



Dissolution and Reform: The City Acquires the Hospital



Having begun in 1536, the Dissolution of religious houses, including hospitals, assumed an unstoppable momentum as predatory asset strippers honed in on vulnerable institutions. Determined to save St Giles's for the city and to integrate it into a reformed system of care for the sick and poor, the rulers of Norwich moved quickly to gain royal support for their plans. The arrival of King Henry's commissioners early in 1546 was followed by a sustained campaign of political lobbying at Westminster, which is documented in unusual detail in the civic records.

Although it escaped closure, the hospital was still stripped of its contents, and, for a while, it seemed as if the chancel, with its remarkable ceiling of imperial eagles, would be demolished. Such extreme measures seemed necessary because of the heavy expenditure sustained by the mayor and corporation, which, as we can see, involved the imposition of a city-wide tax or 'relief of the poor'.

*For more information about the people and events described in these extracts, see Carole Rawcliffe, *Medicine for the Soul: The Life, Death and Resurrection of an English Medieval Hospital* (1999), chapters seven and eight.*

13 February 1546, hospitall: Item, it is to be remembred that Master Rogers moved the Courte that Sute shuld be made to the kynges maiestie ffor the hospitall, expressing what releff pore people have dayly ther (**NRO, NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book, 1540-1549, p. 309**).

24 March 1546, hospitall: This daye a certen peticon made by the advyce of the lerned counsell of the Citie was redde openly & dystynctly & cetera. Wherupon, hit is thought mete that it shalbe exhibited to the kynges maiestie ffor th'entent and purposes conteyned in the same, the copies wherof remayne with the Chamberleyn (**NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book, 1540-1549, p. 313**).

25 March 1546, Costys off sutys, the weke in which our lady day ffell, 1545-6: And payd to yong master Catlyn the yonger ffor his paynes & counsell taken with the comyssioners sitting upon the acte ffor Colleges & chauntries, & drawyng a petycion to the kynges maiestie ffor the hospitall xvjs; to master Corbet ffor his labour, Counsell & paynes in the seid Sute & ffor drawyng a certifficat ffor the master of the hospitall viijs; to master Catlynges Clerk ffor twyes writing the peticon, wherof ones after master Gosnold had corrected, Item iijs vjd; to master Corbettes Clerk ffor new wrytyng the certifficat after his master had drawen it ijs; to Richard fframyngham ffor writing of ij copies of the peticon & ij copies of the certifficates ijs; Item to master Gosnalles Clerk ffor a copy of the precepte & an other of the articles sent to the Chirchewardens ijs; to master Godsalves clerk ffor writing of the peticon in parchemyn, & delyvered to master Cod ijs; to Richard fframyngham ffor writing of certen Copies as of the peticon, certifficate, value of the landes, Instruccions & a letter to Sir Nicholas Hare, knight, which master Cod bare with hym to London ffor the same Sute xijd; to master Codde, alderman, ffor his costes & paynes rydyng to London in mid lent weke to make sute in the same xxvjs viijd; And to hym the xiiij daye of Auguste ffor his costes, labours & paynes beyng at London in ester terme xviiij dayes & in mighelmes terme x dayes, at ijs the daye, liiij; & in rewarde ffor his paynes vjs aboute the same sute; & to Thomas Mersham alderman ffor his costes in auguste to London ffor the same mater, & ffor certen rewardes that he gaff ther ffor the ffortheryng of the Sute theryn, as it appereth by a bill sygned with in Meyers hande, xlvijs vd; & paid to hym more ffor hys costes to London & ffrom thense to the Courte ffor the seid Sute in the latter end of septembre, as appereth by a like bill signed as is afforeseid, lvijs vjd (**NCR, 18A, Chamberlains' Account Book, 1537-1547, f. 232r-v**).

12 May 1546, Memorandum hospitall: Item, it is agreed that Master Codde shall take payne ffor the Citie to attende upon the kynges maiestie & his highnes counsell this terme to ffolowe the sute begon ffor the hospitall within the same Citie (**NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book, 1540-1549, p. 319**).

