 in Simpson, 'Vulnerability', 188.

¹⁶⁵ Gammon, 'A Denial of Innocence', 90-1. See also the attack on Dennis Doolan, 1826 discussed in Simpson, 'Vulnerability', 197.

¹⁶⁶ Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, *OBP*, "Crimes Tried at the Old Bailey" *OBP*, under Sexual Offences: rape

Pauper apprentices with greater experience of the ‘real’ world were perhaps more worldly than charity children but those without parents or kin and girls especially, may have been easy victims. They had no easy contacts with anyone to whom they could appeal and were more likely to be living and working in isolation without any private space of their own. Access to the outside world was restricted by the hours and nature of their work. The experience of Mary Tollin in 1789 illustrates several of the points discussed above and helps to explain the reluctance to take cases involving young girls to court. Mary had come from Ealing parish workhouse ‘to go out nursing’ but had obtained for herself a post at Cranford-bridge, as servant to Edward Studsbury for 1s a week. When she began her service there were several women lodgers in the premises but, after a few days they left, leaving Mary alone with Studsbury, another lodger Charles Burton and a young boy. Mary claimed to have been raped by both men during the week and to have contracted venereal disease as a consequence. Unlike other girls, who felt unable to appear in court, she was able to give a graphic account of the attack by Studsbury,

. . .he threw me down on the bed, and he got upon me, and he entered my body, and he hurt me very much indeed, and I tried to halloo out, and he clapped his hands before my mouth, and he told me if I made any disturbance he would cut my throat.¹⁶⁷

After a week and three days living in the household, Mary ran away to a relative (she appears to have had no parents) who ‘acquainted the overseer’ with her circumstances. It is possible that we lack the full account of the trial, but the case turned upon some fairly slight inconsistencies in the girl’s account which allowed the prisoners’ counsel (the formidable William Garrow) to present her evidence as flawed and ensure that Studsbury and Burton were acquitted.¹⁶⁸ Of course, Mary may have made a false accusation to cover an earlier liaison (implicit in Garrow’s argument) but one is struck by the ambiguous nature of the court towards a

¹⁶⁷ *OBP*, September 1789, Edward Studsbury, t17890909-96, (sexual offences: rape, not guilty)

¹⁶⁸ Garrow was well-known for his success in achieving acquittals, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, *London Lives: Poverty Crime and the Making of the Modern City, 1690-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 359-60

defendant who was, as she stated at the outset of the trial, ‘going of thirteen’.¹⁶⁹ On the one hand Garrow appears sensitive to a twelve year old, on several occasions addressing his questions to ‘My little girl’. On the other hand this was perhaps a device to undermine the reliability of her evidence – it was not unusual for a girl under the age of thirteen to be rejected as a witness on the grounds that she did not understand the concept of the oath. Yet he went on to claim that this twelve year old girl was duplicitous in concealing a liaison to which she had consented with the young boy in the household.¹⁷⁰ A sort of ‘Catch 22’ situation arose from the fact that from the age of ten a girl could be at once too gullible to produce credible evidence and yet ‘worldly’ enough to be capable of intrigue and compliance in sexual acts. Garrow would have been aware of an ambiguous attitude towards girls which arose from the fact that the age of consent for marriage was twelve which placed them (in some eyes) above the age of ‘innocence’. It was also possible to draw on a literary tradition which depicted maidservants using their sexuality in ruthless promotion of personal gain.¹⁷¹

In the cases she examines from the Old Bailey, Julia Gammon shows the contradictions and complexities inherent in this situation. A girl had to present a convincing account of what had happened to her and at the same time be seen as an ‘innocent’. Too much knowledge made her appear suspiciously worldly to the court but without adequate detail of what had happened to her a conviction could not be secured. It seems a tragic irony that many girls were sent into their first experience of service described in their indenture as a ‘child’ of their parish or charity school, at

¹⁶⁹ Fears about the corrupting influences of sexual offences in the late eighteenth century meant that full accounts of trials were not always published, *OBP*, Clive Elmsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, “Crimes Tried at the Old Bailey” *OBP* under Sexual Offences; Note too Tim Meldrum’s warning that the historians’ tendency to see the servant in the past as the invariable victim of sexual abuse in the household, may lead us deny them agency and initiative of their own, Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, 100-4

¹⁷⁰ *OBP*, September 1789, Edward Studsbury (t178909-96)

¹⁷¹ The legal age of consent was twelve in the eighteenth century but an Act of 1576 had the effect of making ten the age of consent in rape cases. See Simpson, ‘Vulnerability’ 200. Henry Fielding may have contributed to the general ambivalence in his exposure of prurience and hypocrisy in Richardson’s *Pamela* in his own *Shamela*. Pamela was ‘not yet twelve’ when she entered service – and so only thirteen to fourteen when ‘courted’ (today we might say ‘groomed’) by ‘B’. Since the age of consent was twelve ‘B’ was legally safe in his intentions (given that Pamela consented). *Shamela*, Pamela’s counterpart, was all too capable of the intrigue and deceit which Garrow suggested. For a discussion of female sexuality as depicted in eighteenth-century literature, see Straub, *Domestic Affairs*, 36-65

the very point at which they were deemed adult enough to give consent to sexual relationships.

Less is known of the dangers of sexual abuse for young boys – customarily sent into service at an earlier age than girls. While the servant manuals of the day gave copious (if disguised) warnings to girls entering service and to their parents, it is difficult to find similar advice to young men and boys. *The Footman's Looking-Glass* warns only of seduction by the mistress – in literature often portrayed as a comic affair as when Fielding's *Lady Booby* attempts to 'corrupt' Joseph Andrews; reference to sexual abuse of boys in autobiography is rare.¹⁷² Contemporary expression of outrage at homosexual acts of any kind was so forceful that it is difficult to gauge any particular feelings about acts involving children - perhaps thought to be unmentionable. Meldrum found that homosexual cases came only rarely before the London Consistory Courts.¹⁷³ Cases before the Old Bailey were also infrequent perhaps because of the severity of the punishment (death), and because the evidence required to secure a conviction was difficult to provide. From the 1780s fear of the corrupting influence of prosecutions for sodomy and 'assault with sodomite intent' led to censorship of old Bailey cases so that very little may be known about the victims of unsolicited sex, including children.¹⁷⁴

None of this means, of course, that boys were not at risk nor, indeed, incapable themselves of exploiting the sensibilities of the age with blackmail and libel. In 1760 William Churchill, a young apprentice to a watchmaker, claimed to be the unwilling victim of what the court called 'that detestable crime of buggery'. The accused was a sailor lodging in his master's house. The trial was a short one and the accused, Emmanuel Roze, was acquitted. Interrogation of the prisoner was brief but Churchill was subjected to close questioning which cast doubt on several aspects of his account, condemned his failure to inform his master and the boy's delay in telling his mother what had happened. His master gave an unfavourable account of Churchill's

¹⁷² Anon., *The Footman's Looking Glass* (London, 1747), 12; Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, first published in 1742, reprinted, 1984 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 48-50

¹⁷³ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, 117-18

¹⁷⁴ Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, "Crimes Tried at the Old Bailey" under Communities – Homosexuality', Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org),

character ‘a very silly, empty boy’.¹⁷⁵ However at fault (or false) Churchill may have been, the case was hardly likely to encourage boys to report similar cases - it is not easy to see what Churchill could have gained by bringing the case. Meldrum is surely right to warn that while recognising that ‘some servants experienced the worse forms of sexual violence and abuse’ we should not ‘elevate them to the norm’.¹⁷⁶ But it is difficult not to conclude that many more young boys in household service, (sharing beds, acting as personal footboys and on call at all hours) experienced sexual traumas than ever were recorded in law courts or personal record.

From his analysis of the victims of sexual abuse and rape cases at the Old Bailey between 1730 and 1830, Anthony Simpson concludes that sixty-seven per cent were domestic servants.¹⁷⁷ Even if we accept that the term servant was used loosely and that among these cases there may have been examples of false accusations, it is clear that females in domestic service were highly vulnerable. Children, male and female, can only have been especially at risk and many serious and less serious incidents never uncovered. Masters could assume some degree of popular indifference to the physical punishment of children, which meant that neighbours and servants were often witnesses to public displays of anger and abuse. They could, therefore be called upon to give evidence if cases came to court. The private and shameful nature of sexual offences, the problems encountered in taking a case to court means that in Martin Ingram’s words ‘The dimensions of this troubling ‘dark figure’ of past abuse can only be conjecture’.¹⁷⁸ The range of occupations of the perpetrators involved suggests that a child in almost any kind of domestic service was potentially at risk.¹⁷⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has considered four aspects of the lives of children in service (their hours of work, leisure, sickness and punishment) which were not covered by the indenture but feature in autobiographies, diaries, correspondence and court cases as areas of conflict or uncertainty in this period. Lack of clarity on these points left many children exposed to exploitation or neglect and masters confused concerning

¹⁷⁵ *OBP*, February 1760, Emmanuel Roze (t17600227 – 44), sexual offences, : sodomy, not guilty

¹⁷⁶ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, 104

¹⁷⁷ Simpson, ‘Vulnerability’, 198

¹⁷⁸ Ingrams, ‘Child Sexual Abuse,’ 84

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 74-7

rights and responsibilities. A fifth section considered the incidence of sexual abuse to which young domestic servants were highly vulnerable. As in other issues we have considered, those most vulnerable in their capacity as domestic servants, were the youngest, those without kin and those at a distance from either kin or a 'parent' body to which they might appeal. As a general rule we can say that child servants were in a more favourable position in relatively prosperous households where money was available for medical care, where economic pressures were not serious enough to compel an excessive work load and where the presence of other members of the household could sometimes provide protection from abuse. Within each category, however, there were qualifications and exceptions.

Commentators on the upbringing of children, including poor children, were more likely in this period to recognise the value of free time for the youngest children. In practice, boys in domestic work were more likely than girls to enjoy opportunities for genuine 'play' or diversions with companions of their own choosing; the nature of their work gave them greater access to the wider world and they were felt to be less in need of surveillance. In this one area, at least, children working in poorer or less respectable homes and with less conscientious masters or mistresses may have been at an advantage, being freer to enjoy leisure time than those working in a household which cared about its reputation. Those in wealthier establishments, however, were more likely to enjoy an extended break from the tedium of daily routines: the chance to travel with their households, sometimes to fashionable locations, and to experiences and contacts which would not otherwise have been available to them. This was a 'bonus' for many domestic servants, which was less often available to young people in other occupations. Against this we need to set the inescapable constraints of domestic work with its expectation that servants could and should be on call whenever needed. This left apprentices, especially the youngest, open to exploitation in terms of hours worked and confinement. Prevailing attitudes to work meant that hired children, not bound by indenture, were also vulnerable. They might be free to leave work at the end of a yearly contract but with the risk of loss of 'character' and of unemployment.

Tenderness towards the sick and a willingness to provide all practical help possible was in evidence at all levels of the servant employing classes but so too was callous neglect. Those in households which could afford good medical care were certainly

privileged – though they ran the risk of encountering misguided medical treatment. Those in poorer households might have access to hospitals providing free treatment for the poor – but too often were in the hands of untrained charlatans. Child servants, however, were more likely than other poor children to have benefited from the introduction of small pox inoculation and, from the turn of the century, vaccination. Parishes, charities, individual employers and parents had practical and humane reasons for making sure that this was so.

Children in domestic service were peculiarly exposed to physical punishment, being so often the youngest and least regarded in the household. Autobiographies, memoirs and court cases suggest that boys were the most frequent victims but girls were the subject of some of the worst cases of abuse because of the isolated, incarcerated lives many led. A lack of consensus about what constituted ‘reasonable’ punishment inhibited witnesses from drawing attention to abuse. Nevertheless the two institutions examined in this chapter took reports of such abuse seriously and carried out investigations. Concerned individuals, usually neighbours or kin, were also prepared to take action to protect children they believed to be in harmful circumstances.

Female domestic servants, including the very young, were disproportionately liable to be victims of sexual abuse; furthermore, the covert nature of the offence meant that many incidents went unreported. The complexities of the law, the reluctance or inability of the abused to take legal action, a certain ambiguity about what constituted abuse as well as suspicions about the honesty of the girls who did come before the courts, make it difficult to assess both the extent and nature of sexual abuse. Much, including the sexual abuse of boys, remains uncovered. On the other hand many young servants were protected by the concern of householders to ‘police’ the sexual lives of their servants.

The absence of guidelines on the issues of work, leisure, sickness and punishment serves to underline the value of the apprenticeship indenture in other respects. The previous chapter has shown that the indenture could, and often did, provide safeguards and redress for aspects of the apprentice’s life which were clearly identified as the responsibility of the master or mistress. Overworked, sick and abused child servants could and sometimes did seek redress (or rescue) but their

dependence on others for help, the uncertainty about responsibilities and rights and lack of confidence in the legal system seriously hindered their efforts.

Chapter 4: A comparison of the practice and experience of apprenticeship in two eighteenth century charities, 1775-1804.

This section of the study examines the apprenticeship policies of two well-established charities in the late eighteenth century, the Foundling Hospital in London and the Blue Coat School in Birmingham.¹ Its overarching aim is to test earlier ideas and broader questions posed in the thesis in the light of the experience of two organisations which were dedicated to improving the lives of the children of the poor and which gave close and sustained attention to apprenticeship. Ideas set out in earlier chapters concerning preparation for apprenticeship, adjustments to new life experiences, household relationships and the world of work will be tested in the light of individual experience. Earlier chapters draw on qualitative evidence from the two institutions. The approach in this chapter involves a more quantitative approach which allows these questions to be examined across a bigger and more comparable data set.

The Foundling Hospital was established in 1739 and by 1745 was situated in Lamb's Conduit Fields, a fashionable part of London and an appropriate setting for an organisation which counted titled men and women as well as leading professionals amongst its subscribers and supporters.² Infants, under the age of two months, were first received into the care of the Hospital in 1741 so that it was not until a decade later that the governors and guardians of the Hospital were much exercised with the task of finding suitable apprenticeships for the children. The Birmingham Blue Coat School was built in an area adjacent to St Philip's Church (later to become the Cathedral) 'for the Schooling and Education of the Poor Children of Birmingham' and took its first intake of children in 1724. The School was the creation of the

¹ The school began as 'the Charity School of Birmingham'. I have chosen to use the name by which it came to be known in common parlance because of the blue uniform worn by pupils. From an early date letters were addressed to 'The Blue Coat School' the name of its successor today. This distinguishes the charity from others in Birmingham at the time. The title was perhaps encouraged by the Governors who were thereby making a link with the prestigious and long-standing Blue Coat School in London, Christ's Hospital.

² George II had granted the founding charter and the Duke of Bedford was its President. The Blue Coat School was also funded primarily by private subscription drawn from leading figures in Birmingham society.

Church of England: its children were from Anglican households, nominated by Anglican subscribers and were to be placed, when the time came, with masters professing an Anglican faith. The Blue Coat School's exclusiveness was hardly surprising but probably intensified by the rivalry of non-conformist groups which, in Birmingham, were both numerous and influential. In 1759 the governors made it quite clear that hereafter 'No dissenting Child of any denomination whatsoever shall be admitted' whatever the circumstances.³ Pamphlet disputes in the 1780s between Anglican clergymen and non-conformist leaders (including Joseph Priestley) only increased tension as well as the determination of the School to safeguard its distinct role in education in Birmingham.⁴ The Foundling Hospital also operated as an Anglican institution: it had an Anglican chapel and sent apprentices out with the Book of Common Prayer and knowledge of the Catechism. The Hospital's commitment to Anglican ideals was, however, less assiduous; the admission of infants was not dependent on the religious affiliation of those who surrendered them; subscribers came from various religions; masters and mistresses applying to take apprentices, who met all other requirements of the charity, had only to be Protestant.

Both institutions placed their apprentices in a range of occupations which were considered to be appropriate to their position in life. Both, while situated in an environment felt to be favourable to the health of the children, were in close proximity to manufacturing and service industries, mostly of a traditional kind, as well as households which required domestic help. Initially the Foundling Hospital anticipated that its boys would be apprenticed into sea service or husbandry but expected girls to be placed out primarily as 'Household Servants'.⁵ The Blue Coat School planned to apprentice boys into various local trades and girls to domestic service. This chapter compares and contrasts the apprenticeship policies of the two organisations beginning with an analysis of their aims and objectives. The work of historians in previous studies of the Foundling Hospital has tended to centre on the

³ Birmingham City Archive (hereafter BCA), MS1622/1/1/1, 13 February 1759, 179

⁴ For the connection between the establishment of the non-conformist school and the 'harsh decision' of the Blue Coat governors see John D. Myhill, *Blue Coat: A History of the Blue Coat School, 1722-1990* (Warley: Meridan Books, 1991) 22. The fiercest of the 1780s debates concerned the Test and Corporation Acts. They involved the Rector of St. Philip's and Priestley, then leader of the Unitarians.

⁵ 'An Account of the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children (1749)' reprinted in Alys Levene (ed.), *Narratives of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Vol. 3, *Institutional Responses; the London Foundling Hospital* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006), 61

early lives of infants when the issue of basic survival was paramount. The focus in previous work on the Blue Coat School has been on the children during their years at school. This study seeks to give new attention to the lives of those who were described in their indenture as ‘a child’ but were sent into the adult world of work to face new hazards and responsibilities. It compares the process by which children made this transition and the experiences of those from two similar charities who were, however, entering two distinct communities.

The children from both institutions were apprenticed to a range of occupations but the main focus is on those who were selected, whether by accident or design, for domestic service. In most respects the policies and practices affecting apprentices bound for different occupational sectors were no different but the experience of household servants was at times distinctive and the comparisons with those in other occupations can be instructive. As indicated in previous chapters, few other child workers, whether apprentices or otherwise, were so closely integrated into the family unit, engaged as they frequently were with intimate details of family life, the care of young children and everyday household management. For these reasons, and because of widespread fears about the opportunities for crime, masters and mistresses had reason to take great care when selecting their household workers. The history of the two charities and the children they placed out provides an opportunity to study the experience of children who were carefully schooled for the possibility of domestic service, isolated from the perceived immorality of the age, and inculcated with values intended to win the approval of employers and subscribers. The reputation and favourable image of the charities depended on the success of these policies. Chapter one indicated that charity children were, as a rule, favoured by the more respectable households, by mistresses anxious to make a favourable impression on visitors and by those comfortable enough to forfeit a premium. The comparative study provides further evidence of what qualities were prized by the receiving households and how well apprentices lived up to these expectations.

We can learn something of these eventualities from correspondence between masters and charity officials, from the complaints made by apprentices themselves and from the reports of the representatives of the charity who visited apprentices in their workplace. It was a three-way tension in which it is often difficult to isolate the particular sentiments of the apprentice: letters between masters and the governors

survive, but the voice of the apprentice is more often conveyed through another party. The investigation into the issue of adjustment takes into account the age and gender of the apprentice and the location of the placement. Finally it is pertinent to ask what proportion of the Foundling Hospital and Blue Coat School apprentices were allocated to household work and to consider its place within the wider context of apprenticeship. Domestic service was a traditional occupation for children and adolescents in the eighteenth century; however, by the later decades, the expanding industrial sector could provide placements, especially for female apprentices, in manufacturing outputs, both traditional and new. At times both charities struggled to find placements for their apprentices; an analysis of the occupations to which children were allocated indicates the extent to which the London and Birmingham institutions reflected contemporary trends or maintained their own well-established preferences.⁶

Sources and methodology

Records of events, policy decisions and finances were carefully maintained at the Foundling Hospital reflecting an eighteenth-century liking for order and classification. For example there is a complete set of the minutes of the General Committee which met every other Wednesday. They could act as a means of answering public criticism which both institutions (especially the Foundling Hospital) experienced from time to time. Careful record keeping was also important for tracing children if word reached the Governing Committee of the ill-treatment of their apprentices, if apprentices were to be transferred to another master, or, on rare occasions when parents returned in the hope of re-claiming the infants they had given up in difficult times. The apprenticeship indentures and the apprenticeship register provide invaluable information.

