



The Patients



This section begins with a list of complaints made to the Mayor's Court in 1550 by the hospital chaplain, a devout Protestant, who found the drunken, quarrelsome and irreverent behaviour of the new inmates unacceptable in 'Gode's Howse'. No less scandalised by the manners of this 'very rough assembly', the Victorian scholars, William Hudson (himself a clergyman) and J.C. Tingey, were also critical of the chaplain's 'bad writing' and apparent lack of education. Today's historians tend to focus upon the evidence such records provide of Tudor policy towards the 'unruly' poor and of the use of institutions like the new hospital to impose discipline upon them.

*For more information about the care (and control) of the poor in Tudor England, and especially in Norwich, see Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot: Sicknes, medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England (1998)*, especially chapter four.*

15 March 1550, The house of the poore: This day Sir John Fysher [the hospital chaplain] hathe exhibite unto this courte a Bill conteyning Articles to be ordeynid, made and grauntid by Master Mayour & this courte for goode order and Rewle to be had, used and contynewed amonges the poore peopill in goddes house in holmestrete, which bill is put to Master Catlyn to peruse and amende, &c. (NRO, NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book 1549-1555, f. 48v; the ensuing list of complaints appears on a loose sheet at the end of the volume)

With the lycens of Master Mayyr here present, & my mastrys the aldyrmen to hym assent, I make my menys at thys tyme for reformatyon of dyverse cawssys amonges the pore people in the hospytall for dyvers abusys me thynke myht be bettyr with yowur coownselles; under Master Mayyrs favur I submet my selffe at all tymes, I trost as my dewty hys:

Nota, fyrst, to a poynt them from our ladys day [25 March] tyll myelmas [29 September] from vj of the cloke in mornyng tyl viij of ye cloke in the forenon, and at aftyn none from iij of the cloke tyl v in somer tyme; and from myelmas tyl our lady day from vij of the cloke tyl ix in the forenon, & in the aftyr none from ij tyl iiij, to kepe ther chyrche, excepte a cawsse resunnable, æ or elles to be refomyd by ther keper.

Nota, the secunde ys that thay shuld resevye the holy communion every quartyr onnys, or schowe the cawsse wy, beyng in the casse that thay are in.

Nota, the therd ys that wan I have aberyall the men wylle nat help to bere them to ther gravys, but make excusys, & lat the women do ytt.

Nota, the forht ys that men & women wyl nat cum to the sermunys at chryst chyrche [the cathedral], do the best I cane, wan they ar able to goo al the cyte over, & sume of them the cuntry also.

Nota, the fyffte ys they wyl nat kepe godes pece, & the kynges, but w[i]ll brayle & stryve onresunnably; summe that want [lack] heryng myht with ponyssment be ponysschyd, that the syht of the eye myht ~~rest~~ reforme them to a dew ordyr.

Nota, the sexthe ys non schall goo in to the cyte a lone, to the dysplesyr of thyr keper, & so cum dronkyn hooome at even with talys inowe [enough]; this wyll they do with owht ony leve, many of them. Werfore I schall dyssyur that, wan they goo, they schall goo ij to gythyr ~~or elles~~ ~~æ~~ with leve of ther keper, [so that] he may know wer they are; & they wyll to the ale howss ij or iij attonys [at once].

Nota, the sevynthe ys that wane ij men fale afyyttyng, or ij women, or j man & a women, to lay them bothe in the stokkes tyll they be bothe plesyd.

Nota, the aythe ys that yff ony of them chyd & brayle at ther mete, than to take them up & set them alone for that tyme or take away ther mett.

Nota, the nythe ys yff ony of them peke or stele to have syche ponyssment as yow schall thynke good for ther dysservyng.

Nota, the tenthe ys yff ij of them goo braylyng to ther beddes to gyff them s[o]che ponyssment as schalbe thowht mete for them.

Nota, the eleveht ys that syche persons as cum in to the howss with syche goodes as they have, & afturward gyff ther goodes owht of the howss agayne, to send them aftyr.

Nota, the twelve ys that thos persons that depart the world nat to gyff ther goodes awaye at ther plesyr & leve the howss in was cass [a worse state] than they ~~ford~~ fond yt.

All thes I know by experyens; and yt ys godes howss & I wold have them godly peple in yt.

All thes thyngges, with yowur favyrs, wold I have rehersyd wan ony person shalbe resevyd in to the howss for ther abytatyon; & also to reheress them every quartyr onnys, for the more erudycyon to them selvys & quyett in the howss.

That for all thys, my pore & sympple informatyon, I put all to my Master Mayyr, with all my mastrys the aldyrmen, & suspet my owyne wyht in this behalve, ~~but undyr the corectyon~~ but undyr yowur corectyton I submyt my self.

