

THE ADMINISTRATION OF AN  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROVINCIAL  
HOSPITAL: THE ROYAL SALOP  
INFIRMARY, 1747-1830

*by*

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IN July 1737 there was distributed in Shrewsbury and throughout the neighbouring parts of Shropshire a pamphlet entitled 'A Proposal for Erecting an Infirmary for the Poor-Sick and Lame of this County and Neighbourhood'. Had it borne fruit, Salop Infirmary would have had a place among the earliest of the provincial hospitals, but the scheme met with no encouragement and almost seven years elapsed before it was revived again. In March 1744 a second pamphlet with the same title and in almost identical terms appeared. But prior to its publication, steps had been taken to ensure its success, for, according to an advertisement on the back page, a meeting of several gentlemen had been held during the previous Quarter Sessions at which a proposal to erect an infirmary had been unanimously approved. A further meeting was held at the ensuing Assizes to open a subscription and to consider the most effective means for promoting their object. A third pamphlet in April 1745 presented an encouraging list of subscriptions totalling £503 15s. and the public were informed that this excellent design was in a fair way to be brought into execution.

At a meeting of subscribers in the Grand Jury Room on 10 August 1745 the Charity was formally embodied when it was resolved that 'the Society be distinguished by the Name of the Trustees of the Salop Infirmary'. There was a temporary suspension of activity during the opening phase of the '45 Rebellion, but in March of the following year, 1746, the grand design was again under way. Subscriptions rolled in, a half-built house was secured for conversion (thus saving the expense of building), staff were appointed, the building was equipped, and on 25 April 1747 the first patients were admitted. In this building the 'Poor-Sick and Lame' continued to receive the best of treatment available according to the knowledge of the times for almost eighty years, until in 1827, being considered no longer adequate for its function, it was torn down and a new, more spacious infirmary was built in its place. This new building, the nucleus of the present Royal Salop Infirmary was opened at the Anniversary Meeting on Friday, 24 September 1830.

The gentlemen who in August 1745 embodied themselves into a Society of Trustees for the establishment and upkeep of an Infirmary in Salop might by a more timid generation have been thought to be embarking upon a very

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considerable undertaking. Such institutions were still few in number, and it is unlikely that more than one or two of the Trustees had had any previous experience of hospitals or hospital management. They were of course able to gain some information from those who had already established similar charities in other parts of the country, and this they did not hesitate to do. Basic information was gained from the pamphlet of the Rev. Alured Clarke on the County Hospital at Winchester, and advice upon other topics was obtained from the Infirmary at Bristol and the recently established Hospital at Northampton. The Secretary of the Northampton Hospital was invited to superintend the opening of the Infirmary and to give advice about any problems that arose.\* But even without such assistance any group of gentlemen in the eighteenth century would have felt quite capable of managing an undertaking of this type. At meetings of Quarter Sessions, Turnpike Trusts, and a host of other local bodies, they were accustomed to order and administer the life of the community in which they lived, and they had practical experience in everyday life of the routine management of large households. A country gentleman would have ten or more servants in his home, the middle and professional classes at least five, and even the small shopkeeper or tradesman living above his place of business in Butcher's Row or Pride Hill would have a footboy and a maid, with apprentices perhaps to add to that number. A peer such as Lord Powys might have forty or fifty under one roof, as many as were to be found in the Salop Infirmary at its first opening counting both patients and staff. It was therefore with confidence gained from similar if not identical experience that the noblemen, gentlemen, merchants and tradesmen of Salop evolved a system of administration for their Infirmary, a system upon the whole efficient in operation and well suited to the conditions of the time.

#### *General Government*

(1) *The Trustees.* The persons primarily responsible for the government of the Infirmary were the Trustees. The importance of keeping control in the hands of the subscribers had been insisted upon by the founders from the time of the first Proposals. 'To prevent any Misapplication of this *Charity*,' the author of that pamphlet had written, 'the Government of it must be placed in the Hands of the Principal Benefactors to it, who will of consequence be most interested in its Success.' The principal benefactors selected for this purpose were designated Trustees.