5 June 1546, hospitall: This daye Master Cod declared to the Corte that he hath made sute to Master chaunceler of the augmentacon, Sir Richard Southwell, Sir Nicholas Hare & Sir William Wodehouse, knight, ffor the opteyning of the Sutie to the kynges maiestie ffor the hospitall & cetera, & that he hath obteyned ther goode willes, & that the seid Sir William Wodehouse, who hath the gifte preferment of the of the same of the same [*sic*] of the kynges maiestie, iff it be sold, will make no Sute therffor nor hynder the seid Citie iff the kynges maiesties pleasure be mynded to offer the said Citie, Savyng to hym his preferment iff it shall so stande with the kynges maiesties plesure (**NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book, 1540-1549, pp. 321-2**).

31 July 1546, hospitall: Item, itte is ordered by the courte & commanded to the Chamberleyn to pay to Master Codde, alderman, ffor his expences taken in the causes of the citie at London this too termes last paste by the space of xxvij dayes est' the rate of ijs the day liiij; & ffor his paynes vjs: Summa lxs (**NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book, 1540-1549, p. 332**).

1 September 1546, hospitall: Item, it is this agreed that one suche person as Master Maier shall think mete shall take peynes to London at the costes of the comminaltie to attende upon the sute begon ffor the hospitall (**NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book, 1540-1549, p. 338**).

22 December 1546: This daye Master Meyer declared to the assemble the sute made to the kynges highenes ffor the hospitall, & cetera, & his highnes plesur concernyng the same to be given to the citie upon certen covauntes to be performed on the parte of the citie, to the performance of which sute the hoole assemble graunted to be contributours and helpers to the same every man after his abilitie (**NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 231r**).

13 April 1547: This daye was sealed with the comen seale of the seid citie too partes of an indenture made by twen the kynges maiestie, the lord protectour of Englund & other his coexecutours of the testament & last will of the most noble kyng Henry the viijth of most noble, worthy and famous memory, ffather to the kynges maiestie that now is, concernyng the gift & graunte of his highenes of the hospitall of Saynt Gile in Norwiche, with all maners, londes and possessions thereunto belonging, to the maier, shreves, citzens & cominaltie of Norwiche & to ther sucessours, under certen covauntes, grauntes, agrementes & articles conteyned in the same, & by the seid maier, shreves, citzens & cominaltie & ther sucessours to be performed & ffulfilled, as by the the [*sic*] thirde parte of the same indenture under the kynges maiesties Grette Seale, the seales of the seid lord protectour & other his coexecutours remayneng in the treasury of the seid citie appereth at large.

Also a ~~particuler~~ boke of the particuler summes of the hole revenues and profites of the same.

Margin: Memorandum that these ij indentures & book ben delivered to ~~alderman~~ Mersham alderman [to] optenye the iij^{de} parte of the same, & after to delyver it to the maier (NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 234r).

10 May 1547: This daye John Corbet th'elder, esquier, by vertue of the kynges writte of dedimus potestatem to hym and to John Tyer, esquier, directed, receyved the knoulege of ~~ij partes of indenture~~ the seid mayer, sheriffes & cominaltie of ij partes of an indenture late made bitwen our soveraign lord the kyng on the ffirste parte, & the right honorable Edward, duke of Somerset, & others of the ij^{de} parte, & the seid maier, shreffes & cominaltie of the iij^{de} parte, & sealed with ther comen seall, concernyng the hospitall of Saynt Gyles, with all maners, londes [and possessions], to be ther willes & dedes, accordyng to the tenour of the same, & the same delyvered to the seid John Corbet to th'entent that the same shuld be enrolled in the kynges Chauncery, accordyng to the tenour of the seid writte (NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 236r).

27 July 1547, Master Cod ffor the hospitall: This daye Master Cod declared to the Courte that, wher he, by the advyce of Master Maier, Master Styward, Master Rogers & divers others of the aldermen, is appoynted to have the viewe of the hospitall ffor the profite of the Citie, yet, as he understond, divers persons aswell of the aldermen as of the comons are offendid. Wherfor he is contentid that iff eny person will giff more ffor it than he, than suche person to have it; & after many comunicacions theyn had it is consented by the hole house that Master Cod shall have the viewe of the same & rule & orderyng therof as one most mete ffor the same (NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book, 1540-1549, p. 391).

30 January 1548: This daye was sealed with the comon seall ffyve ffoure partes of ~~ffive partes~~ ffouer severall indentures concernyng certen leaces made to William Reynoldes, John Reynoldes, Thome Leman & Nicholas Harlet of certen londes lyeng in Birlyngham and other ~~londes~~ townes, & cetera, beffore by them goven to the maier, & cetera, to the sustentacon, & cetera, of the pore ffolkes of the hospitall, & cetera, the other partes of the same iij severall lees under the seales of thesorer for to remain in the tresory, & cetera.