By yowur chaplen to the pore.

The next manuscript reveals that the civic authorities were more sympathetic towards the poor inmates of God's House than the exasperated Master Fyssher might have wished. From the 1550s onwards, a series of contracts has survived, binding successive 'keepers' to provide a decent level of care for their charges. This, the earliest, is notable for its insistence that the patients should be given good quality wheat bread, and that they should be protected from any physical abuse or unnecessary 'correction'. Care was also taken to safeguard the hospital's slender revenues and to ensure that proper records were kept.

An Indenture betwixt the Surveyours of th'ospitall and the keper of the same.

Thys Wryghtyng Indentyd, made the last daye of Maye in the yere of our Lord God m^dlxvj [1566] and in the Eight yere of the Raigne of our Sovereyn Ladie Elizabeth, by the grace of god Quene of Ingland, Fraunce and Ireland, defender of the faith, &c, **Betwyn** Thomas Sotherton, Mayour of the cittie of Norwiche, Thomas Whall and Thomas Parker, Alderman and Surveyours of the hows of the poore, otherwise called Goddes hows in holmestrete, within the cittie of Norwiche, on the one parte, **And** William Olyver of the same Cittie, Bere brewer, on the other parte, **Witnesseth** that the seid Mayour and Surveyours, for their part, And lykewise the seid William Olyver, for his part, have Covenanted for the keepyng of the xl^{tie} [40] pore people which are to be kept in the seid hows of the pore, otherwise called Goddes hows, upon souche Agreamentes and Artycles as hereafter be declaryd:

In primis, the seid Mayour and Surveyours covenant and agree that the beforenamyd William Olyver shall enter and take the chardge of keepyng and provydyng of meat and drynk for the xl pore people and their keepers at the Feast of St John Baptist [24 June] next insuyng the date herof; And he to have then payed hym xxxj*li* xiijs iiij*d* [£31 13s 4*d*]

at his entrey for one quarters dyettes of the same xl pore people and their kepars before hand payed, Whiche (if he shall fortune to dye or otherwise to depart before th'end of eny yere duryng all the tyme that he shalbe keper thear) he shalbe bound to leave and Repay ageyn to the use of the hows at his goyng of.

Item the seid Mayour and Surveyours covenaut and agree that the seid William Olyver shall have and receyve at that his entryng into the hows for provysyon of wood and cole for the xl pore people and their kepars for the whole yere then next following *xxli*. And [he] shall enter bond, with suretye, That, if he shall fortune to departe this lyfe at any tyme within one yere after his entrey, And so for every yere that he shall contynue keper thear, That he shall leave, or cause to be left, suffycient wood or coale to serve the xl pore people from the tyme that he shall enter untill that tyme twelvemoneth; And so allweys shall have *xxli* payed hym before hand at Midsoomer for provisyon of wood and coale for the whole yere following.

Item it is further covenauted and agreed that the seid William Olyver shall have and receyve for the keepyng of the of the xl pore people for their dyettes, and the dyettes and wages of their kepers and officers, *xxvjli xiijs iiijd* every quarter by covenaut so made with hym in great, So that he shall allweys have one quarters dyettes payed before hand, Whiche he shall leave and Repay ageyn to the use of the seid hows at his goyng owt.

Item it is also covenauted and agreed that the seid William Olyver shall have the Scyte of the hows, with all the gardeyns, Medowes, Ortyardes and groundes (only two howses except), which shalbe reserved for storehowses to lay in thynges necessary for Reparacions, without eny Rent or Ferme payeng.

Item it is also covenauted and agreed that the seid William Olyver shall have the land without St Augustyns gates which Vyncent Tesmond now hath, And to paye therfor *lxs* by yere: Videlicet, every quarter of A yere *xvs*. **And** the seid William Olyver for his part Covenauteth to and with the seid Mayour and Surveyours That he, the seid William, shall kepe the seid xl pore people in Sycknes and in helth, and *iiij* women keepers, accordyng ...