There are some gaps in the Blue Coat records, for example the Committee books for 1773-1781 and 1796-1801 have not survived. Apprenticeship indentures exist for each year of the chosen period but for a small number of years appear to be

⁶ For a discussion of this phenomenon in London, 1751-1816, see Alys Levene, 'Charity Apprenticeship and Social Capital in Eighteenth Century England', in *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency, 1750-1914*, ed. Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (Farnham; Ashgate, 2013), 45-69.

incomplete. In most years it is possible to identify any additional placements by cross reference to the Committee book for that year where a brief note of approved apprenticeships was also made. Usually the number of references matches the number of indentures, but occasionally, as in 1795 additional apprenticeships for that year are mentioned in the Committee book – in this case for three boys (for whom there is no subsequent evidence of death or cancellation) bringing the number of first time apprenticeships to twenty. This strategy is not possible, however, where the Committee books for these years either have not survived or were neglected due to financial difficulties and lack of administrative staff. Consequently Table 1b may underestimate slightly the number of first-time apprentices in the years identified above. Valuable insights into the running of the school and preparation for apprenticeship, however, are available in the Visitors' Book which records the observations of regular visits to the school by governors from 1781-1805. Additional material for both institutions is available in newspaper articles, correspondence and sermons.

In this chapter research focuses on the apprenticeship indentures and the committee meetings of the governors of the charities. The apprenticeship indentures provide essential information; the name of the child being apprenticed; the masters/mistresses with whom they were placed; the occupation and location of the master or mistress and the occupation of the new apprentice - which is not necessarily the same; the term of service to which the apprentice was committed. The Foundling Hospital indenture gives the age of the child being apprenticed on the indenture; the age of the Blue Coat apprentices can be deduced from the school registers for a significant sample of children who were placed out. In addition, as we have seen in earlier chapters, the indenture set out the obligations of those on both sides of the contract. The Foundling Hospital register of apprentices provides a means of identifying any additional apprentices for whom (exceptionally) no indenture exists. Committee meeting records from both institutions can provide further information on the character of masters, the particular problems of individual children (for example, seventeen year old George Horsley from the Foundling Hospital who proved difficult to place because of his 'lame' left hand), the complaints of masters and mistresses concerning an apprentice, or the accusations of

unjust treatment (or worse) made by apprentices themselves.⁷ Correspondence between masters/mistresses and the Governing Board supplements knowledge of the experience of the apprentices.

The shorter thirty year period covered in this chapter (1775-1804), compared with the broader sweep of the preceding chapters, allows a closer examination of the process of apprenticeship in two similar yet distinct organizations. It is also possible to follow the experiences of individual children and to compare and contrast the decisions and approaches which determined their lives as apprentices; this adds significantly to the picture of apprenticeship gained from diaries, autobiographies, and memoirs in earlier chapters. The year 1775 is chosen as the starting point because by that date the Foundling Hospital was free from the major consequences of the period of the General Reception (1756–1760) when, in return for a Parliamentary subsidy, it had been obliged to take uncapped numbers of infants into its care. This and other obligations placed enormous strain on the resources of the governing board and made it necessary to compromise on several of their earlier ideals, including those determining policy towards apprentices.⁸ From 1760, when Parliament decided that it could no longer support the scheme, the number of foundlings taken into the London Hospital each year fell dramatically to adjust to the changed financial circumstances of the Hospital and its perceived function.⁹ A massive drive was undertaken to find apprenticeships for the overwhelming number of children taken in during the period of the General Reception. The governors resisted the more strenuous demands of Parliament designed to speed up the process of apprenticeship; nevertheless they felt compelled to reduce the age at which many children were placed out and to seek more placements beyond London. In 1771 a last government subsidy of £3,500, intended for payment of apprenticeship premiums, was granted, signifying another way in which the ideals of the Hospital had been compromised.¹⁰ These measures reduced the number of children living in the Lamb's

⁷ For George Horsley see General Committee Minutes, 3 January 1776, LMA, A/FH/A03/002/012

⁸ For example, some children were apprenticed at an earlier age than had been customary and less attention could be given to ascertaining the character of masters and mistresses or to inspecting the children once placed.

⁹ For more precise details see Ruth McClure, *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 141

¹⁰ McClure, *Coram's Children*, 116-120. In 1765 the governors had stated their objections to premiums in response to a number of resolutions put before them by the House of Commons.

Conduit Fields building to the more manageable number of 377 returning the Hospital to a situation somewhat closer to that which existed in the 1750s.¹¹ In 1775 forty-one first time placements were arranged which represented a significant reduction from 1770 when apprenticeships had been found for sixty boys and eighty-three girls in London alone. An additional number of children had been sent out from the branch hospitals set up and overseen by the London Hospital to cope with the numbers of children received during the General Reception. These regional hospitals had been sold or closed down by 1773.¹²

While much attention has been given by historians to the tempestuous General Reception period, less has been said of the subsequent, more routine work of the charity despite the fact that this set the template which was to be followed for a number of decades. As a Committee pointed out at a later date, the circumstances in 1775 were more in keeping with the original principle that ‘a smaller number of Orphans should be kept *well*, than that a larger Number should be kept otherwise’ (my italics).¹³ This ideal applied equally to the apprentices to whom greater attention and protection could now be given.

In addition to the forty-one first time apprentices referred to above, the 1775 General Committee Book for the Foundling Hospital records eighteen additional apprenticeship arrangements for which there are no indentures in the 1775 bundle. Cross reference to the apprenticeship register shows that the children concerned had all been apprenticed for a first time at an earlier date - in some cases more than once. Any subsequent indenture(s) can usually be found neatly folded with the indenture for the first apprenticeship which explains its absence in the 1775 bundles. These eighteen reassigned or transferred apprentices indicate that the Hospital guardians still had responsibilities for the many apprentices assigned at earlier dates. Most reassignments or transfers were the result of disagreements between master/mistress and the apprentice, or the consequence of death, debt, or imprisonment. As such they

Acceptance of premiums became, however, a condition of receiving the grant from Parliament. The General Committee Minutes for 1769-71 show that the majority of children at this time were placed out with premiums (called fees), usually of £3 or £4, General Committee, LMA, A/FH/A03/002/010

¹¹ ‘Regulations for Managing the Hospital (1796)’ in Levene, *Narratives of the Poor*, Vol.3, 82

¹² McClure, *Coram’s Children*, 132, 123. The last regional hospital, Ackworth in Yorkshire, was sold in 1773.

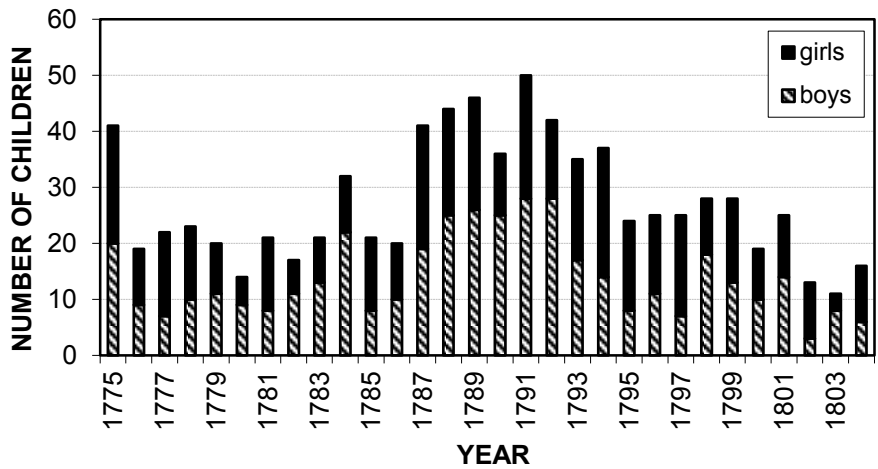
¹³ The Report of the Committee Appointed by the Annual General Court of the Foundling Hospital, 12 May 1790, 6. Quoted in McClure, *Coram’s Children*, 189

could involve the governors in considerable investigation and correspondence as well as a search for a new placement.

By 1775 the smaller and more exclusive Blue Coat School was a well-established educational establishment and its pupils, with their distinctive blue uniforms, were a feature of Birmingham life. It took in between ten and twenty pupils each year (the youngest pupils were aged seven, the oldest fourteen) so that when William Hutton visited the school before writing his history of Birmingham in 1783 he found around ninety pupils.¹⁴ In 1775 the Governors placed out just nine apprentices for whom they also retained responsibility until the end of their term, dealing with complaints from either party, arranging transfers from one master to another, and overseeing releasements (when both parties agreed that the apprentice could leave before the contractual seven years was completed). Like the foundlings, they were 'poor' children but they had been taken into the school on the recommendation of Birmingham subscribers who vouched for their worthiness to receive a Blue Coat education, and the respectability of their family. Unlike the foundlings they would be returned, by apprenticeship, to the small local community where they had originally lived with their families. Whilst much larger and with wider concerns than the Blue Coat School, the Foundling Hospital operated, by 1775, an apprenticeship system along the same lines and guided by similar principles. Both institutions were placing out boys and girls who had been living under their care and authority for some years. Both were compelled to adjust their intake according to financial circumstances and there were times when the discrepancy in numbers was less striking. In 1778 the Blue Coat School found apprenticeships for fifteen leavers and the London Hospital for twenty-three. In 1782 both institutions found placements for seventeen first-time apprentices.

¹⁴ William Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, 1783, republished (Birmingham: E.P. Publishing Limited, 1976), 213

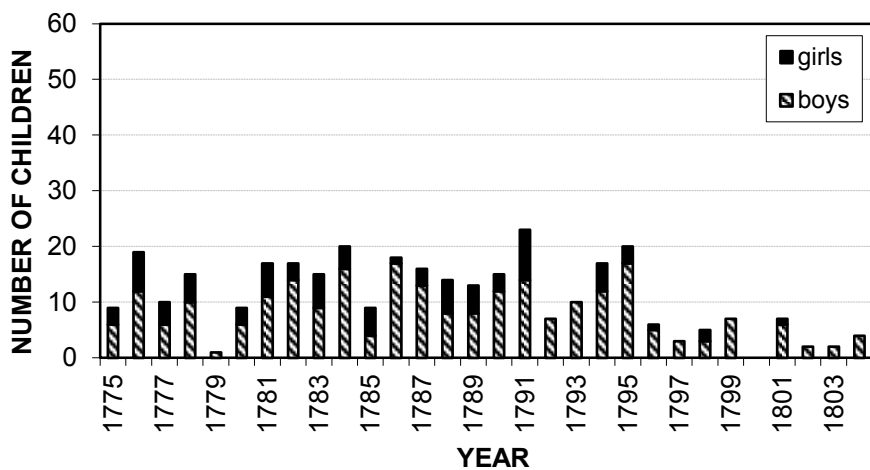
Figure 1a: Foundling Hospital: Number of children sent out as apprentices each year, 1775-1804



Total: 814 (417 boys, 397 girls)

Sources: Apprenticeship indentures, LMA, A/FH/A/12/004/081 to 084; apprenticeship registers, A/FH/A/12/003/001, microfilm X041/005A.

Figure 1b: Blue Coat School: Number of children sent out as apprentices each year, 1775-1804



Total: 316 (232 boys, 84 girls)

Sources: Apprenticeship indentures: BCA, MS1622/2/6 to MS1622/2/35; Committee book, 5th Volume MS1622/1/1/1/4

Apprenticeship at the London Foundling Hospital and the Birmingham Blue Coat School: aims and objectives

The London Foundling Hospital had always associated an altruistic desire to save the lives of abandoned children with a moral obligation to produce honest, upright citizens capable of earning their own living and avoiding dependence on the poor law.¹⁵ At the same time their charges were to be attached, on leaving the institution, to low-grade occupations so as not to be advanced above their deserved station. Nor were they to be privileged in the job market over the children of the ‘deserving’ poor. In his influential work *The Fable of the Bees* Bernard Mandeville argued that attempts to ease poverty and promote social mobility were counter-productive to the well-being of society. Rather the poor should be taught to accept ‘hard and dirty labour’ along with ‘coarse living’ ‘Where should we find a better nursery for these necessities’, he asked, ‘than the children of the poor?’ More pointedly Mandeville blamed charity schools for failing in this aim and for creating an insolent, insubordinate generation of servants.¹⁶ Such ideas did not go uncontested but appealed to many of the early subscribers to the Hospital whose views the guardians and governors could not ignore.

The regime and lifestyle within the Hospital was designed accordingly, with apprenticeship and beyond in view. As the governors frequently reiterated, children were to be employed in ‘useful’ work each day as well as school work. In 1783, for example, the General Court decided that all boys over eight were to be thus employed for four hours each day ‘to introduce early Habits of industry among the Children’. Girls were to be occupied ‘in such work as they are capable of performing’¹⁷ The Governing body was sensitive to criticism on this point. In 1765 the General Court responded to a letter which had appeared in the *Daily Gazetteer* in April of that year alleging that the boys were being taught French and drawing which the writer thought entirely inappropriate. The General Court publicly denied any

¹⁵ The Hospital’s moral stance is seen in its attitude to mothers who petitioned to have their child admitted by the Hospital: their case carried more weight if it could be shown that they would, thereby, be able to return to gainful employment and not fall into dependency or worse, McClure, *Coram’s Children*, 142-4

¹⁶ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (London, 1729), ed. P. Harth, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 315, 19. See also discussion in R.C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 184-5

¹⁷ Rough Minutes of the General Court, 14 May 1783, LMA, A/FH/A03/001/003

such practice or intention: rather the boys were to be prepared for ‘Agriculture, Sea Service and other laborious employments’ and the girls for ‘Household and other menial service’¹⁸ In practice the range of occupations was wider than this, at least for the boys, a significant number of whom went into domestic service of various kinds as well as numerous traditional occupations. The governors remained true, nevertheless, to the idea of equipping the children for a future life that was to be both arduous and honest. Allowing visitors into the Hospital, and putting the boys to work outside in view of the general public helped to allay hostile criticism. Requesting visitors not to take familiar notice of the children ‘lest it should encourage them to forget the lowness of their station, and their being designed to be the servants of the Publick in the most laborious offices’, had much the same purpose.¹⁹

In most respects the Blue Coat School pursued the same ends in its long-term preparation for apprenticeship, if on a smaller scale. The school regime favoured much the same rigorous, regular routine as the London charity: early rising, a limited curriculum, constant employment and frequent attendance in chapel. There was the same aim of enabling children of the poor to avoid dependence on the parish and to become honest citizens. The founders placed emphasis on the importance of education including both reading and writing (The latter was not generally approved in the Foundling Hospital in the early years for the reasons already noted. According to Mandeville, ‘Every hour those of poor people spend at their book is so much time lost to the society’.²⁰) Nevertheless, the pupils were expected, on leaving, to be employed, as the foundation documents stated, ‘as apprentices or domestic servants’ or in similarly modest or menial occupations.²¹ Situated in the middle of ‘the city of a thousand trades’ the school had little need to contemplate either husbandry or sea service for its boys but the miscellany of metal trades to which boys were sent made much the same demands with respect to work and application. Most girls were sent, like Sarah Millward in 1775, to learn ‘such necessary business of housekeeping’ as

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 May 1765, LMA, A/FH/A03/001/003

¹⁹ McClure, *Coram’s Children*, pp.173,188; Committee Book, 26 July 1749, LMA A/FH/K02/001

²⁰ Mandeville, *Fable*, p.294

²¹ V.D.B.Still, *The Blue Coat School, 1722-1972* (Birmingham, 1972), 4

her master or mistress required in the skilled and semi-skilled workshop households within fairly easy reach of the school.²²

Their indenture reminded them that they were ‘One of the *poor* Boys/Girls of the Charity School’ (my italics) rather as the London children were reminded that they were ‘put and placed out’ by the Governors and Guardians ‘of Exposed and deserted Young Children’. Foundling children were given new names on being received by the Hospital; in a very few cases their lack of status seems to have been compounded by such names as Phoebe Drudge and Thomas Orphan - lifelong reminders of their origins. On the other hand considerable prestige was attached to their connection with the Hospital when seeking apprenticeships, enhanced by a reputation for integrity and hard work.²³

The Foundling Hospital had greater scope for impressing its ideals on its leavers: the children, taken in as small babies, were sent out to foster nurses but returned to London at the age of four or five years where they stayed until apprenticed, usually aged eleven or twelve. They might be seen on Sundays walking to Chapel, but their contact with the outside world was otherwise extremely restricted. Their new names, on reception, were intended to sever all links with family and kin. The Blue Coat School, too, was keen to shield its pupils from outside influences, including family contacts. Parents whose children were selected for places in the school signed (or made their mark) on the Resignation statement agreeing to have no more contact with them while they were pupils at the school except on permitted days.²⁴ Blue Coat children, however, were at least seven years of age when received into the school. They had a good deal more experience of outside life (the ‘permitted’ days with their family included a week at Christmas) than was ever the case for the foundlings once received back from the foster-nurses. In seeking to impose its own ethos the school had to contend with a community with a distinct and well-established character of its own with which its apprentices were collectively familiar.

Setting the Scene

²² Sarah Millward, 18 May 1775, BCA, MS1622/2/6

²³ See discussion in Alys Levene, “‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence’: Master-Apprenticeship Relations in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England”, *Social History*, 33, 2 (2008), 187 and *passim*

²⁴ Blue Coat School Order Book, 1760-1773, 30 September 1760, BCA, MS1622/1/1/3, 2

The study of apprenticeship practice begins with an analysis of the cohort of apprentices placed for the first time in 1775 in order to convey something of the character of both charities as well as the challenges they faced and the context in which they operated. It provides a reference point for later developments at a time when it became more difficult to find placements for the children of the poor and financial difficulties were more pressing.

Table 1: Age at time of first apprenticeship, 1775

	Foundling Hospital				Blue Coat School			
	boys	(%)	girls	%	boys	(%)	girls	(%)
Age 9/under	7	(35)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Age 10	5	(25)	2	(9.52)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Age 11	1	(5)	10	(47.6)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Age 12	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Age 13	1	(5)	0	(0)	2	(33.3)	0	(0)
Age 14	0	(0)	1	(4.76)	2	(33.3)	3	(100)
Age 15	3	(15)	2	(9.52)	2	(33.3)	0	(0)
16 and over	3	(15)	6	(28.5)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Total	20	(100)	21	(100)	6	(99.9)	3	(100)
Total boys and girls:	41				9			
Mean age boys:	11.5; mode: 9				14; mode: 13,14,15			
Mean age girls:	13; mode: 11				14; mode: 14			

Source: Indentures for 1775, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/081, A/FH/A12/004/082. The age of the foundling children is calculated from the date of their reception. Children were accepted up to the age of two months (exceptionally, older infants were taken) which means that a small number who are classified as, for example ten, will actually be just eleven. Overall, therefore, the table underestimates the age of apprenticeship by a marginal amount for the Hospital children. The age of apprenticeship of the 1775 cohort from the Blue Coat School are obtained by linking the ages of the children, listed in the school register for 1771, 1772 and 1773, with the date of their indenture: Register, BCA, MS1622./2/1/1; Indentures, 1775,

The striking feature of Table 2 is the spread of ages of first apprenticeship at the Foundling Hospital compared with the much more stable situation at the Blue Coat School where both boys and girls took up their apprenticeships between the age of thirteen and fifteen. The thirteen year olds were within one or two months of their fourteenth birthday. Five year old Francis White, subsumed in the under nines at the Foundling Hospital, has been excluded from the calculation of the average age. He was formally apprenticed to a blacksmith but is likely to have been a child returned to or allowed to stay with his wet-nurse in Farnham in Surrey one of the rural areas favoured by the Hospital when recruiting foster nurses. Few foundlings were allowed to stay with their foster family but this rule was relaxed during the General Reception when the Hospital had so many children for whom to find homes and placements. Alternatively, Francis may have been found a new home with childless parents; since there was no legal process of adoption (except by the lengthy procedure of an Act of Parliament), apprenticeship was best suited to either situation and provided some guarantee of a stable upbringing and securing a settlement. At the age of five Francis could have contributed little to the heavy work of the blacksmith.²⁵ His position underlines the complexity and diversity of the cases dealt with by the Hospital, still, to an extent, coping with the consequences of the General Reception.