And the same daye was sealed with the comen seall, & cetera, a letter of attorney made to Master Ryers [*recte* Rogers] & Robert Reynebald to receyve astate of & in the same londes ffor the maier, & cetera, accordyng to iij severall grauntes therof made to the maier, & cetera (NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 239r-v).

11 May 1548: It is agreed that Master Meier, Master Meier electe, Master Styward, ~~Master Catlyn~~, Master Rogers, Master Aldriche, Thomas Wulman, the chamberleyn, Richard ffletcher, Leonard Sotherton, Thomas Morley, Thomas Grey & ffraunces Wulman, or the more parte of them, shall have & take the vewe & oversight of the reparacions of Master Cod don at the hospitall, etc, at suche tyme as Master Meyer shall appoynte (NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 245r).

29 September 1548, Account for the year 29 September 1547-1548: Sewtes: In primus for the costes of the accomptant rydyng to Bery [Bury St Edmunds] to the kynges awdyte kept ther for dyvers matters concernyng the comminalte ... for the accompt of the hospytall; for the dyscharge of xiiijs xjd yerely rent paid out of the hospitall to the manour of framyngam; for vs vjd yerely rent paid out of the sayd hospytall to the manour of heylesdon; and for diverse other thynges concernyng the profyght of the comminalte, for whiche consyderacions was paid by the sayd accomptant for entrans in to the awdytours bookes & for recording of dyverse thynges in to the courte rolles, with the costes of the accomptant, a man & ij horses: summa xijs ixd (NCR, 18A, Chamberlains' Account Book, 1541-1549, f. 279r).

5 January 1549, John Porter: Whereas John Porter, surgeon, hath ben assigned to gyve his dyligence to the poore peopull within the hospitall, this day Master Mayour have geven him warning against our lady day [25 March] nixte comyng to leave the same withoute that there be had some other agremente, & cetera (NCR, 16A, Mayor's Court Book, 1540-1549, p. 539)

15 March 1549: It is also moved to this house to here their mynde concerning the Quere of the late hospitall, of whiche is thoughte mete and conveyente to be used for the grammer schole; and that the leade thereuppon mighte be taken of & amyloyed to some other use, & so covered with reede or tyle. Whiche cause, after their advice in this behalf herde & knowen and ~~the~~ fully resolved, it is ordered & agreed that Master Mayour, Master Stywerd, Master Leche, Master Tasburgh, Master Necton, Master Aldriche, aldermen, Masters Bacon and & Atkyns, shereves, Raphe Marsham, ffraunces Wolmer, Richarde ffletcher, Thomas Soterton, John Bengemyn, William Heede, Thomas Wolman, Leonarde Soterton shall this after noon resorte to the spitall, their to survey the house if they may have any other house there mete for the sholehouse, so that the chauncell may be converted towards the satisfaccion of the debte of the Cittie, & cetera (NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 250v).

1 May 1549: It is also agred and fully concluded that the Chauncell of the late hospitall of S^t Gyle in Norwich shalbe taken downe and solde to th' use of the Cittie towards the satisfaccion of the debtes of the same Cittie (NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 253v).

10 May 1549: This day is elected and chosen twoo surveyours of the landes and possessions of the late hospitall, that is to say by Master Mayour and aldermen is chosen Master Thomas Marsham, and by the commons is also chosen Master Alexander Mather to exercise the same office of survey for a yere nexte ensuing.

Margin: Surveyours of the house of the poore

Now is also appoyted for the sale of certen thinges remaynung at the late hospitall thies persons for prysours thereof, videlicet: Master Necton & Master Aldriche, aldermen, Thomas Soterton & Raphe Marsham (NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 254r-v).

31 May 1459: Wher atte an assemble holden here on Crouchemes daye [14 September] last past it was then graunted, agreed & enacted that the Chauncell of the late hospitall, et cetera, shuld be taken down & sold to the use of the Citie towerd the payement of the dette of the same Citie, notwithstandinge nowe it is ffordur enacted & agreed upon divers consideracions that the lede of the same Chauncell, the pathement & the stalles or deskes, with the selyng annexed to the same ~~selyng~~ stalles or deskes, shalbe sold towerd the payement of the same dette; & that on selyng, the windows with the glasse & ironworke and the walles & the roff as thei be nowe shall stande still & be rooved with reede, not withstandinge the seid acte late made on Chrouchemes daye, whiche premysses shalbe sold by Master Necton, Master Aldriche, Master Thomas Marsham, Master Mader, Thomas Sotherton & Rauff Mersham at suche prises, & cetera, on Mondaye next to come, the same persons to be there by viij of the clok in the fforenon (NCR, 16D, Assembly Minute Book, 1510-1550, f. 255r).