to the foundacion, with meat, drynk, fyryng and wassing meete and convenyent for allmes people; And that they shalbe fedd with no courser bread then whole wheat bread, without either Rye or barlye to be putt and myxed thereith. **And** the seid William Olyver also covenauteth for his part That he, his wyfe and kepers shall well and gently use and intreate the seid xl pore people & every of them at all tymes, without eny correccion or beatyng of them or eny of them. But, in case the or eny of them will not be ordryd and rulyd, Then he to complayne to the Surveyours of their misdemeanours; and allwes to kepe the full number of xl pore folke. And if eny shall fortune to dye, or else depart the hows, Then he to signifie their names, so dead or departed from the hows, to the Surveyours or one of them at the least within twoo dayes after they shalbe departed from the hows. **And** the seid William Olyver further covenauteth that, if he shall fortune to departe this lyfe at any tyme before eny of the *iiij* quarters of the yere shalbe fully accomplisshed and ended, fforsomocheas he shall allweys have the *xl^{li}* markes [*£26. 13s 4d*] for A quarters paiement before hand, That he shalbe bound with good Suretye to kepe the seid xl pore people and their *iiij* kepers duryng the tyme of the whole quarter which he shall have receyved the money for, Or else to allow accordyng to the rate for so many weekes as shalbe wantyng of the Quarter. **And** the seid William Olyver convenauteth to kepe A booke of all the names of the xl pore people which he shall receyve into the hows, with the day of their entryng into the hows and the daye of their death, or otherwise departing, owt of the same hows. And also shall save all souche Apparell or sheetis as eny of them shall fortune to leave at the day of their death to help the rest with. **And** the seid William shall also kepe a booke of all souch legacyes and gyftes, either of bedding, shettis, shirtes and smockes, lynnyn and woollen, or monye as shall fortune to cum into his handes of the gyft of eny body towards the Relieff of the pore people. **Allso** the seid William Olyver shall save and preserve to the use of the seid hows all souche Beddyng, stuff and utensilles of hows as shalbe commytted and delyvered to the seid William Olyver by Inventorye or otherwyse.

In witnes whereof to the one parte of these present wrightynges indented remayneng with the seid William Olyver th'aforseid Thomas Sotherton, Mayour, Thomas Whall and Thomas Parker have sett their handes and Seales; and to the other part of the same wrightynges Indented remayneng with the seid Thomas Sotherton, Mayour, Thomas Whall and Thomas Parker the seid William Olyver hath sett his hand and Sealle. Gyven at the seid cittie of Norwiche the daye and yere first above wrytton.

Dorse: Redd, Sealed and delyvered in the presens of Master Thomas Peck, Alderman, and Thomas Corye the younger (NCR, 24B/36).

The practice of keeping inventories, or detailed lists, of all the possessions owned by a hospital was already centuries old when the next document was drawn up at the start of the seventeenth century. It probably marks the arrival of a new master or keeper, who could be held to account when he left, and prevented from selling off valuable assets. Inventories are particularly helpful to historians, as they provide a rare glimpse into the daily living conditions of patients. The residents of God's House clearly benefited from a well-appointed laundry and (by the standards of the age) had more than adequate bedding. As in many contemporary institutions for the elderly, they were expected to bring a sheet with them, in which they would eventually be buried.

An Inventory Indentid taken of the Beddyng, Blankettes, Coverynges & pillowes, Coffers, stooles & other Implementes belonging to the poore in the hospitall

First in the 19 Bed chamber

Eleaven fetherbedes good & bad

Nyne fether bouldsters

Eighten fether pillowes

Tenne fflockbeddes

Seaventen flockbolsters

ffive flock pillowes

Twelue yellowe Rugges

Seaven blankettes good & bad

Twenty six dornix coueringes good & bad

Nyneten Bedsteades

Twenty three old Coffers and Chistes

ffourten stooles and Chayers good & bad

In the fyer howse next adioynynge to the said 19 bed chamber

One ffyer pann

One payer of tonges

One payer of dogyrons

Twoe barres of yron

One yron hake

One payer of bellowes

In the longe Hall

Seaventen Bedsteades
Nyne ffetherbeddes
Three fether bolsters
Eight ffether pillowes
Eight flock beddes
Sixten flock boulsters good & bad
Eight flock pillowes
Sixten yellowe rugges
ffower Blankyttes
Six dornix coverynges good & bad
Seaventen old coffers & chayers
Twenty fower stooles & ould Chayers good & bad
One great Chist bottomed with yron
Two longe Tables with trusselles fast in the ground
ffower longe fourmes made fast in the ground
One payer of dogyrons
Two barres of yron for the fyer
One fyer pan; One payer of tonges
One payer of bellows and one close stoole

In the chamber called the 14 Bed chamber

Twelue Bedsteades
Three ffetherbeddes
One ffether bolster
Three fether pillowes
ffive fflock beddes
Eleaven flockboulsters
Three flock pillowes
Seaven yellow Rugges
Two dornix Coverynges
Eight Coffers
Twelue stooles & Chayers
One payer of tonges