What is also evident from Table 2 is that in 1775 boys from the Hospital could be sent into apprenticeship at a very early age – nine to ten years being the most common. Even allowing for the margin of error in the ages of the foundlings (see above) the contrast with the Blue Coat School is significant. Girls entering apprenticeships from the Foundling Hospital were most likely to do so aged eleven but the number of girls aged sixteen or over is also a feature. Again there is much to

²⁵ Apprenticeship indenture, Francis White, 2 August 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/12/004/081. In 1765 the governors had expressed their disapproval of Parliament's recommendation that children could be apprenticed from the age of seven. It seems unlikely that they would have sanctioned this once free from General Reception obligations and pressures. For discussion of the governors' case against the placements of very young children and the value of apprenticeship in the absence of any formal process of adoption, see McClure, *Coram's Children*, 116-7, 129-30

suggest that the arrangement of apprenticeships by the Foundling Governors was anything but straightforward.

Table 2a: Foundling Hospital: apprentices in 1775, numbers, gender and occupations.

	domestic work	%	other occupations	%	Total	%
<u>Boys</u>	8	(40)	12	(60)	20	(100)
<u>Girls</u>	18	(85.7)	3	(14.2)	21	(100)
Total	26	(63.4)	15	(36)	41	(100)

Source: Foundling Hospital indentures for 1775: LMA, A/FH/A12/004/082

Destinations of boys not undertaking domestic work: gingerbread baker (2), tailor (2), peruke maker, shopkeeper, tea-broker, blacksmith, shoemaker, rope-maker, stay-maker and ‘moddeller’. Destinations of girls not undertaking domestic work: shroud-maker, trimming maker, gold and silver trimmer.

Table 3a shows that in 1775 the Foundation Hospital sent out to apprenticeships much the same number of girls as boys, which reflected the equal balance of the sexes within the charity. Eighteen of the girls (85.7 per cent) were assigned to households requiring a domestic worker, the traditional role for girls. Three girls were placed in non- domestic work, but all in occupations in which women had traditionally worked. More boys also went to household work than any other occupation (45 per cent) but overall the boys’ placements show a much wider range of trades and reflect the varied range of trades which flourished in London as well as the many openings for domestic work in London households. At first sight the occupations to which the children from the Foundling Hospital were sent seem to be clearly gendered and yet not rigidly so because of the high proportion of boys in household work. Previous examples, however, have suggested that boys filled a

distinct role within the gamut of domestic duties: they were more likely than girls to be involved in tasks such as errand running, minding the master's horse, weeding and feeding the pigs, which took them outside of the house. Inside their activities tended to be restricted to tasks considered appropriate for boys – polishing boots and serving at table. No boy was sent to sea-service – the original destiny for the majority of boys. The design failed because the navy customarily required boys who were older (and stronger) than those sent out by the Hospital.

These forty-one placements gave rise, before the year was out, to several problems to which the Committee had to respond. Two of the 1775 boys had their first placements cancelled and had to be found new masters that year. Samuel Adams' master, a gingerbread baker, asked the Hospital to take ten year old Samuel back because 'he has a violent running in his ears' which made him unfit to be employed in his business.²⁶ Samuel was reassigned to George Coleman, a 'gentleman' living in Carmarthen, for 'household business', so that by August, nine (45%) of the first-time apprenticed boys were in domestic work.²⁷ Robert Collins, also ten years old, was refused by the first master proposed for him because he did not come with a second suit of clothing.²⁸ Perhaps, as a peruke maker, this master was particularly concerned about the appearance of apprentices before his customers. Eleven year old Ferdinand Still, apprenticed to a tailor on 4 January, was already on 1 February to be returned to the Hospital due to 'badness of the boy's sight'.²⁹ These examples suggest that specialist and craft occupations threw up more challenges for these very young boys than did domestic service; certainly the close work of shoemaking or tailoring would have been more difficult for a boy with poor eyesight than household tasks. For much the same reasons, masters requesting domestic servants were perhaps more tolerant of children with problems of the kind suffered by Samuel and Ferdinand, at least if they were less likely to be on public display. An earlier attempt in October 1774 to place Samuel with Admiral Pye had failed not because of his health but because he proved to be too small to get up behind the Admiral's

²⁶ Committee Minutes, 12 April, 1775, LMA, A/FH/A003/002/012

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 August 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/03/002/012

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 May, 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/03/012. The governors must have wished to avoid establishing a precedent for providing extra clothing. Robert's new master, a tailor, was unconcerned on this point, perhaps because he could easily supply the clothing.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 February 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/03/002/012

carriage.³⁰ He was ten years old. There is no suggestion that Coleman required a premium for taking Samuel – he simply required a houseboy for mundane and routine work. There is some indication, however, that household work, in the case of the boys, was often the choice for those who were less robust.

Apprentices assigned in earlier years continued to make demands on the governors. As well as eighteen apprentices for whom reassignments had to be made in 1775, there were other complications.³¹ In March Nathaniel Cholmley, one of the governors, reported on the ongoing prosecution of John Bolton for the alleged murder of his household servant, a former foundling, Elizabeth Rainbow apprenticed to him in Yorkshire in 1768. The Hospital solicitor took action when Nicholas Hare complained that his master refused to take him back following a fall from a horse which had occurred while in his service. Dorcas Gould was received back into the hospital on account of her poor eyesight. Close needlework was an important requirement for girls in many households so that Dorcas's failing eyesight may have been as much of a handicap as it was for boys in tailoring or shoemaking. In October Richard Jupp, a Clerkenwell carpenter, was summoned before the Committee to answer the accusation of ill-usage made by his runaway household servant Rosamond Wood, who had been apprenticed to him in May 1769.³²

³⁰ Committee Minutes, 26 October 1774, LMA, A/FH/K02/001, 16

³¹ Indentures for those reassigned do not appear in the 1775 box but the names of those to be found new placements are identified in the Committee minutes as having been previously apprenticed.

³² Committee Minutes, 1 March 1775; 12 April 1775; 25 October 1775; 4 October 1775, LMA, A/FH/A003/002/012. The dispute between Rosamond Wood and Jupp seems to have been settled amicably; there is no indication that Rosamond was reassigned and Jupp was allowed to take apprentices at a later date. Dorcas Gould was sent to two further placements; the last, in 1777, with a 'cook shop' man, seems to have endured.

Table 2b: Birmingham Blue Coat School: apprentices in 1775, numbers, gender and occupations

	Total	domestic work	%	other occupations	%
Boys	6	0	(0)	6	(100)
Girls	3	2	(66.6)	1	(33.4)
Total	9	2	(22.2)	7	(77.7)

Source: Blue Coat School indentures for 1775: MS1622

Destination of boys: toymaker, buckle maker, Boulton and Fothergill works at Soho (Birmingham), printer, scale-beam maker, ironmonger / maltster.

Destination of girl not undertaking domestic work: mantua maker (dress-maker). This too was a traditional occupation for women. Ann Keelings was apprenticed to a master but, unusually, we are not given his occupation which makes it likely that mantua making was his wife's concern. 33

Although the sample for the Blue Coat School is extremely small we can see that the majority of boys in Birmingham were attached to workshops producing metal goods. The Boulton and Fothergill firm in Soho, Birmingham made a wide variety of small metal goods including toys, candlesticks, and silver-plated items. Edward Hodges' apprenticeship there in 1775 was endorsed by his mother, probably because his father had died.³⁴ No Blue Coat boy was assigned to domestic work which, in the London charity, with the transfer of Samuel Adams (see above), was the destination of almost half the boys. On the basis of the scant evidence for 1775 the Blue Coat boys do seem to have been in a better position to earn a living and remain independent. Domestic service, for men, had a low status in the eyes of contemporaries (with the exception, perhaps, for those like John MacDonald, discussed in earlier chapters, who were valets to distinguished gentlemen) and

³³ Indenture, Ann Keelings, 17 October 1775, BCA, MS1622/2/6

³⁴ Indenture, Edward Hodges, 10 May 1775, BCA, MS1622/2/6. Matthew Boulton was a subscriber to the school from 1767 and the school benefitted financially and practically from this connection. He was known to give preference to poor boys and orphans when engaging apprentices, Myhill, *Blue Coat School*, 24

tailoring and shoemaking were considered ‘overcrowded’ trades. The Blue Coat boys were placed in trades considered skilled or semi-skilled and ones in which they might rise to become journeymen or even small masters. The Boulton and Fothergill firm was the largest and most prestigious firm in Birmingham at the time and parents would have considered a place there to be advantageous. On the other hand, the reputation of the Foundling Hospital, its connections with wealthy and distinguished individuals and the composition of London society held out the possibility of openings for boys as household servants in a wide range of social groups. Three of the eight boys sent to household work went to households headed by men identified as ‘esquires’; another went to a Doctor of Laws and a fifth to a Doctor of Physic. These were households with a greater degree of security than many workshop trades and holding out the possibility of favourable employment prospects.

While the male/female ratio was balanced at the Foundling Hospital, Table 3b reflects the higher proportion of boys taken into the Blue Coat School school. This followed a pattern established in 1724 when twenty-two boys were taken in to live in the school but only ten girls.³⁵ Domestic service was the destination of the great majority of girls at the Foundling Hospital (80 per cent) and of the majority of the small sample in the Birmingham charity. Closer analysis reveals that most girls in both charities were placed in the households of artisans or craftsmen. Three girls from the Foundling Hospital (Table 3a) went to wealthier households – for example Sarah Cowell went to Sir Charles Whitworth a subscriber and active member of the Hospital – which suggests again that London society offered a wider range of experience.³⁶ The figures from one year are not, in this case, very meaningful, but they indicate that foundling girls could attain positions in prestigious households. Despite the expectation that charities would avoid placing their apprentices in occupations which raised them above the ‘deserving poor’, it is clear that both the Blue Coat School and the Foundling Hospital had aspirations for their charges which went beyond the utilitarian objective of simply avoiding dependence on relief, which was so integral to poor law policy.

³⁵ Myhill, *Blue Coat School*, 4.

³⁶ Indenture, Sarah Cowell, 1 November 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/12/004/081

The Blue Coat placements seem, at this point, to have been straightforward but they demanded time and attention on the part of the Guardians and officers: parental consent, for example, was necessary so that the indenture could state that the child was placed, as in the case of Thomas Taylor, ‘with the consent and approbation of his Father and the Governors’. In the case of James Spooner, presumably an orphan, the ‘consent and approbation’ was given by his ‘Friends’, a term which usually referred to ‘kin’.³⁷ By the 1770’s, the indenture recorded that a Blue Coat School child ‘doth put himself/herself apprentice . . .’ to master or mistress. He/she signed the document alongside the signature (or mark) of the employer. How much this reflected a genuine part in the decision making by the new apprentice is difficult to say (the parent continued to sign or make their mark), but it represented some recognition, at least, of their involvement in the arrangement. In 1775 there were no re-assignments and no releasements from apprenticeships. The latter were rarely contentious but involved some degree of negotiation which the charity officials were bound to oversee and approve. Releasements reflected the relaxation of apprenticeship contracts in the later eighteenth century seen here, in some years, to operate in charity as well as private and poor law arrangements.

Patterns and developments in apprenticeship at the Foundling Hospital and Birmingham Blue Coat School, 1775-1804

The close attention to the apprenticeship policies of 1775 provides a reference point by which we can measure later developments and judge the extent to which that year provides a pattern for the longer period as a whole. The thirty-year period is more meaningful for a comparative study and provides more evidence to test and re-visit ideas discussed in previous chapters, for example the nature of work undertaken by apprentices and the different experiences of parish apprentices and hired servants.

Preparation for apprenticeship

The broad form of apprenticeship in the two charities, despite a number of distinct features, demonstrates much common ground with respect to aims and objectives.

³⁷ Indenture, Thomas Taylor, 25 January, 1775, Indenture, James Spooner, 20 June 1775, BCA, MS1622/2/6

Less has been written, however, of the experience of the placement itself and of the extent to which the children were able to adjust to the different circumstances in which they found themselves. How were the children of both institutions prepared for entry into the world of work and what efforts were made to ensure that they went to acceptable households? The regime and lifestyle of both institutions must have left few leavers in any doubt about several of the qualities which would be expected of them in their apprenticeship. Sermons and hymns reinforced the importance of hard work and obedience and gave particular emphasis to the importance of moral obligations; in the case of the Foundling Hospital, ‘honesty, sobriety and diligence’ were the watchwords for which their apprentices were said to be admired.³⁸ The daily routine, which in both institutions involved a good deal of domestic work for girls, was designed with their future lives in mind. Practical considerations as well as lofty ideals were in evidence here: employers were more likely to favour trained, disciplined, and morally upright children and this was known to act as an attraction which substituted for a premium.³⁹ When Edward Piercy, an active governor of the Blue Coat charity, made a regulation visit to the school in October 1784 he praised the efforts of the mistress to ‘render the girls more useful when they go into service’ by improving their needlework skills. Such knowledge ‘cannot but render them more valuable’⁴⁰

It was more difficult to prepare boys for the more specific skills required in the various trades to which they might be sent. As discussed in Chapter one, in 1783 the General Court of the Foundling Hospital decided that a number of boys should assist the gardener in the Hospital grounds in growing vegetables.⁴¹ This was a means of inuring the boys to menial work but governors would have been aware that

³⁸ For discussion of the significance of these values see Alys Levene, “‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence,’” 183-200

³⁹ Payment of premiums was rejected on the grounds that they might attract masters who were more concerned with money than with training and maintaining the apprentice. The rule was relaxed by the Foundling Hospital during the General Reception, but it was a principle to which the governors returned in 1771 with some exceptions for children with disabilities, General Committee minutes, 26 December 1749, 1 May 1771, LMA, A/FH/K02/001. The Blue Coat School seems to have followed the same principle. I can find no explicit statement concerning premiums but no sum is mentioned in the indenture, nor in the record of the apprenticeship made in the Committee meeting Record Book. Notices for the press advertising the availability of apprentices make no notice of a premium and no sum for the cost of premiums appears in statements of expenditure.

⁴⁰ Visitors Book 1781-99, 12 October 1784, BCA, MS1622/12/1, 43

⁴¹ General Court, 14 May 1783, LMA/A/FH/A/03/001/003

gardening frequently formed part of a houseboy's duties. Foundling apprentices were also dressed appropriately for their function and status. The plain, utilitarian nature of their clothing signalled the apprentice's readiness for hard-work and an unassuming role in a modest household. A few foundling boys attached to domestic work were sent to grander establishments which aimed to impress with a staff noted for good looks and splendid livery. For the most part, however, theirs was a routine role - useful but without ostentation – for which they were well-equipped with serviceable coat, trousers, breeches, a change of shirt, plus stockings, shoes and hat.⁴² If masters, like the peruke maker who rejected Robert Collis, wanted something more (see above), they had to pay for it themselves.

The commitment to apprenticeship was, as discussed in chapter two, intended to be a serious undertaking. Both charities attached importance to the occasion endowing it with a sense of solemnity which marked a new stage in the child's life. The Hospital indenture was a large, formidable, printed document headed by the lamb, an emblem of the Hospital, and two imposing females, one of which was Britannia and the other a many-breasted woman, symbolising the Hospital's nurturing of the new-born infant. It was sealed with scarlet wax and signed by the Secretary (Thomas Collingwood for most of this period), two witnesses and the master. Each departing child was given a Bible and the Book of Common Prayer – a reminder to both apprentice and master that religious observation should continue. The Blue Coat School indenture was less elaborate in appearance but the occasion, with the impressive list of signatures and the presentation of books to each child, must have been memorable. The decision to include the signature of the apprentice may have been an attempt to impress upon him/her their new responsibilities and create a sense of self-esteem. A copy of the indenture was retained by the institution and an identical one given to the master – to be kept safely in the event of disputes or need for clarification. Ruth McClure considers that for many at the Foundling Hospital, 'no more solemn occasion, except marriage, would mark their lives'.⁴³ Given the perfunctory nature of the wedding ceremony for some of the poor, the event which marked apprenticeship may well have been the more memorable. Apprenticeship,

⁴² McClure, *Coram's Children*, 193-4

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 127

moreover, would in time confer ‘settlement’, that crucial status which, as Keith Snell has shown, gave the poor a sense of belonging as well as the right to parish relief.⁴⁴

In their ‘Instructions . . . upon being put apprentice’, drawn up in 1754, the Foundling Hospital made sure that leavers were aware of the rights (as well as the obligations), which the indenture gave them. At the foot of the document, following the expected exhortations ‘to be honest, careful, laborious and diligent’ apprentices were reminded of the master’s commitment to provide ‘Meat, Drink, Washing, Lodging, and Clothing’. Boys were promised a payment of £5 a year for the last three years of the apprenticeship.⁴⁵ (This was recognition, perhaps that they had moved beyond the early years of apprenticeship towards adult status). The school master and mistress were to ensure that the children learnt the ‘Instructions’ before being placed out.⁴⁶ As earlier chapters have shown apprentices with a sense of grievance could and did refer to these commitments and most especially with respect to the clauses applying to clothing which many masters seem to have found irksome. Equipped with knowledge of their legal rights and despite the reminders of their humble origins, some sense of worth was fostered in the foundlings by the instruction, when moving to the wider world, to ‘Be not ashamed that you were bred in this Hospital’.⁴⁷

Coming, as most did, from communities in which apprentices were familiar figures, Blue Coat pupils probably had a good grounding in their rights. The School Order Book for 1781-1795 records six cases (including that of Elizabeth Fieldhouse discussed in Chapter three), involving failure on the part of masters to provide adequate clothing – one girl ‘being in bad plight with respect to her cloathes’. Three boys appealed to the Committee concerning failure of their masters to provide the ‘double apparel’ due to them when they left their apprenticeship. William Bradly was clear that this was ‘agreeable to the covenant of his indenture’ and due ‘at expiration of his time’⁴⁸

⁴⁴ K.D.M Snell, *Parish and Belonging* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), *passim*

⁴⁵ ‘Instructions on Being Put Apprentice . . .’, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/208

⁴⁶ See, for example, Committee minutes, 9 August 1775, LMA, A/FH/A003/002/012

⁴⁷ ‘Instructions’, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/028

⁴⁸ Committee Book, 5 September 1785, 43; 18 April 1791, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 80. Some cases may never have reached the governors, but that apprentices were so well versed in their rights may

Preparation was not concerned with the apprentices alone. Measures were taken to ensure that masters or mistresses applying to take apprentices had the material means and moral qualities to maintain and train them. What exactly was required became more closely defined and more bureaucratic. Typically, in the early years of the Hospital, two church wardens would vouch for the character of anyone in their parish who wished to take a charity child.⁴⁹ From April of 1769, in order to provide satisfaction about economic and social stability ‘a proper Certificate’ was to be sent from the minister and church wardens certifying that applicants for child apprentices had a legal Settlement, and were ‘in such Circumstances as not likely to become burthensome to the Parish’⁵⁰ By the 1770s applicants for apprentices at the London Hospital completed a printed pro-forma with details of their name, address, occupation, marital status, and whether requesting a boy or girl. They also gave the name of person or persons who could provide a character reference – sometimes completed as ‘any person in the neighbourhood’.⁵¹ A measure designed to make compatibility between apprentice and master/mistress more likely, was to allow an element of choice. The form provided space for the name of the child chosen from a handful of those selected for apprenticeship.⁵² From the 1770s masters were to be accompanied by their wives, an attempt to ensure that both husband and wife accepted the new member of the household.⁵³

An examination of the fifty-seven applications to the Hospital in 1775 and the inspector’s response tells us a good deal about the qualities they looked for in master and mistress in that year and subsequently. It also gives a more rounded perspective of the masters and mistresses who applied for apprentices; so often they appear only in coroners’ reports and court cases as abusers or perpetrators of gross neglect. On the outside of the folded form the investigator (J.A.) wrote a summary of his findings

help to explain the small number of complaints - masters would have been aware of the actions apprentices might take and of the school’s response.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Certificate of good character for Joseph Young, 13 August 1769, LMA, A/FH/A12/002/002

⁵⁰ Printed sheet with Certificates of good character for masters, 26 April, 1769, LMA, A/FH/A12/2/2/1-

⁵¹ For example Application for Apprenticeship from Thomas Clark, 21 November 1775, LMA/FH/A12/1/ 24/1-