Trustees were appointed for life or for a limited period. Trustees for life were those who gave benefactions of twenty guineas or upwards at one time or two separate donations of ten guineas; the executor or executors jointly of any person leaving a legacy of twenty guineas; and any person charged with the conveyance to the Charity of a benefaction from an unknown hand of twenty guineas or more. Trustees for limited periods were subscribers of two guineas per annum, and benefactors of ten guineas who in addition donated one guinea annually. Such trusteeship lasted as long as the subscriptions were paid. Head

\* He remained three weeks in Shrewsbury and received for his services £14 14s. together with a gratuity of £3 3s. (*Minutes*, 2 May 1747.)

officers of any society or body corporate which contributed an annual subscription of two guineas or a benefaction of twenty guineas were ex-officio Trustees of the Charity. In addition, at Half-yearly Boards, twelve subscribers of one guinea per annum were appointed trustees for the ensuing half-year, being selected in rotation from the alphabetical list of subscribers. Of these half-yearly trustees, six had to reside within the town of Shrewsbury and six in the county of Shropshire or elsewhere. The six local trustees were of particular value, because, in the event of a quorum not being present at any of the weekly meetings, they could be sent for to make up the number required.

Until 1792 all Trustees were eligible to attend all meetings of the Charity—General Boards, Special General Boards, Weekly Boards and Anniversary Meetings—and, provided their subscriptions were not in arrears, they were entitled to vote upon any question. Upon the whole, attendance at meetings was reasonable, though the brunt of the weekly meetings fell upon the Trustees resident in and about Shrewsbury, which is hardly surprising considering the difficulties of travel, especially in winter-time when even main roads were not infrequently reduced to quagmires by heavy rains, ill-drainage, and the churning wheels of carriers' wagons. But even in Shrewsbury all Trustees did not play their part equally. As early as 1747 the annual report urged a greater number of local Trustees to attend so that the work would not always be carried on by the same persons who, because of the poor attendance of the others, constantly felt under the necessity of attending themselves, unjustly gaining thereby 'the imputation of being over-busy and fond of usurping the Management to themselves'. This reminder of duty had, however, no effect, and a good many years later, the writer of the Twenty-Third Report still found it cause for reproach that the burden of management was always falling on the same group of people.\*

These complaints of poor attendance concerned the Weekly Board meetings only, and there would again appear to be a fairly obvious explanation. A good many of the Shrewsbury subscribers were merchants and shopmen and it was hardly convenient for, or reasonable to expect, men of business to abandon their counting houses for two or more hours every Saturday morning. Of necessity the work had to fall upon those whose time was more at their own disposal—the few independent gentlemen, the retired officers, and that body which showed particular devotion to the Charity, the clergy of the town. That the vast body of Trustees maintained a strong interest in the work of the Infirmary, despite their inability to take a fully active part is amply demonstrated, however, by the large attendances at the Special General Boards when matters of moment were to be decided, and by the handsome collections gathered at the Anniversary Meeting each year.

(2) *The Weekly Board.* The day-to-day management of the affairs of the Charity was carried on by the Weekly Board which convened each Saturday morning at 11 o'clock in the Board Room of the Infirmary. Prior to 1792 the

\* 'And the burden of attendance is found very inconvenient to the few who think themselves, from the neglect of others, under a necessity of attending. We must therefore earnestly and seriously recommend it to the trustees within the town and neighbourhood, to relieve those who are tired of this constant duty, and who have the best right, from their past service, to be excused in future.' (*Report*, 1768.)

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attendance of five Trustees was required to form a quorum but after that date the presence of three Directors was sufficient (see below). A Chairman was selected at each meeting from among those present, and when there was an equal vote he had a 'casting voice'. The Secretary of the Charity was required to be present at all meetings and to keep a record of the proceedings. A rough minute was recorded during the meeting, and later a fair copy made. Only one volume of rough minutes has survived, covering the 1770's, and it would appear that the only difference between the rough and fair copy of the minutes is that the names of patients admitted and discharged are recorded in the former but omitted in the latter. An exception is the first minute book which does give their names; thereafter this part of the business is described simply by the entry 'Admitted and Discharged patients'. The disease from which a patient suffered was not entered as a rule in the Minutes. In a few cases where patients were refused admission the explanation is recorded.\* Until 1763 the Minutes were signed by the Secretary, but at a meeting of the Weekly Board on 31 December of that year it was decided that for the future all minutes would be signed and certified correct by the Chairman of the meeting next following that to which the minute referred. This applied also to meetings of the General Board. The resolution was subsequently incorporated in the Statutes which required that the proceedings of the previous General or Weekly Board be read over at each following Board, and that no order made at either Board should remain in force unless confirmed by the subsequent Board.