29 September 1549, Account for the year 29 September 1548-1549: Realeffe: Item realeffe for the dette of Godes howse in holmestrete, late cald the hospytalle: *iiij^{xx} iiij li* [£84], whiche the sayd howse dyd owe to the comminalte of the cite syns the fyrst tym it was apteynd for the dyscharge whereof the said comminalte grauntyd a taske in the name of a realeffe to the summa of *iiij^{xx} li vijs* [£80 7s], to be gathered of the wardes within the cyte, whiche was levyed as hereafter folowythe:

In primis, of Trows: *xijs*, wherof was levyed but *viijs viijd*.

Item, of Southe Conysford: *xliijs*, wherof was levyed but *xxxvjs*.

Item, of North Conysford: *lxs*, wherof was levyed but *ljs*.

Item, of Berstrete Warde: *v li xijs xd*, wherof was levyed but *v li ixv iiijd*.

Item, of Seynt Stephyns: *vj li*, wherof was levyed but *v li xvjs*.

Item, of Seynt Peters was levyed the hole *x li*.

Item, of Seynt Gyles was levyed the hole *xxvjs viiijd*.

Item, of Est Wymer: *xj li viijs*, wherof was levyed but *x li vijs*.

Item, of Myddyll Wymer: *xiiij li*, wherof was levyed but *xj li xvjs*.

Item, of Est [*recte* West] Wymer *viiij li*, wherof was levyed but *vij li xs iiijd*.

Item, of Coslany: *viiiij li vijs xjd*, wherof was levyed but *vij li xvjs ijd*.

Item, of Colgate: *iiij li xvjs vijd*, wherof was levyed but *iiij li*.

Item, of Fybrigge and Spytlongd, *vj li*, wherof was levyed but *v li iiijd*.

Summa *lxxiiij li xvjs vjd* [£73 17s 6d].

(NCR, 18A, Chamberlains' Account Book, 1541-1549, ff. 297r-98r)

29 November 1549, An Aeyde of the poore: fforasmuch as it have and doth appere to this hooll house and assemble here That the Cittie is dyvers and sondrye wayes indebted by reason of the late hospitall, nowe called Goddes Howse, to the somme of a Taxe, whiche thing is thoughte mete and necessary to be dyscharged. In consideracion whereof, it is nowe fully graunted, condescended and agreed by this house That there shalbe assessed, taxed and gyven universally within this Cittie a Certen Somme of money, by the name of an Aeyde of the poore, to be arrered and levyed as by Master Mayour and his counsaill shall thinke moost mete and convenyent for to dyscharge the debet of the seide Cittie, & cetera (NCR, 16A, Assembly Proceedings, 1491-1553, f. 213r).

30 November 1551, *lvj li* [£56] gyven th'ospitall to discharge the debt therof: Whereas the howse of the late hospitall is endebted to dyvers personnes that is to saie: To Master Nectonne, alderman, *xiiiij li ijs xjd*, To Master Codde, alderman, *x li xiiijs xd ob'*; To Thomas Kyng *xiiiij li xiiijs viijd ob'*; And a demaunde is further made by Master Nectonne of allowaunce by reason of the falle of money [i.e because of inflation] in the somme of *xvj li*, whiche he receyved to his loss, *v li vjs viiijd*; And further allowaunces likewise demaunded nowe by him for the fynding of the poore peopull and officers in the howse of the poore till Mydsomer next, over and besides his ordynarye receiptes, the somme of *x li xs vd*. All whiche sommes accompted to gethers amountithe to the somme of ffyftye five poundes eight shillinges seven pens, **It is nowe** ordered, graunted and agreed That the seide somme shall be satisfied and paied to the personnes beforenamed by thies personnes: videlicet, by th'andes of the Chamberlayns of the Cittie *xlviij li*; And by Master Mayour from th'amper tenne poundes, whiche sommes amountith to *lvj li* to be paied before Christmas nexte (NCR, 16A, Assembly Proceedings, 1491-1553, f. 228v).