⁵² General Committee minutes, 5 October 1768, LMA, A/FH/A/03/002/009

⁵³ R.H. Nichols and FA Wray, *The History of the Foundling Hospital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 192

and the verdict of the Committee. Ann Flint, a spinster, was described as ‘A good Character . . . in partnership with an uncle has good business and lives in a creditable manner’. Her application to take Jane Evans was approved – the Hospital’s chief concerns (respectability and financial stability) having been satisfied.⁵⁴ Elsewhere the investigation frequently took into account the reputation of the whole family. James Sanderson, who applied to take Edward Shell for household work, was said to have ‘a very Reputable family’ as well as a business which promised to be ‘a very likely place for a Boy’.⁵⁵ Charles Dulyard, a peruke maker, scored well on several counts: ‘The neighbours give the Petitioner and his Wife a good Character, say the Man has good Business and has lived in his house about 8 years has a family of children, keeps two or three Journeymen besides apprentices’. Martha Bright, therefore, became a servant in a household which promised to be respectable, financially secure and stable.⁵⁶ Miss Evans of Dukes Court was the only referee to comment on the well-being of the apprentices rather than their future employment prospects: she was sure that the two children sent to George Coleman’s household in Carmarthen, ‘will be well-treated and good care taken of’.⁵⁷

Eleven of the fifty-nine petitions were rejected because they lacked one or more of the positive qualities found in those who were approved. William Herbert, a respectable sounding excise man, was said to be ‘honest and ‘industrious’ but his neighbour could not recommend placing an apprentice with him since Herbert had ‘a large family of small Children and the wife near her time again’. The former apprentice girls, he added, ‘were often in broils and Quarrels’. Sarah Brewer (who had been requested by Herbert) went instead to John Harkey of Bishopsgate.⁵⁸ The comments of neighbours were often, as in this case, well-observed and practical. Mr Lucas, a bacon butcher in Leaden Hall Market, on the other hand, had moral reservations describing a fellow salesman, George Cook and his wife, as ‘but Indifferent Characters’ who kept ‘a House of loose Company and not a proper place

⁵⁴ Applications for apprentices, Ann Flint, 16 August 1775, LMA, A/FH/A12/1/24/1-

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, James Sanderson, 2 November 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/12/1/24/1-

⁵⁶ Application for Apprentices, Charles Dulyard, 18 July 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/12/1/24/1-

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, George Coleman, 15 August 1775, LMA, A/FH/A12/1/24/1-

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, William Herbert, 24 February 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/12/1/24/1-. This was a reassignment for Sarah Brewer, first assigned to a whitesmith in Derbyshire.

for a Girl to go to'.⁵⁹ The number of rejections indicates that obtaining an apprentice from the Hospital could not be assumed: the investigation was more than mere routine and several conditions had to be satisfied. No girls were to be placed with unmarried men and no foundling apprentice could work in a public house.⁶⁰

In 1787 the report of the steward, searching for a reassignment for Ann Jenkinson reveals much the same concerns about employers but greater regard for the working conditions of (in this case) female apprentices. He rejected Mrs Smith's pin-making business in Tooles St. Southwark because she employed several apprentices who worked from 6a.m. to 9p.m. and were compelled in their work to mix with the 'lowest class.' There was no opportunity for the girls to acquire 'proper habits or notions of cleanliness or any other requisite of a female'. Some, he believed, drifted into prostitution. More interestingly the steward observed that 'no art is required in the business': it was an overcrowded occupation with little prospect of a secure livelihood.⁶¹ In 1787 the governors were under some pressure, having to find first time placements for forty-one new apprentices as well as those, like Ann Jenkinson, for whom they sought a transfer. They were not, it seems, prepared to sacrifice basic standards or objectives. The Hospital was, of course, aware of the criticism which could arise if their judgement about masters proved ill-founded, but the nature of the questions and the enquiries made reinforces the view that the Committee was not simply concerned with finding placements for their charges; they also sought to safeguard their moral circumstances and future security.

We know less of the preparations made by the Blue Coat School when recruiting masters, but the procedure seems to have been similar. Frequent references occur in the Order Books to enquiries to be made into the character of a master who had applied to take apprentices, though the subsequent report is rarely recorded. After the report, usually undertaken by the school master or a member of the Committee, the placement had to be officially approved. In January 1783, for example, Mr Parker, a brass founder of Snow Hill in Birmingham, applied to take a Blue Coat girl as his apprentice. The Committee evidently approved: an indenture survives for Maria

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, George Cook, 21 January 1775, LMA, A/FH/A/12/1/24/1-

⁶⁰ Committee minutes, 28 November 1753, see, Levene, "Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence", 187

⁶¹ Correspondence, 16 June 1787, LMA, A/FH/A12/023/001

Collis, placed with Samuel Parker in February of 1783, ‘to learn the business of a household servant’.⁶² In 1783 John Brown, was said to be intending to take his son as his apprentice but ‘only in order to turn him over to a person that has it not in his power to board him’. Brown was described as a man of good character but his proposal would have by-passed school regulations by allowing a Blue Coat apprentice to be sent to a man who was unable to maintain or accommodate him and whose character had not been subjected to the charity’s scrutiny. This suggests that the two essentials of a master for the Foundling Hospital – good character and sound finance - were just as important here. Furthermore, reassignment to another master was a matter for which legal approval was required.⁶³ The Blue Coat School, too, was aware of the impact of negative publicity.

Apprenticeship preparations in the Birmingham charity included negotiations with parent or kin who, having been kept at bay during the school years, were now to be consulted. This could be irksome and prolong negotiations as when the ‘friends’ of Joseph Clare refused to agree to any placement suggested by the Committee.⁶⁴ Parental involvement, however, acted as an additional safeguard for the apprentices and could be helpful when applications from masters and mistresses were in short supply. In 1786, to overcome this problem, advertisements were placed in *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette* to make known the availability of pupils ‘fit to be put out apprentice’. The Committee prepared forms to be sent to parents as well as to subscribers who had nominated children for the school ‘intimating that they are of proper age to be put out apprentice and desire they would use their endeavours to provide places for them’⁶⁵ With their knowledge of the industrial and commercial community, parents could provide useful contacts. On the other hand, enquirers had also to ensure that those willing to take apprentices were Anglicans which, in a city already known for its strong nonconformist character, reduced the pool of potential masters. The London Foundling Hospital required only that those taking in their children were (respectable) Protestants. The great range of Protestant religious

⁶² Blue Coat School Committee Book 1781-95, 13 January 1783, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 14; see also an enquiry by Mr. Marden with respect to Mr Selkirk, 96

⁶³ Committee Book, 2 June 1783, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 18

⁶⁴ Committee Book, 8 February 1790, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 74

⁶⁵ Committee Book 1781-95, 27 June 1785, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4

denominations in London and the more relaxed attitude to religion, which astounded Voltaire and other foreign visitors, must have widened the scope of the search.⁶⁶

The enquiries made and the additional precautions were not always successful in identifying unsuitable masters/mistresses. Inevitably, too, there were loop-holes in the system as when circumstances changed subsequent to the indenture being agreed. One such example, in 1786, was the case of Mary L'Argent discussed in Chapter 3 who was severely abused. Mary's early months with Priscilla Hawkes seem to have been reasonable enough but the Hospital could not have foreseen her mistress's marriage to a man who deeply resented having to feed and clothe an apprentice who came, in his words, 'at the useless and uncommon age of twelve years'. He was unprepared for what gave 'little return for so great a Burthen'.⁶⁷ Most foundling apprentices *were* very young but most approved masters accepted the apprenticeship contract: young children had to be maintained but in return worked without pay for a long period of time. Some masters thought themselves fortunate to have children from a prestigious organization with a reputation for producing hard-working, diligent apprentices.

Ages of first-time apprentices

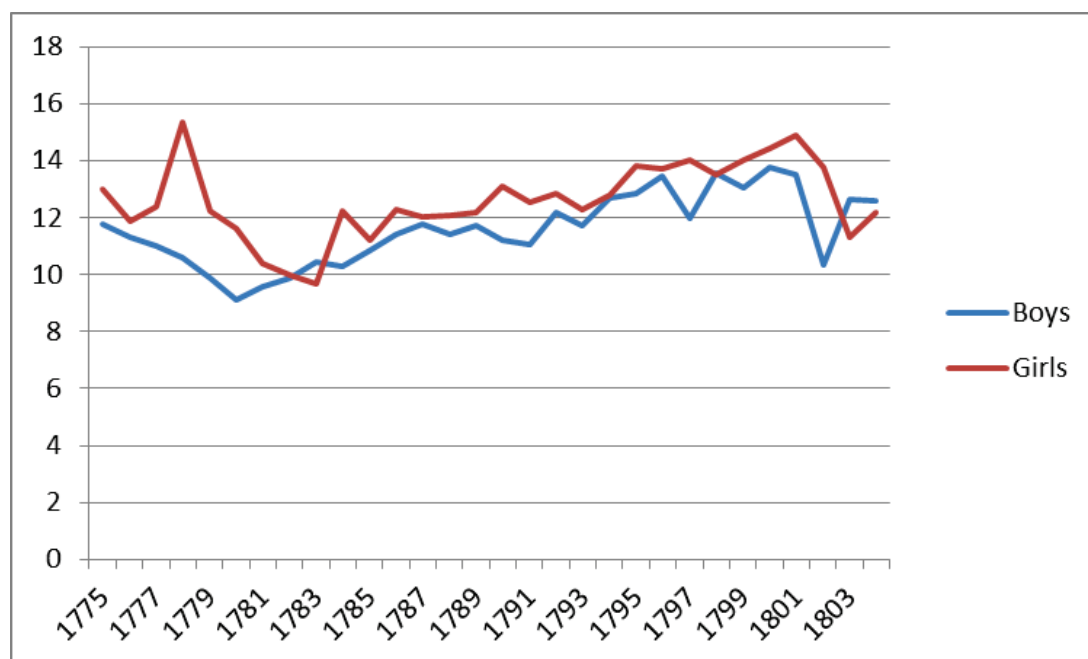
The age at which foundlings were to be sent to apprenticeships had been an area of tension between the governors and Parliament during the General Reception period (1756-60). The governors had argued, with some force, that boys under ten, were unsuitable for sea-service or husbandry and that small girls were unequal to the heavier demands of household work in the one-servant households where many were sent.⁶⁸ Pupils who benefited from a longer period of education and training at the school, were, they claimed, more desirable apprentices and were taken by better households. Table 4a shows the ages of children apprenticed out when placements had returned to the Hospital's control and numbers of children were nearer to the pre-General Reception period.

⁶⁶ 'C'est ici le pays des sectes. Un Anglais, comme homme libre, va au ciel par le chemin qui le plait'. Voltaire, *Lettres sur les Anglais* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 17, first published 1733. Voltaire travelled elsewhere in England but most of his observations were based on London.

⁶⁷ Correspondence, 24 November 1786, LMA, A/FH/A12/023/001

⁶⁸ McClure, *Coram's Children*, 116-8

Figure 2a: Ages of apprentices sent out from the Foundling Hospital, 1775-1804

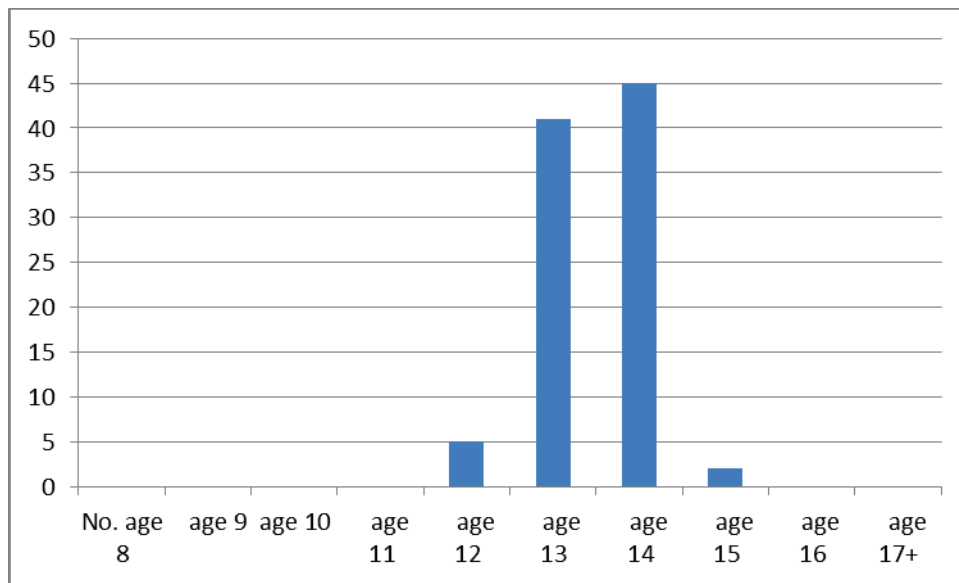


Sources: Foundling Hospital indentures, LMA/A/FH/A/12/004/081 to /084 and/095; Apprenticeship register LMA, microfilm X041/005A .

Figure 4a shows that the range of ages seen for 1775 remained broadly the same for 1775-1804 although there is a steady, if irregular, rise in the age at which foundlings were sent out and none under ten after 1784. Girls were overall apprenticed at a later age than the boys. Figure 4b shows that while Blue Coat pupils, boys and girls, were not sent out into the world of work at so young an age, nor did they stay much beyond the age of fourteen (most of the thirteen year-olds were within one or two months of their fourteenth birthday). By this point they were held to have completed their schooling and charity regulations, as well as local custom, determined some form of apprenticeship. As children came to the school recommended by trusted subscribers and in good health there were fewer of the problems of disability or sickness with which the Hospital had to contend, which could delay placements. Very early age apprenticeships, however, became less frequent at the Foundling Hospital and in 1806 the General Council ruled that no child should be apprenticed before the age of fourteen bringing their policy more or less in line with the Blue Coat School.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ McClure, *Coram's Children*, 250

Figure 2b: Ages of apprentices sent out from the Blue Coat School, 1775-1804

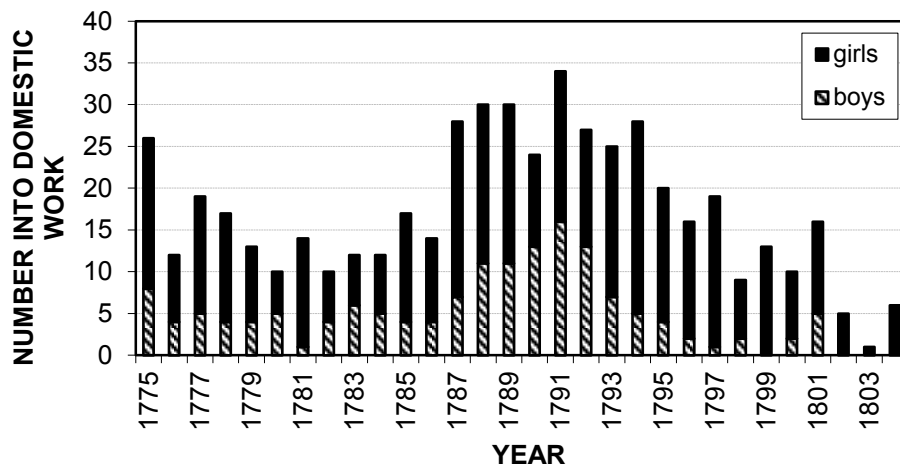


Source: Blue Coat School Register, BCA, MS1622/2/1/1. The ages of Blue Coat pattern of School apprentices do not appear on their indentures. Their ages have been calculated from the school register which records the ages of school pupils in 1771, April 1772, April 1782, April 1783 and December 1783. The registers provide the age in years and months of the children in that year so that it is possible to calculate their age at apprenticeship by counting forward to the date of their indenture. The lists are incomplete but allow the age to be calculated for 117 apprentices. Figure 4b takes a different form from Figure 4a in order to convey more clearly the smaller numbers and the different ages.

Analysis of occupational distribution

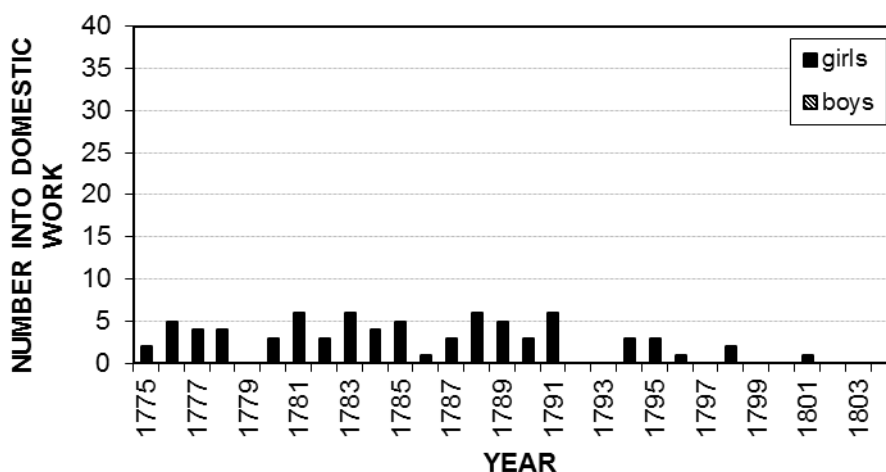
The comparative study has provided an opportunity to analyse two institutions with significantly different policies towards domestic service and to assess the importance of domestic service against other occupations in which apprentices were placed. As Table 4b shows, the Blue Coat School sent no boys to household work in this period, whereas at the Foundation Hospital the role of a boy servant was considered an entirely appropriate one for its apprentices. The differences can be related to the different trades and social structure of London and Birmingham, but also to the influence of parents of Blue Coat boys and contemporary attitudes to suitable work for boys and girls.

Figure 3a: Apprentices sent to domestic work from the Foundling Hospital, 1775-1804



Source: Foundation Hospital indentures, LMA, A/FH/A/12/004/081 to 084, Apprenticeship Registers, X041/005 A. Fourteen girls sent to ‘hybrid’ occupations where household work was combined with other occupations are included with ‘domestic work’. Two boys, both from the Hospital, were to combine household duties, one with stay-making and the other with mantua making. A small number of first-time girl apprentices had some experience of work in the Toplis worsted mill in Nottingham (see discussion below).

Figure 3b: Apprentices sent to domestic work from the Blue Coat School, 1775-1804



Source: Blue Coat School indentures, BCA, MS 1622/2/6 to 35. One girl (included with the ‘domestic work’ category) took on a ‘combined’ role .

Figures 5a and 5b confirm several of the patterns and differences seen in Tables 2a and 2b for 1775. Household work (usually described as the ‘business of a household servant’) was the occupation in which the overwhelming majority of girls were placed by both institutions. Even when household work was combined with other trades (these have been included in the household category) they were ones which were well-established as ‘women’s work’. Fourteen foundling girls went to occupations which combined domestic work with other occupations, all of them traditional for women. For example, in 1781 six went to Jane Goadby in Plastow, Essex to combine tambour-making with household work.⁷⁰ Other ‘hybrid’ roles involved embroidery, shroud-making, mantua-making and work with feathers. Of the total 397 foundling girls, only 32 (8 per cent) were placed in occupations in which no (apparent) household work was involved. These were for the most part occupations associated with women (mantua making, trimming making, shroud-making, haberdashery child-bed linen) although two were sent to button-making – a trade in which both men and women were involved. The most unusual was Mary Price sent in 1804 to ‘a collector of the King’s taxes’ and described as ‘in his business’ (He may have had a second occupation but it is not identified). Figure 5a almost certainly offers an underestimate of girls in domestic service since the occupations of fifteen girls are not recorded; given the pattern seen elsewhere it is likely that some, at least, of these were indeed household workers, omitted as a result of an oversight by the recorder. Of the 84 girls placed by the Blue Coat School (Figure 5b), seven (8.33 per cent), were sent to occupations other than household work; mantua making and confectionery. The occupations of two Blue Coat School girls are unknown. It is possible, however, that girls from the Blue Coat School, placed for household work in small workshops (in some cases with their own family), were drawn into craft and manufacturing work which gave them some respite from household work and the opportunity to learn wider skills. One girl was specifically sent to combine household work and lining leather boxes.