One ffyer pann
One payer of bellows
One payer of dogyrons
Two yron barres

In the washehowse Lodginge

Six Bedsteades
Six fflockbeddes
Seaven flockboulsters
Two flock pillowes
Eight fetherpillowes good & bad
ffourten dornix coveringes good and bad
Eight Coffers
Eight old stooles & chayers
Twoe dogyrons
One ffyer pann
One payer of tonges
One payer of bellows

In a little lodginge chamber ext the washowse

Three Bedsteades
One ffetherbed
One ffetherboulster
One ffether pillowe
Twoe fflock beddes
One flock bolster
ffive dornix Couerynges
Twoe Coffers

In the Church Chamber

Bedsteades
ffive ffetherbeddes
ffive ffether bolsters
Two ffether pillowes
One flock bolster

Twoe Blankettes
Three yellowe Rugges
Two darnix Coverynges
Six old stoole & Chayers
ffower Coffers
One close stoole
One payer of Tonges
One fyer pann
One payre of dogyrons fast
One payer of Bellowes
One square table & Trusselles to turne vp against the stayres
One rost yron

In the newe Lodgeynge

Twenty three Bedsteades
ffourten ffetherbeddes
ffiften fether boulsters
Thirty fether pillowes
ffourten flockbeddes
Sixten flock boulsters
ffive flock pillowes
Twenty three blankettes
Twenty thre good darnix coueringes
Twenty thre pewter basons
Twenty two small towelles
One & twenty Chamberpottes
Twenty fower Coffers
Seaventen Chayers & stooles
Two payer of dogyrons
ffower yron Barres
Two payer of Tonges
Two fyer pannes
Two payer of bellowes
One great chist for the lynyng
One great planck table with trusselles & footbankes framed thereto
ffower longe fourmes
One fayre lanthorne

In the great Chamber ouer the new lodgynge

Sixten new bedsteades
One ould Chist
Twoe longe stooles of plancke

Six Buckittes belonginge to the hospitall howse

In the Kytchinge and pastrey

Three dressers with Trusselles fast in the ground
One other dresser with trusselles
One newe round Copper kettle with a byle
One great Chopping block
One great boyler of cast mettall
One couer of bord to the same
One longe barre of yron to the Chymney with two other barres for the same
Two yron hakes
A fayer sinke of marble stone
One great kneadinge trowe
Two mouldinge tables
Two longe Shelves
One trough to put dishes in

In the Brewhowse

One great guilefatt with an apron of lead
One mashefatte with the vnder becke
One sweete wortefate
Twoe Coolers
One Copper with the yron furnys
One deale & a ladder
One skoope & a short deale
Ould hoopes & old broken bottomes

In the well howse

One pully for a well
One old Tonell
Thirty Staffes of some ould fatt

In the Mill howse

One mault mill with the stones, hopper and trough
Three ould worne milstones besides

In the Pygges Howse

One small peece of lead

In the washinge howse

One small Copper hanged without yron
One great bookynge tubbe
Three great rinsinge tubbes
Three washinge tubbes
Two old payles with yron byles
One Colrake
One fyerforke of yron
One stoole that the tub stand on
One beatynge stoole

In the church porche

Twoe beres and one ould payer of stockes

In the Cloyster

One fayer lead for rayne water & poled round about to dry Cloathes onn
Two longe ladders whereof one broken
One little short ladder

In the Maulthowse & crick thereto adioynynge

One fayre Sistorne of lead to steepe in, in a frame
One Lyttle Ladder for the Sistorne
Three Lattizes in the Maulthowse
Six Lattizes on the Maultchamber, one Bynge for dryed mault or barley
One swaype with the stopp, yron pole & Chayne

In the Swynes yard

One shorte peece of ould Tymber

In the Buttery

Three Berestooles & one old Cubberd

In the hall

One longe table vppon three Trusselles & ij longe fourmes
Two longe footebankes & one old livery Table, The Bench to the Table &
back for the same
The hanginges to the hall
One fayre large brasinge Chaffer

In a littell Buttery next the parlour

Twoe shelues, one payre of Trusselles, one Table of two long bordes

In a lyttle Closett next the parlor

One old liverie Cobard & two poore folkes Coffers

In the greate Chamber

One Livery Bedd, [blank] Cubbard

In the porch Chamber

One good longe open presse

In an Inner chamber next the greate chamber

One old Table with two old Trusselles

Lynnen belonginge to the Beddes

Twenty three beddes in the newe Lodginge
fforty payre of sheetes ggod & whole & two Towelles

In the keepers hand Bradley

ffifty seaven Sheetes good & bad
ffifty seaven payer on the beddes and Twenty nyne payer in all besides,
whereof fower payer very Raggis, & but fower Towelles
Sheetes brought in by poore people that are found in the keepers handes for
wyndynge sheetes are in number Thirteen Sheetes