Few girls apprenticed by either charity were given an opportunity to undertake the variety or scope of occupations which Amy Erickson, and Keith Snell found

⁷⁰ Apprenticeship indentures, 11 April 1781, Rose Hill, Mary L’Argent, Elizabeth Williamson, Sophia Rose, Rebecca Chertsay, LMA, A/FH/A/12/004/084

amongst women for example, working as goldsmiths, gilders, furniture makers and engravers.⁷¹ Neither the Foundling Hospital nor the Blue Coat School made any sustained attempt to exploit the possibilities which existed for girls outside domestic work either in traditionally female sectors or in the new textile mills to which several London parishes were now sending significant numbers of their girls.⁷² In Birmingham the abundance of small workshop industries willing to take girls for household work made it unnecessary for the Blue Coat School to reach out beyond its traditional occupational or regional boundaries in search of placements for girls. When masters were not forthcoming the governors generally resolved the problem by advertising in the local press or recruiting help from parents.

The few attempts made by the Foundling Hospital to break with the well-established custom of sending girls to domestic service met with limited success. The governors had acquired a reluctance to send children, especially girls, to factories after unfortunate experiences during and soon after the General Reception.⁷³ In the 1790s, however, with large numbers of children needing placements due to the economic and social disruptions of the Napoleonic wars, the possibility was considered again. In response to a request from Toplis & Co., a firm of worsted manufacturers in Cuckney, Nottinghamshire, and following a favourable report of the premises, thirty-six Hospital children, including ten girls, were received by the Toplis Mills in 1792. The youngest were seven years-old.⁷⁴ Three of those named on the agreement struck with Toplis were, however, allocated elsewhere within the next few years; of these the one girl, Hannah More, went to a milliner in Bermondsey in 1795.⁷⁵ Only one girl of the original ten is recorded in the Hospital register as having been formally

⁷¹ See discussion and tables in K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1600-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 279-81; Amy Louise Erickson, 'Married Women's Occupations in Eighteenth Century London', *Continuity and Change*, 23 (2008), 267-307

⁷² Alysa Levene, 'Parish Apprenticeship and the old poor law in London', *Economic History Review*, 63, 4 (2010), 915-41. While domestic service increased its share of apprenticed children recruited from the parish, 1760-1830, a significant number of parish children from London were sent to mills and factories in the north and midlands. The occupations were new but the poor law officials managed to reconcile new approaches with traditional old poor law objectives.

⁷³ Committee Minutes, 23 June 1784, LMA, A/FH/K02/001

⁷⁴ Articles of Agreement, 4 July 1792, LMA, A/FH/A13/001; Katrina Honeyman, *Child Workers in England, 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the Early Industrial Labour Force* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 133, 287. Honeyman points out, however, that the Hospital Secretary believed the prospects for those who completed their time at Toplis were bleak, 138

⁷⁵ Apprenticeship register, Hannah More, 12 November 1794, LMA, A/FH/A/12/003/001/002. A note adds that this was not carried out until 1795

apprenticed to Toplis' partner firm, Royds and Toplis, when she was sixteen.⁷⁶ By 1798, however, the firm was in financial difficulties and the remaining foundling children were thrown on the resources of the local parish which according, to a local clergyman, was 'inadequate to their maintenance'⁷⁷ The Hospital Committee appointed two clergymen to assist in finding suitable placements for the children.⁷⁸ Five boys were apprenticed out to other northern textile firms and one sent to household work in London.⁷⁹ The others were to be sent to sea or placed with farmers, tradesmen or 'other services'. We cannot assume that the foundlings who were originally sent were still present nor is it clear how many were girls – who may have gone into domestic work after all.⁸⁰

A handful of first-time foundling girls, therefore, did have some experience of large-scale factory life in this period. After 1798 industrial apprenticeships of this kind seem to have been used as a last resort for girls whose other placements had failed as was the case for Ann Wharton, who, after two household positions fell through, was sent to Samuel Oldknow's mill near Stockport.⁸¹ Complaints by Oldknow that the girls he received were 'rather headstrong, high spirited young women' suggest that mill work was reserved for 'problem' girls rather as sea service came to be for the boys.⁸²

Traditional sentiments about appropriate roles remained entrenched in both charities and the communities they served. Domestic work, although physically demanding, could be varied: a good household provided opportunities to gain skills in cooking, preserving, laundering and child-care as well as the hard grind of cleaning. The argument, that this was good grounding for marriage and rearing children, remained a persuasive one – and so perhaps the view, especially in the Foundling Hospital,

⁷⁶ Apprenticeship register, Sarah Stacey, 30 July 1800, (LMA, A/FH/A/12/003/001/002

⁷⁷ See Honeyman, *Child Workers*, for the ways in which Toplis had deteriorated, 241-2; Committee minutes, 7 March, 1798

⁷⁸ Committee minutes, 14 March, 1798, LMA, A/FH/A003/002/018

⁷⁹ The boy sent to domestic work in London was John Dickens, Apprenticeship Register, John Dickens, 26 April 1798, Apprenticeship Register, LMA, A/FH/A/12/003/001/002 and see Committee minutes, 7 March 1798, A/FH/A/003/002/018

⁸⁰ Of seven apprentices recruited by Toplis from Hackney parish in 1794, three ran away, two had to be returned, one died and the other left, Honeyman, *Child Workers*, 123

⁸¹ Apprenticeship register, Ann Wharton, 18 July 1798, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/001/002

⁸² Apprentices' petitions for gratuities, Samuel Oldknow for Ann Wharton, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/6/1-, 1805-1810

that it was appropriate for girls whose mothers had in many cases been servants themselves and lacked the guidance in household management a mother could give.⁸³ Practical as well as ideological considerations prevailed. It was easier to continue with domestic service placements by casting the recruitment net more widely and relying on the Hospital's reputation for well-trained, compliant apprentices, than to look for new work opportunities.

Both charities, therefore, continued to favour household work for girls, almost to the exclusion of all other occupations even when the results for these were encouraging. Ann Wharton (see above) seems to have adapted pretty well to mill work. In 1807 Oldknow supported her application for a gratuity, recognising (conventionally enough) that she had been 'honest, diligent and sober' but also that she had stayed in his employment beyond her apprenticeship term.⁸⁴ Not all girls were happy to fit into the domestic service straightjacket. Just how other charities responded to the possibility of taking up new industrial placements for both boys and girls and with what results needs more attention. The lack of enthusiasm found in the Foundling Hospital and Blue Coat School may be another of the several ways in which children from charities were distinguished from parish children.

The striking difference in the apprenticeship destinations of the boys in the survey is the absence in the Blue Coat School of any boy placed in domestic work. In contrast, 153 (36.6 per cent) of the 417 foundling boys found work as household workers although this percentage had decreased by the end of the eighteenth century. The absence of boys in domestic roles in Birmingham is partly explained, as already suggested, by the abundance of small skilled and semi-skilled trades which customarily employed one or two (boy) apprentices. The town, at this stage in its development also lacked a significant wealthy middle class of the kind which, in London, employed footboys to complete a large servant labour force. Nevertheless, this cannot be the only explanation; Birmingham did contain the category of professional households headed by clergymen, doctors, apothecaries, and schoolmasters which in London included a boy servant in their household. Nor was it

⁸³ See Amy L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, 53, on the traditional status attached to 'housewifery', especially where non parish children were involved.

⁸⁴ Apprentices' petitions for gratuities, Samuel Oldknow for Ann Wharton, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/6/1-, 1805-1810

unheard of to send a Blue Coat boy into household work: in February of 1772 Thomas Grindle was apprenticed, aged thirteen, as a boy servant to the Reverend Brailsford. An entry in the Order Book for September of the previous year reveals that Thomas was originally to be assigned to a factor in Birmingham but adds, rather enigmatically, ‘if Mr Wiggan will have him’. The possibility must be that the boy was in some way unsuitable for the work required in a Birmingham workshop even for buying and selling; he was perhaps too frail or too lacking in intellectual ability. It took the governors five months to find the new place for Thomas; a clergyman, with no obvious economic role for a boy servant might have been more forgiving of his ‘failures’.⁸⁵ It was an isolated case and suggests that household work was seen as a ‘last resort’ for boys.⁸⁶

The Blue Coat governors had also to take into account parents’ aspirations for their children, but especially the boys. Having assigned them to several years of schooling parents wished for something more highly regarded than household service. Popular concepts of masculinity were also at stake (discussed in chapter three). There was some indication of this when, in 1789, John Walker complained that his nephew, Joseph Spittle, apprenticed to a surgeon, had been ill-treated. What, it transpired, Walker wanted for his nephew was, in his words, a ‘proper’ situation – perhaps because working for a surgeon had not involved learning a trade but a good deal of bottle-washing, sweeping up and errand running. Joseph was in time found a placement with a hat maker and therefore the chance to practise a recognisable and marketable trade.⁸⁷ The involvement of parents or kin in apprenticeship placements was a constraint from which the Foundling Hospital was entirely free – which may help to explain why the governors had less reason to shun domestic work for boys and little pressure to settle them in more lucrative (or manly) occupations.

Finally, the very composition of the Blue Coat School suggests a gender bias in the wider community. There were always more boys than girls - a circumstance which reflected the choices of the subscribers who nominated the children who were to

⁸⁵ Blue Coat School Order Book, 24 February 1772, and 10 September 1771, MS1622/1/1/1/3, 171,165

⁸⁶ Interestingly the only apprentice sent to as a household servant to Birmingham from the Foundling Hospital was a girl, Apprentice register, Jane Prater, 31 August 1804, LMA/FH/A12/004/ 001/002

⁸⁷ Committee Book, 2 November 1789, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 72

enter each year. Clearly greater importance was attached to the education of boys than to girls and perhaps this went with traditional ideas about women which were later reflected in apprenticeship decisions. That this was the consequence of subscribers rather than the governors is evident from the plea made by the Committee in February 1790 that they should give preference to girls, ‘there being very few girls at present’⁸⁸

Adjusting to life outside

Earlier discussion has shown that removal from an institution (workhouse, school, charity) or family life could be traumatic for a child. Yet as Katrina Honeyman has observed, little research has been done on the difficulties children faced or the extent to which feelings of friendlessness, isolation or the absence of belonging were understood.⁸⁹ While evidence of concern for the material needs of apprentices is clear it is far more difficult to ascertain or apprehend their emotional feelings on leaving their institutions or the extent to which the Hospital or Blue Coat governors took such feelings into account. For the foundling children the move was the third upheaval in a very short life: at birth (or very soon after) they were separated from their mother, at the age of four or five from their foster nurse and, usually before the age of fourteen, they were sent to a household quite unlike the place in which they had spent more than half their life. They were prepared for hard work, religious observance and limited opportunities for leisure but not for the loneliness and social isolation which was often inevitable and which some must have felt keenly. Some awareness of the loss of fellow foundlings is evident in the explanation given by the matron in 1802 when Ann Williamson failed to settle easily into her new home: ‘it may have happened that going from a place where she had many play-fellows she might grow dull and listless in a new situation until accustomed to it’.⁹⁰ Such insights into the mind of a child were unusual but while the matron’s observations were shrewd and not unsympathetic the remedy was seen to be simply a matter of

⁸⁸ Committee Book, 8 February 1790, BCA, MS1622/1/1/1/4, 74

⁸⁹ Honeyman, *Children Workers*, especially 199-214

⁹⁰ Committee Minutes, 7 April, 1802, cited in Levene, ‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence’, 198. See also Apprenticeship register, Ann Williamson 12 August 1801, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/001/002. This was probably a charity apprenticeship by Reverend Robert Fellowes in lieu of adoption.

time. The case seems a poignant one since Anne was no more than five or six years old and had been sent away to a clergyman's household in the village of Harbury in Warwickshire; however beneficial this must have seemed to the Hospital authorities, it must have been a bewildering dislocation for such a little girl.

Occasionally a master, more rarely a mistress, took two or more apprentices which ensured some youthful companionship for the children. Ann Newby and John Newton were sent in March 1790 to be servants to James Flack a schoolmaster in Dufour's Place, Soho. Francis Spilsbury, a chemist in Soho, took three foundlings into his household; Abraham Cromp and Jane Nelson in April 1791; Rachel Welstead joined them soon after.⁹¹ Such placements, however, were unusual for domestic service: in the modest households to which most foundlings were sent they were often the sole servant. Some were in the same part of London: Soho, Westminster, Holborn and Marylebone were all favoured destinations where there might have been a chance to renew friendships when running errands, delivering goods, at church and in occasional moments of leisure. All the same, isolation was a well-known feature of much domestic work, especially for girls, who were less likely to work outside the house. Mary Ashford, a hired servant in London left an agreeable, well-paid position telling her mistress that she could no longer abide the loneliness.⁹² Charity apprentices had not this option.

When apprentices did join a household with other servants, relationships were not always harmonious or friendly. Some indication of this can be seen in apprentices' petitions for gratuities - the applications made at the end of their term for a 'reward' of up to five guineas.⁹³ The petitions were supported by the testimonials of the master or mistress which, for the most part, respond conventionally to questions about the conduct of apprentices, but occasionally reveal tensions and provide insights into household relationships and why apprentices found it difficult to adjust.

⁹¹ Apprenticeship Register, Anne Newton, John Newton, 31 March 1790; Abraham Cromp and Jane Nelson, 23 April 1791; Rachel Welstead 13 April 1791, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/001-002

⁹² Mary Ashford, *Life of a Licensed Victualler's Daughter, Written by Herself* (Saunders and Otley: London, 1844), 40-1

⁹³ The custom of granting annuities, which had lapsed during the General Reception, was revived in 1794. It was intended to encourage good behaviour but also to provide work tools for the men and some financial security for women. Not all applicants were thought worthy of the full 5 guineas but the Committee took into account the behaviour of those who had improved after a difficult start and awarded accordingly, sometimes in defiance of the reports of the master or mistress.

In October 1802, the Hospital matron Hannah Johnson noted that there had been a complaint against Elizabeth Printer two years into her placement with Captain Griffiths which, ‘upon enquiry . . . proved to be the fault of the Nursery Maid, in misrepresenting her to Mrs Griffiths’. Elizabeth March had been returned to the Hospital following the arrival of a new girl to help her mistress, after which ‘there was continual complaint against her’. Daniel Lee, apprenticed at the age of twelve, would have remained in his master’s service, ‘but for the intrigues of a wicked female servant’. All three had been found new places where they completed the rest of their term without complaint on either side. Elizabeth Printer was awarded three guineas, Daniel Lee and Elizabeth March received four. Evidently the inspectors did not hold them wholly responsible for any disagreements.⁹⁴

Other apprentices found compensation for the loss of peer companionship. While Robert Pemberton served as household servant to Edward Southbrook the eldest son of the family had died and thereby, the inspector noted, ‘Robert has lost an excellent friend’. Robert used the testimonial form to record ‘the goodness he has continually Received from the family of Ed S Esq.’⁹⁵ Several apprentices, like Anne Williams, who had served Jacob Bertsch’s for nine years, were happy to stay on as hired employees. Anne was retained, Bertsch wrote ‘as servant in the family’ implying a sense of her belonging with them.⁹⁶ When Eleanor Montgomery moved on to a new situation, her former mistress promised ‘to always make my House an Asylum for her when out of place’ – a valuable failsafe for any hired worker but particularly for one without family or relatives. Lady Seaforth on leaving for Barbados left 20 guineas to apprentice Frances Stringer to a mantua maker, assuring Fanny that if she were to merit the gratuity ‘she would always be her friend’.⁹⁷ Of course, these are testimonies which might have been given by masters and mistresses wishing to ensure that they received apprentices in future. Nevertheless some foundlings found security and friendship.

⁹⁴ Apprentices’ petitions for gratuities, Thomas Lowndes for Elizabeth Printer, LMA, A/FH/A/7/3/1-1802; Walter Smith for Elizabeth March, John Foster for Daniel Lee, LMA, A/FH/A/7/5/1-, 1804-5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* Edward Southbrook for Robert Pemberton, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/6/1-, 1805-1810.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Jacob Bertsch for Anne Williams, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/3/1-, 1802

⁹⁷ Apprentices’ petitions for gratuities, Margaret Jennings for Eleanor Montgomery, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/3/1-, 1802; Elizabeth Pedlar for Frances Stringer, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/4/1-, 1803

Distant Placements

For some children the challenge of adjusting to a new situation may have been intensified by being sent, like Ann Williamson, to placements which were far from the Hospital. London and its environs could not provide all the placements needed even by the 1770s when numbers had been much reduced. Figure 6a shows that between 1775 and 1804, 94 foundling children were sent to destinations outside a twenty mile radius of London on the occasion of their first apprenticeship. This amounts to 11.5 per cent of the total 814 foundlings (boys and girls) apprenticed out. Of these, 65 (representing 7.9 per cent of the total 814), were to be trained in 'household business'. Thirty-nine of the household apprentices were boys who were, for the most part, sent to clergymen or masters identified as gentlemen or esquires. John Edwards in 1783 and Thomas Ragg in 1790, for example, both found homes with clergymen in Cheshire, John in Prestbury and Thomas in Macclesfield.⁹⁸ In 1776, Mark Noble was sent to Robert Parker of Salford (Warwickshire) a local worthy whose family had a reputation for establishing charitable funds to assist poor boys.⁹⁹ Few joined such distinguished households as Matthew Proctor who went to Sir Christopher Whichcote a Baronet of Aswarby in Lincolnshire, but most went to households with some claim to gentility or reasonable affluence: for example, three boys went to surgeons. Furthest away was twelve year old Ralph Maitland, bound in September 1784 to Henry McNab, a 'teacher of elocution' at the Glasgow College.¹⁰⁰ Most unusual was Christopher Sweedland who, in 1783, became personal household servant to John Latham, a student of physic at Brasenose College, Oxford.¹⁰¹ The Hospital's early connection with the Navy, might explain the number of children sent to Jersey (sixteen in total) where naval officers had a strong

⁹⁸ Apprenticeship indenture, John Edwards, 9 April 1783, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/084; Apprenticeship register, Thomas Ragg, 10 February 1790, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/001/002

⁹⁹ Apprenticeship indenture, Mark Noble, 14 August, 1776, LMA, A/FH/A/12/004/082; details of the Parker family in L.F.Salzman and Philip Styles (eds), *The Victoria History of the County of Warwick* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), 165

¹⁰⁰ Apprenticeship indenture, Matthew Proctor, 1 May 1776, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/082; for boys sent to surgeons see apprenticeship indentures, William Burgess, 3 January 1781, Thomas Woolaston, 14 August 1782, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/084 and apprenticeship register, James Harris, late 1796, LMA/A/FH/A12/003/001/-002; apprenticeship indenture, Ralph Maitland, 29 September 1784, A/FH/A/12/004/085. A duplicate of his indenture is enclosed with his own which could mean that he did not take up the place, but there is no evidence of an alternative placement or record of his death.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Sweedland, 20 May 1783, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/084

presence. Of the twelve boys sent there, however, eight were assigned to household services and only two to sea service.

Twenty eight girls (6.5 percent of the 397 girls.), were sent to distant apprenticeships (Figure 6a). Of these, twenty six were household workers representing 40 per cent of all 'distant' placements and 92.8 per cent of the distant household apprenticeships for girls, reflecting fairly closely the overall apprenticeship pattern for foundling girls (91.4 per cent). The social status of the households to which they were sent shows much the same preference for gentility and sound finance as was the case for the boys; nine girls went to clergymen, gentlemen or esquires; Margaret Lintot went to a portrait painter and Hannah Travis to the keeper of a ladies boarding school; Caroline Western to a Captain in Jersey; Martha Whitworth was apprenticed to Lady Kensington in Pembroke.¹⁰² In addition to these 94 'distant' first time apprentices there were a number of foundling apprentices who were already outside the twenty mile radius and an additional number who were reassigned to distant placements during this period and for whom the Hospital retained some responsibility. The usual practice was to appoint local clergymen (as for the Cuckney Mills) to act as inspectors and respond to their communications as appropriate.

A small clustering of foundling apprentices existed in Wales (Carmarthen, Denbigh and Pembroke), and in Jersey (St Helier) but these were with individual households. The arrangement with Messrs. Toplis in the 1790s was (see above) short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful. Samuel and Isaac Oldknow took a small number of foundlings and occasionally gave advice and suggestions for placements.¹⁰³ The Toplis episode, however, suggests some lapse in the Foundling Hospital's ideals. We might qualify Ruth McClure's praise for the governors' 'humanitarianism and watchfulness' in finding new apprenticeships for the Toplis children in 1798, by noting the tender age of some of the children who were to be sent to a mill which employed about four hundred children, including six year olds, used boys on the night shift and kept the machines in operation twenty-four hours a day. While perfectly legal, it shows a tolerance for a form of employment for children which

¹⁰² Apprenticeship register, Margaret Lintot, 9 January 1788; Hannah Travis, 23 July 1794; Caroline Western, 8 April 1789, LMA, A/FH/A12/003/001/002; Apprentice indentures, Martha Whitworth, 14 August 1782, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/084

¹⁰³ For example, Committee minutes, 24 January 1801, LMA, A/FH/A003/002/020

previous experience had shown to be mistaken and which contemporaries had already begun to condemn. Elsewhere, the distant placements suggest that the Hospital used its wider connections in ways which benefited its apprentices in terms of stability and future employability. The emphasis on traditional occupations (the majority for boys and girls were for household work) in households which were respectable and secure, suggests that the Hospital was particularly concerned to safeguard children who were sent to distant locations. The experience of the General Reception had made the governors aware that it was difficult for apprentices to draw attention to abuse or deficiencies and for the governors to respond swiftly.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Gentility, however, had provided no safeguard for Elizabeth Rainbow, allegedly murdered by her master John Bolton, 'gent', Committee minutes, 1 March 1775, LMA, A/FH/A03/002/012. For the indenture details see Apprentice Register, 18 May 1768, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/001/002

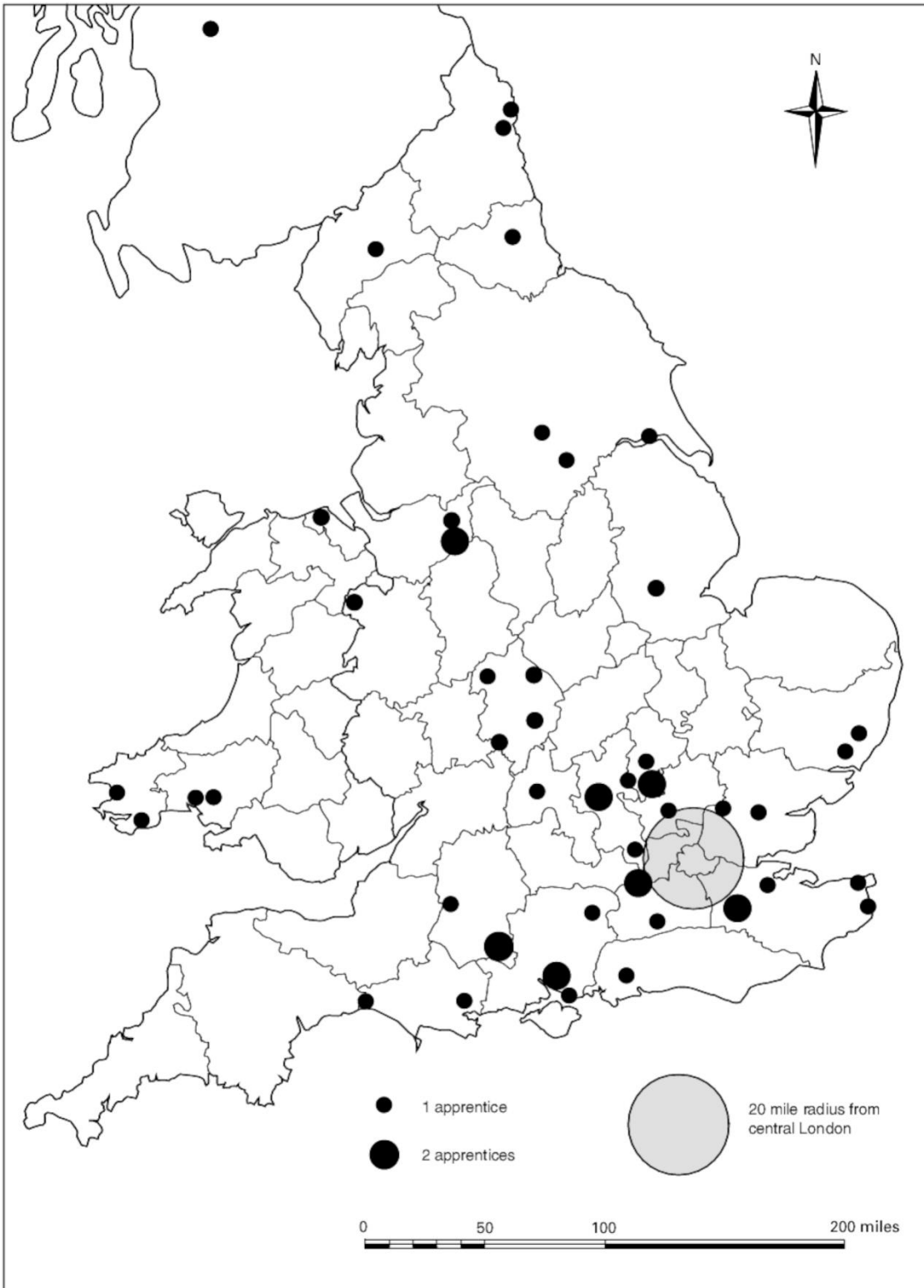


Figure 4a: Map showing ‘distant’ placements of apprentices from the Foundling Hospital to household work, 1775-1804

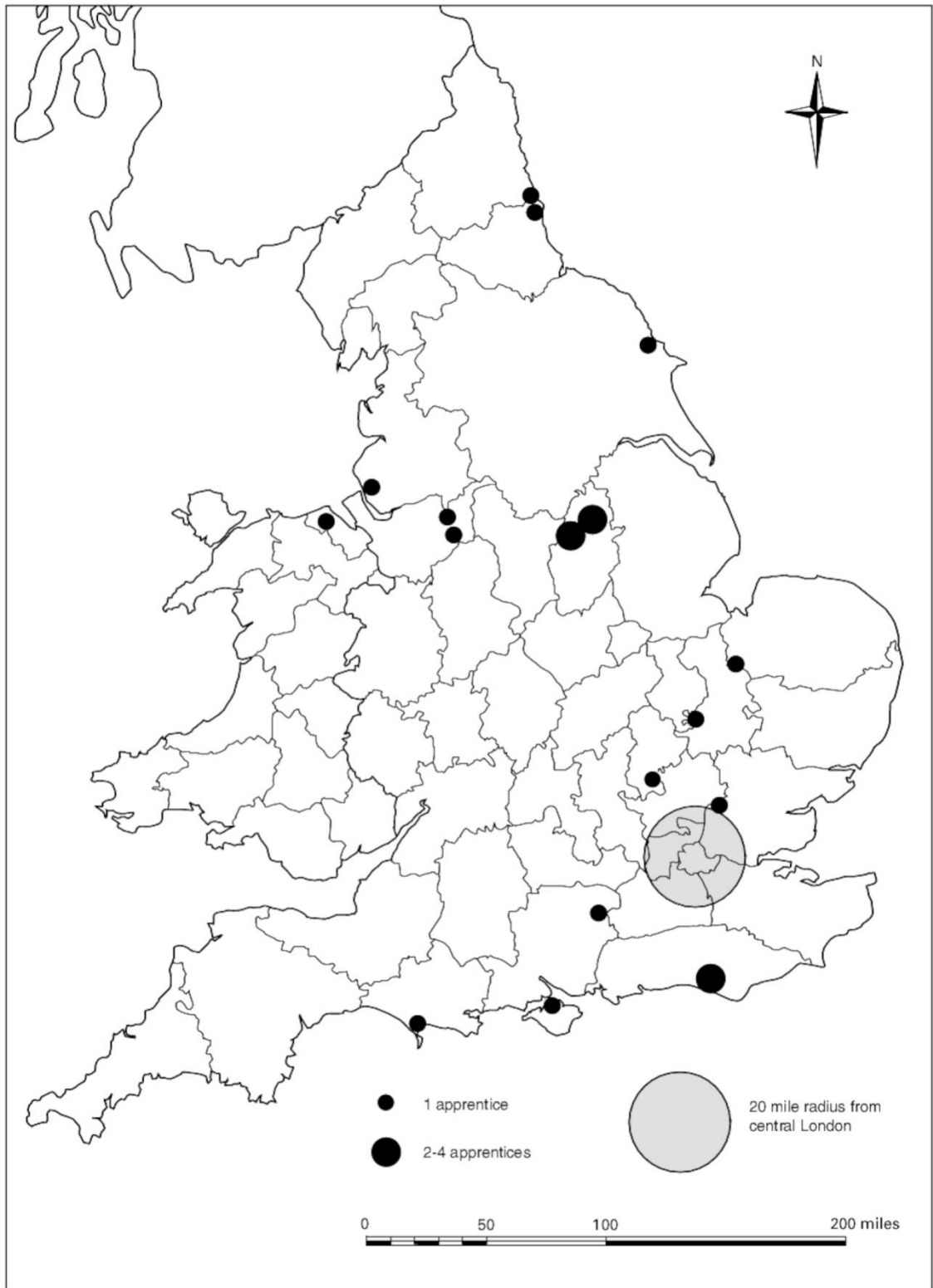


Figure 4b: Map showing ‘distant’ placement of apprentices from the Foundling Hospital to occupations other than household work, 1775-1804

The concerns of the Hospital were essentially practical. There is little evidence that the Governors and Guardians saw these distant placements as posing emotional or psychological difficulties for the apprentices. Rural locations, where many were sent, were considered a healthy option (as for the infant foundlings) after the disease and grime of the capital and likely to pose fewer risks of moral contagion. The Committee might have reasoned that many children at that time, including their own, were sent away to boarding school at similar ages. And it is possible that many children in London, like eleven year old Jane Evans, bound to shroud making in Southwark, led a life as lonely and dismal as any distant foundling.¹⁰⁵ All the same, these children faced a long journey, a completely new community as well as an unfamiliar household and loss of friends. On Jersey there may have been language difficulties and elsewhere dialect and accent may have made relationships with other servants more difficult. There was no hope of a respite in the holidays or a speedy return.

How well these children coped with their new environment and the demands made on them seems to have depended on the disposition of the child as well as the nature of the household. Fourteen of the sixteen children sent to Jersey, on the evidence of the apprenticeship registers, completed their apprenticeship in their original placement. William Seal and James Rogers, however, both apprenticed as household servants, were the cause of concern. William Seal, assigned to Jersey in May 1784 aged eleven, became deeply disturbed a few years into his apprenticeship (See chapter two). His master, Jean Fillieul, wrote that he had been ‘several times in danger of my life’ as a result of William being ‘out of his reasonable senses’.¹⁰⁶ Apparently fearing that Fillieul intended to confine him in chains William, now seventeen, made his way back to the Hospital by first making a getaway to France in a stolen boat. The Committee was eventually persuaded that William was too disturbed to be returned to Jersey. James Rogers’ case was a more conventional case of conflict between apprentice and his master, in this case, Major James Home to whom James had been allocated in 1786. Reassigned to Major George Burghall of

¹⁰⁵ Apprenticeship indenture, Jane Evans, 23 August 1775, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/081

¹⁰⁶ Letter from John Fillieul (folded in indenture for William Seal, 1784), 11 May 1790, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/831

Great Ormond Street, James seems to have done well and completed his term.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps he simply found a more genial household, but he may have felt more at home in London. Certainly the familiarity of London, despite its hazards, was a comfort zone for some: in 1802 Ann Bradley earned five guineas gratuity for the ‘entire satisfaction’ she gave to the households she had served but, when her mistress proposed taking her to Scotland, ‘did not chuse to go so far from London’. Ann James had accompanied her master from London to Reading. He proposed retaining her with (a generous) eight guineas a year, ‘but her desire was to go to London’.¹⁰⁸ Distant placements, however, were a declining trend. By the end of the century only 6.7 per cent of foundling apprentices were obliged to come to terms with locations at any distance from the south east of England.¹⁰⁹

It is impossible to know if William Seal’s state of mind was disturbed by the experiences of being a foundling or if James Rogers really minded removal from London, but a telling episode in the lives of several foundling apprentices was their return, without leave, to the foster parent homes in which they had spent their first years. Domestic service, more than any other occupation, must have awakened earlier experiences of closer family ties. In 1770 Mary Durham made her way from her master’s home in White Cross, London, to her former foster nurse at Yateley in Hampshire – a daring enterprise for a young girl with limited experience of the outside world and little, if any, money.¹¹⁰ The governors’ response to Mary’s ‘elopement’ appears unsympathetic. In March 1771 they distributed a letter warning that ‘no Money can be allowed to any Nurse who shall receive or detain such a Child or Children’. Further, they would be liable to prosecution unless the master or mistress were immediately informed of the apprentices’ whereabouts. The overseers of the poor were to be told lest the child became a burden on the parish.¹¹¹ Letters from inspectors must have made the Hospital well aware that strong bonds of affection could develop between nurse and child in the early years. John P. Jones had noted in 1766 that Richard Clive’s nurse desired to keep him, being ‘fond of the boy

¹⁰⁷ Apprenticeship register, James Rogers, 13 November 1786, LMA, A/FH/A12/004/001/002; Committee minutes, 15 December 1790, LMA, A/FH/A12/003/002/016

¹⁰⁸ Apprentice petitions for gratuities, John Jennings for Ann Bradley, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/7/1-, 1802; Joseph Watkins for Ann James, LMA, A/FH/A12/7/7/1-, 1810-13

¹⁰⁹ Levene, ‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence’, 190

¹¹⁰ General Committee Book, 5 December 1770, LMA, A/FH/A03/002/010

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6 March 1771

to a degree of distraction'.¹¹² There were other similar accounts. The Hospital, however, was under legal restraints in the matter of runaways. It was prepared to take action against any master whose unreasonable treatment of a child had led them to take flight and if necessary to find the apprentice a new placement.

¹¹² Correspondence: John P. Jones to Mr Collingwood, LMA, A/FH/A6/1/19/10/26

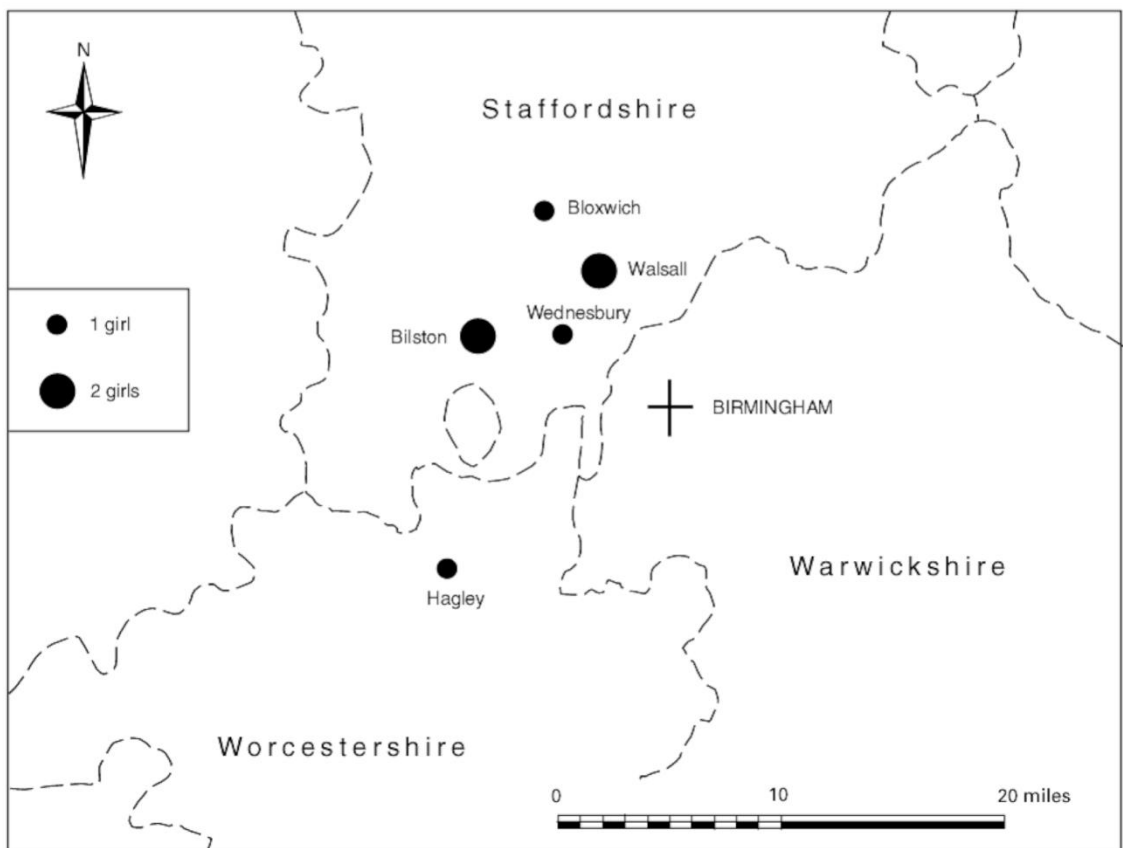
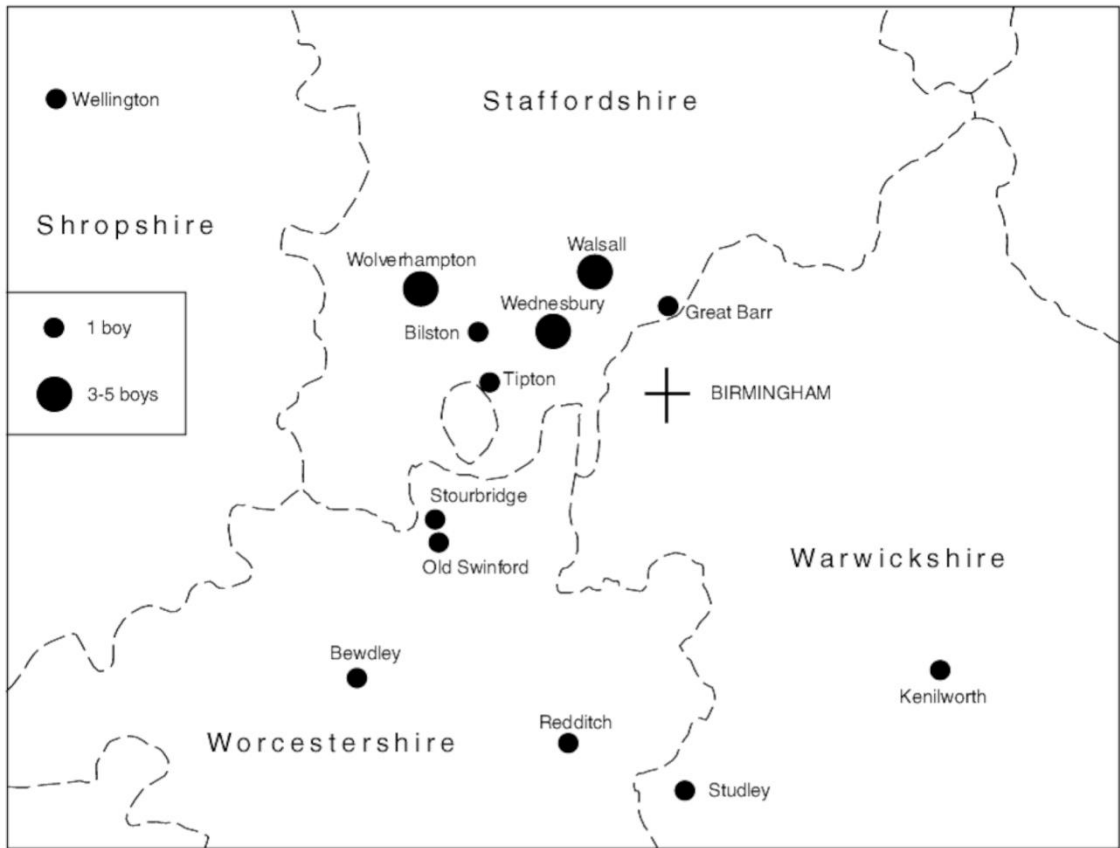


Figure 4c: Blue Coat School ‘distant’ placements for apprentices, 1775-1804

The experience of leaving and accommodating to a new life was less daunting for Blue Coat apprentices. Most were returning to a familiar community with which they had maintained links, however tenuous, during their time at school. Some, like Ann Hadley in 1775 returned to their former homes. Ann was apprenticed to her father to learn ‘the necessary business’ of housekeeping and may have been drawn into the household’s button making trade of which she must have known something already.¹¹³ Some problems of adjustment were sure to occur after five or more years of fairly intensive education in an Anglican stronghold. Samuel Underhill wrote an exceptionally elegant signature at the foot of his indenture of 1785, but his master, Samuel Pledge, could only leave his mark. Mary Callow’s clear, confident signature stands out besides the uncertain hand of her shoemaker master.¹¹⁴ Of course, this did not mean that a difficult apprenticeship was inevitable – Pledge, a linen draper was likely to have found a literate and numerate boy very useful for his business - but it does hint at the possibility of a breakdown of communication in some instances.

Like foundling apprentices, most Blue Coat children were placed within the vicinity of the school but few, as Figure 4c shows, went as far away as the ‘distant’ apprentices from the Hospital whether for household work or any other. A total of 34 apprentices (twenty-seven boys and seven girls) were placed more than seven miles from the centre of Birmingham. Three boys went to London but two of them to masters who shared their surname.¹¹⁵ There is no clear statement that they were family or kin but this seems likely and may well have been the case for the third boy. William Brewer went to Spalding in Lincolnshire and Luke Sturley to Kenilworth (to be apprenticed to his father); all others were no more than fifteen miles away (Figure 6c).¹¹⁶ Six girls were sent beyond seven miles to ‘learn the business of a household servant’. Two went to Black Country locations: Sarah Clay to Walsall and Phoebe Collins to Wednesbury, neither place much more than eight miles from central Birmingham. Ann Phillips and Lucy Fox were apprenticed in Bilstone in Staffordshire, about twelve miles away and about the same distance as Elizabeth

¹¹³ Apprenticeship Indenture, Ann Hadley, 16 November 1775, BCA, MS1622/2/6/ 9

¹¹⁴ Apprenticeship indentures, Samuel Underhill, 25 April 1786, BCA, MS1622/2/6/16; Mary Callow, 19 September 1782, MS1622/2/6/13

¹¹⁵ Apprenticeship indentures, William Taylor, 24 April 1775, BCA, MS1622/2/6/6; Thomas Ross, 7 May 1776, BCA, MS1622/2/6/7; Henry Brant, 21 June, 1782, BCA, MS1622/2/6/13

¹¹⁶ Apprenticeship indentures, William Brewer, 14 October 1776, BCA, MS1622/2/6/7; Luke Sturley, 13 August 1794, BCA, MS1622/2/6/25

Fieldhouse in Hagley. Only Elizabeth Charles in Bloxwich was further away by about three miles. The seventh girl went to learn mantua making in Walsall.¹¹⁷

As Elizabeth Fieldhouse's experience shows, problems and abuses did arise and Elizabeth's unhappiness may have been intensified by being placed some distance away. She did, nevertheless, manage to make her circumstances known to the school governors and to her step-mother. Apprentices from the Blue Coat School were rarely far from family members who on occasions took action to protect them or at least draw attention to perceived problems. In this, as in so much else, child servants with someone to look out for them were less vulnerable than otherwise.

Conclusion

In their aims and objectives the London Foundling Hospital and Birmingham Blue Coat School shared much in common when preparing their charges for apprenticeship and in the ways in which they remained a resource for them. The task of finding placements was more straightforward for the Blue Coat School; the scale of its operations was smaller and its reach less extensive. Its children came from, and were returned to, a fairly homogeneous community of small workshop enterprises and were all affiliated to Anglicanism and sponsored by a subscriber. The Foundling Hospital was charged with finding a greater number of apprenticeships – a task which necessitated searching out placements in several parts of England. Its strength lay in the prestige acquired from support amongst the great and good of London and the reputation of its apprentices for hard work and honesty.

In the capital apprenticeships could be found in a wider range of social and economic households thanks also to the willingness to place them in any respectable Protestant household. In Birmingham there were more opportunities for boys to pursue skilled and semi-skilled trades, for example, metal work and small-scale manufacturing which found favour with parents in being more likely to lead to a secure livelihood. The absence of parental pressure at the Foundling Hospital left the organisation more

¹¹⁷ Apprenticeship indentures, Sarah Clay, 27 November 1801, BCA, MS1622/2/6/32; Phoebe Collins, 30 June 1794; Anne Phillips, 26 August 1777 and Lucy Fox 2 April 1777, BCA, MS1622/2/6/8; Elizabeth Fieldhouse, 16 December 1778, BCA, MS1622/2/6/8; Ann Thompson, 16 April 1776, BCA, MS1622/2/6/7

freedom in its activities but may have enabled it to push more of its boys into domestic work - an occupation which by the end of the eighteenth century had become increasingly feminised and (for men) lacking in status. The Hospital, however, was able to place several children with disabilities in household work – a humane solution for those who might otherwise have encountered difficulties in obtaining a livelihood. For this the Hospital was prepared, against the usual practice, to pay a premium. A number of children with poor eyesight, for example, were removed from occupations requiring close work to domestic work. Disability concerned Blue Coat governors less often because illness or disability precluded a child from entry into the school or resulted in their removal.

Domestic service remained the favoured occupation for female apprentices from both charities with a handful placed in traditional female occupations such as embroidery or millinery. The Foundling Hospital's experiment with large-scale factory work for girls in 1792 was short-lived, outside the normal pattern of Hospital apprenticeships and unrepeated except for a small number of individual females and rarely for first-time apprentices. Girls from the Blue Coat School who entered domestic service in households pursuing manufacturing trades such as button making and box making may have been drawn into the trade, but entrenched gender attitudes inhibited more diverse work experiences. Women did work in Black Country occupations such as chain making, but no girl was allocated to work of this kind from the Blue Coat School during 1775-1804.

Neither charity was immune from contemporary censure (sometimes misinformed), especially the Foundling Hospital, thanks to its high profile in London circles and its links with individuals and organisations throughout the country. Both charities won approval from the widespread belief that the children of the poor did best when separated from parents; they could be inhibited in their policies, however, by influential theories on what was an appropriate education or apprenticeship for the poor. In the close, integrated community which industrial Birmingham had become, it was not possible for the School to escape parental influence – which might cause tension and at times conflict over placements. On the other hand there were advantages for the apprentices themselves since parents and kin were on hand to draw attention to abuse or neglect. The Foundling Hospital had in operation all the procedures for dealing with failing masters; it was prepared to intervene and had the

authority and weight to enforce change. The problem, at times, was that it was unaware of abusive situations. Nevertheless, it was often the apprentices themselves, from both institutions, who initiated such contacts, equipped by knowledge of what the indenture had promised them. In a number of cases the safeguards failed but the existence of well-established bonds between institution and apprentice gave many charity children a 'failsafe' which few parish apprentices could hope for.

The comparative study of two charities has provided more information on the lives of one particular set of children placed in apprenticeship. The concluding section draws on this material to assess the relative fortunes of child servants from a range of different backgrounds and to examine their significance in the household experience of the 1760 to 1830 period.

Conclusion

‘I liked this life with all my heart’

John MacDonald aged about nine assisting Corstorphine coachmen and grooms¹

‘after she had served her said master about two years she was turned over to John Gormley of the parish of St Nicholas in the said Borough of Leicester . . . she ran away from her apprenticeship with John Gormley several times and was taken back again and about a year since she ran away and has been running up and down the country ever since’

Settlement examination for Elizabeth Jennings, aged sixteen, taken before the Justices of the Peace in Derby (1797) ²

The aim of this study has been to bring into historical focus the lives and activities of a sub-section of a significant work force in Georgian England which historians have often overlooked. Child servants were a recognisable and distinct occupational group in the sense that they all contributed to the daily process of household management. What emerges most strikingly from a study of child workers in domestic service, however, is not so much their common experience as the enormous range and variety of experience we find amongst those within the sphere of ‘household business’. Even if the spotlight on children narrows the breadth of the experience of household service, there is evidence of the ‘broad spectrum’ of servant lifestyles which R.C. Richardson found amongst servants in general.³ This is, perhaps, inevitable given the different categories of children involved (parish apprentices, privately engaged servants, charity apprentices), the great variety of households in which they might be placed and the range of ages and the numbers channelled into this most ubiquitous of occupations.

This conclusion brings together the findings of this thesis in a review of the main issues covered and moves on to consider the broader conclusions and implications

¹ John MacDonald, *Travels in Various Parts of Europe, Asia and Africa During a Series of Thirty Years and Upwards* (London: printed for the author, 1790), 23

² Settlement Examination for Elizabeth Jennings, Rogue and Vagabond, taken before the Justices of the Peace of Derby 13 April 1797, ROLLR, 23D52/5/4

³ R.C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 230

arising from, for example, how well-prepared children were for their household role, how well they adjusted to removal from their previous lives and the importance of safeguards provided by parents, kin or institutions. The final section compares and contrasts the experiences of the different categories of child servants and the nature of the households into which they were received. It considers how they perceived their role in domestic service and how this affected their future prospects. All such issues were influenced by attitudes to gender and consequently to opportunities available to males and females.

A distinct feature of the approach in these chapters has been to shed light on the perceptions of child servants which are so often lost in statistical surveys and contemporary bureaucratic procedures. How they perceived their position in the households in which they were placed and how they responded to the circumstances of everyday life cannot be assumed to be on a par with adults in the same occupation. The imbalance in favour of the male voice, discussed in the introduction, has been compensated to some extent by the numerous observations made by masters, mistresses, charity officials, parish overseers and parents on the lives of girls in service simply because the vast majority of those sent into household work were girls. For the most part the ‘voice’ which emerges from these sources echoes the same variety and polarization of experience found in the official records, as well as the individual experiences of boys and girls. Examples range from those who were perpetually neglected and abused to those who found happiness, security and a sense of belonging in their new lives. It remains true, nevertheless, that the evidence available for the lived experience of girls is limited and warrants further attention.

The reasons for taking in children as domestic servants

The analysis of the servant-employing households examined in chapter one demonstrates that children were taken in for a wide range of reasons which often involved much consideration and calculation. Some were seen as a useful source of cheap and amenable labour to be trained as required. Others were taken in out of charity to be saved from poverty but also from idleness and immorality. Children were not necessarily, however, a welcome addition to a household; some were taken reluctantly out of social obligation or even resented as an outright burden. Those responsible for finding placements for children, whether working for charities,

parishes or parents seeking positions for their own children, were well-aware of these complexities and also of the social tensions likely to arise in many situations. While they could exploit a number of circumstances which worked in favour of children they had also to contend with a range of negative responses from potential masters and employers.

Some masters and mistresses saw the employment of apprentices and child workers as an opportunity for easy economic gain, but taking an apprentice as a household servant was never intended to be a money-raising venture. Rather it was a contract: in return for providing maintenance and training the master or mistress got free labour services for a number of years. In poorer servant-employing households a parish apprentice girl taken in to skivvy might make financial sense: she came with a small premium and might release an experienced member of the household for more profitable work. The work she was expected to do required little training and so brought an immediate benefit – unlike apprentices trained for skilled trades where the rewards for the master came only after several years. For the most part, however, the ‘bonus’ of free labour might at best cut down on household costs but did not contribute to its income.

Consequently, quite modest poor law ratepayers chose to pay the fine (usually £10) for refusing a parish apprentice. Against any supposed savings they set the cost of feeding and clothing the child, her inability to tackle more demanding household tasks, the possibility that she would fall ill and they become liable to pay for medical care or at least lose her services. The premium accompanying most parish children bound to domestic work (£2-£5) was seen as poor compensation and children from charities did not necessarily come with one. The initial provision of shoes and a good suit of clothing for the child was helpful, but an insufficient incentive in many cases. The experience of a number of children indicates that the best economic benefit for a master was a child who came in to work each day but lived and was provided for at home. In this situation the master avoided the cost of maintenance – a saving which became more worthwhile as the cost of food mounted at the end of the eighteenth century. It was, however, a solution which was unavailable for children without parents or for poor-law overseers seeking placements for orphans or children from pauper families.

At times children were at an advantage in the household labour market thanks to the status attached to keeping servants. The low cost of labour was an incentive for a struggling professional to use a small boy to assist with the running of both household and business – but it was to keep up appearances rather than to gain any profit from his work. For wealthy establishments employing a large retinue of servants any savings gained by employing a child were insignificant in the context of overall expenditure. More modest employers, perhaps a rural clergyman opting for a young non-apprenticed worker, might save a small amount in wages by taking a boy instead of an adult but the cost of food and clothing was much the same. For those who could afford it the status symbol of a boy in livery was worth more than anything that might be saved by his work. There is little evidence that the servant tax on female servants (1785-1792), which allowed exemptions for girls, led to any greater enthusiasm for employing children in place of older servants. A small easing of the tax burden did not compensate for lack of experience or stamina.⁴

Even if economic prospects looked favourable, employers and masters knew that, whatever their rank, they might have to contend with potentially truculent behaviour, or worse, from their child workers.⁵ Complaints by masters as well as autobiographical evidence show that ‘idleness’ and staying out late were common forms of rebellion; reports of runaway apprentices who had disappeared, sometimes with household items of value or in expensive livery, were not uncommon. Nor was it only the older children in the last years of apprenticeship who were troublesome. John MacDonald was only nine or ten when he ran away from an abusive position to find new work. Nanny Nutter was between twelve and thirteen, when, on many occasions, she conspired to make her mistress’s life difficult.⁶ There was much besides to deter master or mistress who valued respectability and order. Pauper children might come from local families with dubious reputations. Parson Woodforde chose his hired boys from known families in his locality but had to

⁴ Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 138-40, 151-7

⁵ Factory children earned a reputation for tractability but because they were closely supervised in a way which was not possible for most masters, see Emma Griffin, *Liberty’s Dawn: A People’s History of the Industrial Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 82

⁶ MacDonald, *Travels*, 34-8; Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 137, 143-5

dismiss a number for their bad behaviour and unacceptable language.⁷ Newspapers fuelled fear of robberies by former servants, including children, who knew the contents of the household as well as its smallest entrances and exits. Most children came with little or no training in household skills and had a reputation for being easily distracted. Those who valued continuity in their households were dismayed when hired children who had been carefully trained left at the end of their contracted year.⁸ Yet commitment to taking a child for seven years was a daunting prospect. Household tasks also required muscle in an era when there were few new adaptations or machinery for domestic work. There were numerous examples of young applicants, usually boys, who were turned away because they seemed too small or were not in robust health. Those with no evidence of having suffered smallpox or who could not produce evidence of inoculation were also at a disadvantage.

Increasingly young servants were well aware of their rights and were prepared to exercise them especially if they were able to appeal to parents, kin or a charitable authority to assist them. This might force the master into more expense or cause him to lose his unwaged or cheap worker. A few young workers managed more positive initiatives. In 1777, John Harmston, servant boy to Matthew Flinders, negotiated a rise in wages on the strength of the services and skills he could offer. Flinders agreed, but John had turned out to be neither as cheap nor as tractable as Flinders had hoped for.⁹ Other young servants sought and obtained redress for lack of the training they believed they were due.

On the other hand, those seeking to place children in domestic service knew that certain factors worked in their favour. Younger servants undertook tasks and errands which older servants (men in particular) found irksome or demeaning. They were less likely to be drunk (a constant complaint of masters) and, in general, more amenable to direction. Most notably, children from well-respected charity schools

⁷ For example Henry Daines, 10 August 1800, John Beresford (ed.), James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson, 1758-1802* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 596

⁸ On the difficulties of leaving work, however, see Emma Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn*, 49-55.

⁹ Martyn Beardsley and Nicholas Bennett (eds), *Grateful to Providence: The Diary and Accounts of Matthew Flinders, Surgeon, Apothecary and Man-Midwife 1775-1802*, Vol. I, Lincoln Record Society (2007) 46

could overcome employers' misgivings despite the absence of a premium. The Foundling Hospital had a reputation for producing children inured to hard work and discipline. Mistresses found that charity girls were willing and young enough to be fashioned to the particular demands of their household. Such qualities found favour with households mindful of their appearances. A healthy fourteen year old from the Blue Coat School was generally to be preferred to an ill-prepared ten year old parish girl, parents or not. Apprentices, committed to long terms of service, could provide stability: some stayed on with their families as hired servants after their term was over and after a succession of yearly contracted domestics had moved on. Masters and mistresses sometimes signalled their satisfaction by applying to the Hospital again when existing apprentices ended their terms of service.

Finally, as John MacDonald and Woodforde's Jacky Warton show, children had appeal and value of their own and might be a means by which a caring or public-spirited individual (sometimes a clergyman) might perform the charitable act of taking in an orphan or relieving a poor family of a mouth to feed. Philanthropic sentiments found new expression in the eighteenth century in both religious and secular spheres and children were frequent beneficiaries.¹⁰ The desire to inculcate certain ideas and attitudes in a very young child suggests the influence of John Locke. If not *tabula rasa*, taken at an early age and removed from undesirable parental influence, these were children capable of being redeemed and rendered useful to society. Individuals in their homes as well as institutions could take on this role.

In any final assessment of the evidence, however, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, even in a society that believed children should work from an early age, it was difficult for many to do so even in an occupation in which they were traditionally found. Children were at the bottom of the employment hierarchy in domestic work and the attitudes of masters and employers at all levels of society

¹⁰ Discussed in Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police* (New Jersey: Princetown University Press, 1989); Alys Levene explores the positive view of childhood which characterises much eighteenth-century writing and ways in which it found practical application, Alys Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Even when attitudes changed at the end of the eighteenth century and much charity came to be seen as 'imprudent' children were ranked among the 'deserving' poor.

played a significant part in their low ranking. They were not persuaded, as mill-owners generally were, that children were necessarily cheap, tractable or adaptable. Some children were taken on *despite* the fact that they were children, under pressure from the overseer or an individual's conscience.

The indenture and similar contracts governing short-term domestic work form the focus, in chapter two, of an examination into the day-to-day conditions of child servants. Testing the efficacy of these arrangements provides insight into fundamental aspects of children's lives as household servants and uncovers something of their own responses. Once again the contrasts are stark. Thomas Holcroft relished the 'fine white-bread' of his breakfasts as a stable boy and was well-aware that he had never been so well fed. The Wiltshire Coroners' Bills for 1768, on the other hand, record the death by starvation and ill usage of Mary Culverhouse, a parish apprentice, with James and Mary Reynolds.¹¹ Contrasts almost as startling may be found in the provision of clothing, accommodation and training. The indenture was, nevertheless, a useful aid to maintaining a basic standard of living for the apprentice and sufficient training to ensure a livelihood in future years. Where it failed it was usually because the agencies which might have acted to enforce it were lacking. The indenture worked best when it was well-known and respected by both parties. As a document with legal force it was a useful reference point in disputes and could be crucial to a court judgement. Without the backing of parents or an institution (the position of many parish children), however, apprentices could do little when they found themselves poorly served by masters.

Private contracts negotiated between parents and employers, usually for one year, were less standardised than the formal indenture but set out much the same basic living conditions. More attuned to local custom and more open to negotiation they too resulted in considerable variety and flexibility in the daily lives of the children concerned. Parents or kin were more likely to be within reach to provide protection or insist on enforcement than was the case for parish or charity children and the freedom to leave at the end of the contractual year gave some degree of bargaining

¹¹ Thomas Holcroft, *Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft: Written by Himself* (London:1816), Cadbury Research Library, PR3515 H228 p.109; R.F. Hunnisett (ed.) *Wiltshire Coroners' Bills 1752-1796*, Wiltshire Record Society, 36 (1980), 29 January 1768, 34

power. The master or mistress, however, could also end the arrangement – a serious sanction if it threatened the right to settlement. The confused legal status of hired servants (including children) could hinder action by parents or kin.¹² Many, however, became adept at using the law to secure the basic standards for their children, or even to improve them by higher wages or better working conditions.

Other obligations the master had were summarised in the indenture by the convenient but unhelpful commitment to provide ‘all other Things necessary and fit for an apprentice’, examined in chapter three. Such vagueness could prove contentious when master and apprentice confronted issues such as hours of work, time allowed for leisure, responsibility for treatment in the event of sickness, and punishment. In the absence of clear guidelines, the policy of masters and mistresses varied and gave rise to wide discrepancies amongst the children for whom we have evidence. The uncertainties were most evident in the event of sickness. By the eighteenth century statements committing the master to care for an ill apprentice ‘in sickness and in health’ had lapsed in both formal indentures and private contracts. This development was hastened by the arrival of more virulent outbreaks of smallpox which placed greater burdens on masters and mistresses whose servants contracted the disease. Children were especially vulnerable to smallpox and less likely to have gained immunity. Some masters made their refusal to take on medical responsibilities for smallpox quite clear, but uncertainty and confusion persisted and responses to servants who contracted smallpox were dramatically different even among those able to afford the costs. They ranged from dismissal (the Purefoy family) to the provision of paid professional care (Lord Carnarvon). Ultimately child servants benefited from being a centre of attention in the smallpox discourse; the evidence of this study indicates that by the end of the eighteenth century child servants were more likely than any other section of poor children to have been inoculated against smallpox. The recognition by charities and parishes, that children were more likely to be found placements as household servants if they were protected against this most deadly of eighteenth-century diseases, played a significant part in this development.

¹² See Douglas Hay, ‘England, 1562-1875: The Law and its Uses,’ in *Masters, Servants and Magistrates*, ed. Douglas Hay and Paul Craven (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 87-8

If inoculation made masters less reluctant to take children, many still remained unwilling to take responsibility for sickness. The law provided no clear solutions for hired servants and no effective means of enforcing care for sick apprentices. The situation was hardly clearer for apprentices from the Foundling Hospital. The governors were sympathetic to requests for help when apprentices they had placed became ill but set limits on the help they were prepared to give. Their insistence, by the end of the century, that responsibility lay with masters continued to be challenged and at times was resolved only by negotiation and compromise. Illness, more than any other eventuality, demonstrated the helplessness of child servants, whether hired or apprenticed, and their dependence on the inclination (and resources) of their households. Those in wealthier households might receive personal care and attention; many others had often to suffer in silence or risk dubious homespun remedies.

The absence of guidelines on the issues of hours of work, leisure and punishment presented similar problems. An indenture occasionally mentioned the master's right to punish an apprentice but for the most part this was taken for granted. The frequency with which physical punishment of young servants occurred in the examples studied and the numerous cases involving excessive punishment to reach the courts shows that it was a constant threat in the lives of very many children in service. There were, however, limits to what contemporaries thought 'reasonable' punishment; some court cases resulted in acquittals for offenders but other courts condemned and punished harsh masters and mistresses. Outrage was also expressed by individuals and in public protests.

Hours of work to be undertaken were determined in many eighteenth-century trades by the demands of the moment rather than by regulated hours; the particular demands of domestic service customarily required servants to be 'on call' at all hours of day or night. Fears for the moral consequences of 'idle' hours for the children of the poor, only reduced the likelihood of free time. Moments of chosen leisure including play, games with peers, reading, visits to and from families or friends, were haphazard and unevenly distributed. Mary Ashford had time to read but, longed for gossip with other servants. The absence of companionship affected some children deeply, accustomed as they were to peer-group friendship and play in

previous lives. This, and the issue of homesickness, touched on children's emotional life which remains a neglected area in the study of working children.¹³

Examining the incidence of sexual abuse presents a challenge to the historian. Neither formal nor informal agreements made reference to the child's need for protection from sexual abuse. There is, nevertheless, enough evidence to be sure that sexual abuse was a fear and hazard for many of the youngest workers in domestic service. The isolated 'behind doors' lives of girls made them particularly vulnerable, but many incidents involving boys never reached the courts. The Old Bailey case of Mary Tollin, discussed in chapter three, shows how legal niceties and popular prejudice made girls reluctant to take cases to court. Public outrage against offenders disguised the lack of consensus about the alleged complicity of the victim and conflicting ideas about the age of consent (whatever the law said). A number of studies have revealed the nature and legal complexities of this subject but it remains a 'hidden' area of history where there is scope for research beyond the Old Bailey into local legal records and press reports in order to explore more widely the extent of sexual abuse of children in the work-place and contemporary attitudes towards both victims and perpetrators.

Overall the absence of guidelines on these issues served only to underline the value of the indenture on the key issues of food, drink, clothing and training. Its terms were not invariably honoured but anecdotal and legal evidence show that it could strengthen the hand of either party. Hired servants were, in legal terms, less well-protected than apprentices on these other issues but in some cases local custom prevailed when disputes arose and the influence of parents or kin could be brought to bear. Once again the ability to move on gave hired servants a freedom, a bargaining power and an escape route which was closed to those bound by indentures. More research is required, however on other areas of a child servant's life which were not covered by written agreements but which could affect their lives substantially. For example all masters/mistresses were expected to ensure that their servants attended church on Sunday, but much distress could arise when child workers in Anglican households wished to attend nonconformist chapels.

¹³ See, Honeyman, *Child Workers*, 210-13

Chapter four tested some of the themes of the thesis through a comparison of the apprenticeship policy of two eighteenth century charities. Both institutions were influenced by contemporary ideas on childhood, poverty and the need for industrious citizens; their children were consequently prepared for apprenticeship in similar ways. Differences in the numbers of children involved, the industrial hinterland and the involvement (or not) of parents, however, determined the age at which they were bound out, the occupations in which they were placed and their future prospects. Apprenticeship continued to be favoured by these charities even as it declined in other areas of the economy. This reflected a traditional attachment to the value of extensive training and prolonged supervision intended to lead to steady employment and responsible citizenship as well as to the ‘insurance’ of settlement. On the other hand, well-established attitudes to gender encouraged the long term trend towards the ‘feminization’ of domestic service stimulated by opportunities for men in industrial society and disapproval of liveried service. Finally, the focus on charity children extended the scope for an examination of diversity amongst children in domestic service and signalled instructive comparisons and contrasts with children who were not attached to charities and not schooled for apprenticeship.

Comparing and contrasting: winners and losers

In bringing together the implications of this study, it is the very diversity and richness of the experience of the children, which presents a challenge and makes it difficult to draw general conclusions. Any assessment of their fortunes involves a consideration not only of material and physical circumstances but also of their sense of security, their relationship with those who shared their working environment as well as the prospects before them. It is reasonable to assume that those who fared best were to be found in more prosperous households, had parents or kin who had played some part in selecting their placements and lived within reach. The most vulnerable were the youngest with no known parent, kin or ‘surrogate’ body to whom they might appeal. This last category was most likely to be found (but not exclusively) as lone ‘maids of all work’ in single-servant households. They were most likely to be female and to have been placed out by the parish with a premium of no more than £2 to £3. Their chances of having received any preparation for domestic roles were less than for other categories though they might have practised basic domestic skills in the workhouse or their own homes. Although some parishes

did make an effort to secure suitable masters, many overseers were under pressure to find places for too many children. The most wretched children were those, like the examples discussed in Gloucestershire, who were imposed on a master or mistress unwilling to take them.

Compared with parish apprentices, the position of Foundling Hospital apprentices was advantageous in several respects. They had been prepared for domestic work and received a sound, if limited, education of the kind which employers increasingly valued. The Hospital had made enquiries about the character and economic viability of those who applied for apprentices; officials made occasional visits to those they had placed, or, in the case of 'distant' placements, made alternative arrangements. Apprentices who appealed to the governors for help or redress found, at least, that their appeals were taken seriously and investigated. An additional and particular advantage for foundling apprentices was their access, through the reputation and prestige of the Hospital, to favourable social and economic connections which could benefit their lives as apprentices and improve their prospects thereafter.¹⁴ Despite the insistence that charity children were to be confined to menial occupations, many could hope to attain useful skills and a more secure livelihood than their parents.

In certain respects the Blue Coat School girls were the most fortunate. Like the Foundling children they had received domestic training as well as a basic education which, in their case, continued to their fourteenth year. Although largely cut off from family and neighbourhoods during their school years they were returned as apprentices to their local communities and in some cases to their own families. Their parents were involved in choosing their placements and on occasions intervened to secure better conditions for them or protect them from exploitation. When parents were lacking there was often a relative to step in and the school readily took action when aware of problems. The placement of girls within reasonable reach of the school was an additional safeguard. The ability to read and deal with accounts was valuable in the developing workshop industries of Birmingham especially in households where domestic and manufacturing economies merged.

¹⁴ See Alysa Levene, 'Charity apprenticeship and social capital in eighteenth-century England,' in *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency, 1750-1914*, ed. Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 16-22 and *passim*.

Children entering domestic work as hired servants generally felt themselves to be more fortunate than apprenticed servants. For the most part their conditions were arranged by parents or kin who had some powers of negotiation in the agreement. Most such children were from poor families and on their own evidence had more to eat and were better clothed than before they left home. Their positions were less secure, but also less binding. It was the freedom to move on (however circumscribed) which hired servants valued and apprentices envied. George Crabbe, working, alongside a short-contract worker, had no doubt that his own position was the more irksome, ‘There being no other Distinction between the Boy at the Farm and myself but that he was happy in being an annual Servant and I was bound by Indentures’¹⁵

Within the general rule we have identified, however, there were exceptions or the need for qualification. To be in a prosperous household or one carefully scrutinised by parent or institution did not guarantee either happiness or well-being; nor did belonging to a house with few resources necessarily mean misery. Poor children, including parish apprentices, might adjust more easily to the culture and lifestyle of less prosperous households. Mary Ashford was happier in a head waiter’s family in Hoxton ‘living just the same as they did and partaking of whatever they had’, than with the daughter of a ‘Scotch earl’ off the City Road.¹⁶ Mary L’Argent’s fortunes changed for the worse when her mistress’s authority was replaced by that of a brutal husband. The widespread practices of ‘bleeding’ and ‘blistering’ were dubious benefits of being in a household able to afford a doctor or apothecary. Well-fed and finely clothed on the large Bargeny estate, John MacDonald could not escape harsh and vindictive treatment from the head coachman. Apprenticeship was ringed with uncertainty: the death of a master or his imprisonment for debt or other misdemeanours could bring about change for better or worse.

Like parish children, foundling apprentices were sometimes sent to placements many miles away. For a number this was a distressing experience; some found their way back to foster parents (from whom they had been separated at the age of four or five)

¹⁵ Thomas Faulkner and Rhonda Blair (eds), *Selected Letters and Journal of George Crabbe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 9

¹⁶ Mary Ashford, *Life of a Licensed Victualler’s Daughter Written by Herself* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1844), 23, 27-33

or returned to the Hospital itself; some returned to London as soon as this was possible. They were surely seeking some sense of belonging. Foundlings had lost any family connections except for the tiny minority who were reclaimed by parents or other relatives. Parish orphans might still have kin and - like Elizabeth Jennings (whose case appears at the beginning of this chapter) - a strong sense of attachment to a community and place to which they longed to return. Parents, on the other hand were not always either willing or able to ensure the welfare of their children; some were harsher than masters and turned up to administer punishment to an erring child; others disappeared from their lives altogether.

Gender too played a part in shaping household experience. Boys were more likely to suffer severe physical punishments. Some of the worst victims of abuse in this period were, indeed, girls but the outrage in these cases may reflect a greater tolerance towards the punishment of boys. Boys were on average younger than girls when apprenticed including those from the Foundling Hospital (see chapter four) and were at times sent to occupations for which they were physically ill-suited. Sometimes, however, the youngest was cherished as the young servant boy ('he was quite a little fellow') in Brighton to whom Mary Ashford became 'a sort of mother'.¹⁷ Boys had greater opportunities for leisure, in poor households as well as more prosperous ones, thanks to the nature of their work and a more carefree attitude to their supervision.

Blue Coat girls, whom we have identified as a 'favoured' category, were, nevertheless doubly restricted, not only in the narrow range of occupations open to them but with respect to wider opportunities. Like the great majority of girls in this study they were destined for domestic work; this represented a contrast with the boys from the school, channelled into a good range of skilled occupations with some attention given to their interest and aptitude. It is true that sources are silent about many aspects of their lives but there is little evidence of the girls moving on to richer experiences of travel or social contacts of the kind which were sometimes available to charity children or those in private arrangements. For the most part their lives seem to have been confined to a fairly narrow community of artisans and tradesmen.

¹⁷ Ashford, *Victualler's Daughter*, 54-7

Even within the institutions studied the contrasts in experience are startling. Despite an admirable reputation for checking out applicants, a number of children placed by the London Foundling Hospital suffered cruelty and neglect in the hands of their masters or mistresses. Yet it is amongst the foundling apprentices that we find some of the most successful placements – apprentices who were absorbed into their host families, enjoyed friendship and security and could move on to worthwhile employment.

Beyond childhood and apprenticeship

It is rare to hear the child's voice in the decision which took them into domestic service. No wonder many regarded it as no more than a stage in their life-cycle and left as soon as their apprenticeship term ended or a new opportunity arose. Apprentices in household work as well as young hired servants must have been aware of the low esteem in which their occupation, or many branches of it, was held. In many respects little had changed since Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe set the trend from the late seventeenth century, depicting servants as duplicitous, conniving, lazy and 'pert'. A common cause for contempt amongst other workers was that servants were cushioned from the harsh realities of life. Robert Dodsley, for ten years a manservant, had seen in his poem *Servitude* (1732) the penalty for this:

Purchas'd by annual wages clothes and meat

Theirs is our time, our hands, our head our feet.

One hundred years later William Tayler, a London footman, was to express similar sentiments, 'The life of a gentleman's servant is something like that of a bird shut up in a cage. The bird is well fed but is deprived of liberty'.¹⁸ Such observations suggest continuity rather than change but, in some respects, servants had more reason for negative feelings about a life in service when Tayler was writing. The seventeenth-century commentator, Richard Lucas, saw servants as men and women upon whom 'the order and the beauty of the world in great measure subsists'.¹⁹ Eighteenth-century economists, however, attached little importance to an occupation which,

¹⁸ Robert Dodsley, *Servitude* (London: T. Worrall, 1729), 19; Dorothy Wise (ed.), *Diary of William Tayler, Footman, 1837*, St. Marylebone Society Publication Group (1962), 62

¹⁹ Cited in, Richardson, *Household Servants*, 127

according to Adam Smith, made no significant contribution to the economy. Apprenticeship was castigated as a brake on the free movement of labour – which did little to help the status of those many parish and charity children for whom it survived.²⁰ Male servants, rather than female, earned the greater opprobrium thanks to popular ideas on what constituted appropriate roles for men and women. Debates in Parliament on the servant tax (1777 and 1785) reinforced the popular perception that male servants, especially liveried staff, were part of an effeminate and extravagant lifestyle. The growth of industry, the years of war which attached worth to men in military service, strengthened such sentiments. In contrast female servants – children’s nurses, scullery, laundry, all-purpose maids and so forth – were ‘industrious subjects who labour under burthens already almost too heavy to be borne’²¹ Such views reflected moralistic reaction to extravagant living as against the lives of the ‘middling sort’ striving to maintain family and household standards which a tax on female servants threatened. They also suggested adherence to an unchanging lifestyle for women.

These ideas on gender had implications for apprentices and others, male and female, in domestic service. As this study has shown there was a distinct role for boys. Households which could afford a boy valued the combination of outside and inside duties he performed as well as the status he brought. Many boys, however, must have felt doubtful about graduating to higher domestic roles. At the Birmingham Blue Coat School it was rare for a boy to be sent to domestic work; for parents it was neither a ‘manly’ job nor a means to a reliable income.²² At the Foundling Hospital placements in domestic service had become less common for boys by the end of the eighteenth century. Parson Woodforde’s boys, after sound training in a domestic role, went on to become plough-boys, farm labourers and in one case a soldier.²³

²⁰ For discussion of survival of parish and charity apprenticeship and decline elsewhere see Alys Levene, “‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence’”: Master-Apprentice Relations in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century England’, *Social History*, 33:2 (2008), 185-6; Keith Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 67-103

²¹ *Morning Chronicle* (London) 21 May 1785 quoted in Susan E. Brown, ‘Assessing Men and Maids: The Female Servant Tax and Meanings of Productive Labour in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Left History*, 12.2 (Fall/Winter 2007), 17. The speaker, of course, in opposing the tax of female servants had reason to stress their value to the running of the household.

²² Masculinity was closely associated with the ability to provide for one’s family, see Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England 1760-1830: Emotion, Identity, and Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 158-9

²³ J. Beresford (ed.) *Diary of a Country Parson*, 243, 588, 522

These were not necessarily more rewarding occupations – but ones considered sufficiently ‘robust’. For girls the position was different but restricted in many ways. Domestic service was highly acceptable with opportunities for advancement within the hierarchy. But for the same reason it was difficult to escape. Outside the new industrial areas little other ‘respectable’ or acceptable work was available for females. Marriage provided an escape (of sorts) and a few girls were drawn into other occupations when working as servants in the households of skilled tradesmen.

Not all household servants, however, saw life in domestic service as one of drudgery and limited prospects; for some it represented a means to a higher social status and wider social contacts. Taken on as a stable boy at Nottingham, Thomas Holcroft looked forward to ‘food enough’ but also that ‘I should now be somebody’. John MacDonald professed to have gained sufficient skills while in service as a child to enable him to make a successful and eventful career as a personal valet. He travelled widely and became an experienced manager of grand household events. Mary Ashford resisted an apprenticeship in dress-making or millinery, preferring the more varied life of service, despite the disapproval of relatives.²⁴ D.A. Kent suggests that in London service was attractive enough for some women to choose it ‘as a way of life rather than simply a stage in their life cycle’.²⁵ The higher ratio of women to men in London may have helped to determine their decision, but some girls saw service as a resource worth developing and to which they might return after marriage as daily workers or if they were widowed or deserted. Servants tended to marry in their late twenties and meanwhile a girl could graduate to more responsible positions and gain a degree of independence as well as useful skills in the event of her return.

By the early years of the nineteenth century, there were certainly more opportunities for girls making their way in household work. Yet, despite his pessimism, William Tayler believed that servants ‘form one of the most respectable classes of persons in existence . . . who will see and know more than any other class of people in the world’. His diary, with its plea for ‘liberty . . . the dearest and sweetest object of all Englishmen’, his appreciation of independence, his astute observations of the lives of

²⁴ Holcroft, *Memoirs*, p.76-7; David Vincent (ed.), *Testaments of Radicalism: Memoirs of Working Class Politicians 1790-1885* (London: Europa,1977), 165; Ashford, *Victualler's Daughter*, 20-1

²⁵ D. A. Kent, ‘Ubiquitous but Invisible: Female Domestic Servants in Mid-Eighteenth-Century London,’ *History Workshop Journal*, 28 (1989), 112

his employers, suggests a sophistication and political awareness which, at the beginning of the period, few servants could have conceived.

Current research on childhood in the past emphasises ‘the complexity and diversity of childhood experiences’ in work as in much else.²⁶ This study has added to the historiography by demonstrating the complexity and diversity within one occupation, reflected in the day-to-day living, rewards, expectations, set-backs and fulfilment of children in one of the most traditional spheres of children’s work. It has shown that children were not highly sought after in domestic service but they were perilously open to exploitation in a world where children seeking work were numerous. Parish children, those without parents, kin or a ‘parent’ body to which they could appeal were particularly vulnerable. For some the only means of protest was through demonstrations of idleness, disobedience or desertion. Many child servants, however, were able to make use of contacts or use their own initiative and knowledge to improve their conditions – aware, as many were, of their importance to the household economy, its style and efficient functioning. For some poor children domestic service represented an improvement on earlier experiences and a means to a worthwhile livelihood. What happened to these young servants when they ‘moved on’ to other positions, or opted out of domestic work remains for the most part unknown. An interesting avenue of work would be to trace their later lives using the census records to discover if their status changed.

Towards the end of her life in the 1840s Mary Ashford was dismayed to realise that female servants were rarely depicted in literature unless it were in police reports and newspapers where they featured as ‘stray delinquents’, or, in penny tracts where the maid, in a state of illness, was ‘shortly to expire’. She drew on her seventeen years in service (from which she had happily not expired), to tell the ‘real truth’ of life in service which had begun, in her case, when she was thirteen.²⁷ This study has sought to uncover the ‘true voice’ of the youngest contingent of the domestic work force which, just like Mary Ashford, deserves to be heard and valued in its own right and in its many manifestations.

²⁶ Goose and Honeyman, *Childhood and Child Labour*, Introduction, 3

²⁷ Ashford, *Victualler’s Daughter*, Preface, 2

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