The Weekly Board had a number of routine duties to perform. It was responsible for the admission and discharge of patients which, except in cases of emergency, took place at its meetings on Saturday morning only. It appointed the House Visitors for the week and the Visiting Clergyman. It inspected the Matron's, Apothecary's and Secretary's accounts, and passed them for payment if they were considered satisfactory. It arranged for the payment of bills through the Under Treasurers, and was responsible for ensuring that these were moderate and reasonable in relation to the work done or the goods supplied. It accepted tenders and awarded contracts for supplies. It was the duty of the Weekly Board to ensure that adequate funds were in the hands of the Under Treasurers to meet all demands likely to be made upon them, and to give orders for the sale of securities if that was necessary. It was responsible for the appointment of servants of the house, the nurses, porters, and domestics, and had power to dismiss them provided that eight members were present at the meeting—a condition that was frequently ignored. It could also suspend or remove any Officer, except a Physician or Surgeon giving his attendance gratis, seven members at least voting for such suspension.†

By the Sixteenth Statute the Weekly Board was empowered to inquire into

\* Margaret Barnfield rejected as a patient being in a dying condition with dropsy and Gutta Serena. (*Minutes*, 12 December 1747.)

† The power was exercised on three occasions only. Mrs. Margaret Cross, second Matron of the Infirmary, was dismissed after almost nineteen years service for being incapable of discharging the duties of her office as she ought to do on account of age and infirmity. Mrs. Harris was dismissed in 1798 for repeatedly disobeying the orders of the Board, and Mrs. Margaret Oakes in 1806 for dishonesty. Mrs. Jane Moore was pressed to resign in 1807 on account of her reputation in the town for drunkenness.

the behaviour of Officers and Servants. The form of inquiry varied. In 1798 when Mr. Robert Woody, the House Surgeon, was accused of disseminating irreligious and republican doctrines amongst the patients of the Infirmary an examination of the entire staff was carried out with the replies of each person questioned recorded in the minutes. An even more elaborate inquiry with evidence taken upon oath was held during the investigation of Matron Oakes's peculation, but in general the inquiries were more informal, consisting of simple interrogation of the persons concerned followed by an immediate verdict. Control of the Apothecary's and the Surgeon's apprentices while in the House fell to the Weekly Board, although they were not the legal masters,\* and the Board had power to dismiss or suspend an apprentice guilty of a misdemeanour.† The Weekly Board was also responsible for the maintenance of discipline among the patients, and many of its meetings were occupied at length with the problem of drunken or thieving patients, those who went absent without leave, abused the matron or nurses, or were uncivil to the Medical Staff.‡

Finally, the Weekly Board was called upon to smooth over a host of minor administrative difficulties which today would be dealt with by the Hospital Secretary or the Matron. Such, for example, was the matter of the lost laundry which exercised the Board in 1754.

Complaint having been made that sev<sup>l</sup> patients have lost linen delivered to be washed. Ordered that the Laundrymaid take no charge of patients Linen but what is delivered to her by the Nurses.

Ordered that the Laundrymaid return all the Linen so taken in charge to the respective Nurses, and that the said Nurses deliver it back to the patients to whom it belongs in the wards and not elsewhere.§

\* 'Whereas Mr. Davis and Others of the Surgeons' Apprentices having been represented by the House Visitors for being rude, and disturbing the House and Neighbourhood and in which Mr. Davis was principally concerned,

'Ordered that John Birkbeck, Esq. be desired to admonish Mr. Davis to behave better for the future.'  
(*Minutes*, 16 August 1760.)

Reprimands of this nature were generally conveyed by the gentleman who occupied the chair on the occasion.

† This was put into force upon only one occasion when an apprentice of Mr. Sandford's—Mr. Cooke—was suspended for a period of six months for disobeying the instructions of the House Surgeon. On his making due submission, and at the earnest request of Mr. Sandford for whom the Trustees had considerable regard, the sentence was subsequently reduced to three months. The young man learned his lesson, and although a somewhat turbulent spirit prior to this episode, gave no further cause for reprimand thereafter.

‡ During the building of the English bridge at the foot of Wyle Cop, below the Infirmary, the Board was called upon to deal with a complaint against David Jones, a patient, 'for going out clandestinely to work as a Labourer at the Bridge'. The gentlemen present had sufficient sense of humour to limit the punishment to a severe reprimand. (*Minutes*, 3 April 1773.)

§ The Board took an interest in the fate of patients outside the hospital.

'The Board having been informed that the accident of a fractured Thigh, for which a young boy was brought hither on the 4th instant, was occasioned by the barbarous correction of his own father, one Thomas Price, alias—Crack of the Blackmoor, in the Parish of Westbury; who, without any reasonable provocation of the poor child's part, took him up by the hair of the head, dashed him violently against the ground and then kicked him repeatedly:—that he has since nearly killed one of his daughters aged about 16; and that it is his common practice to beat his wife and children in the most savage manner, upon the slightest provocation.

Ordered. That the Rev. Edward Leighton, Mr. Edward Harries, Mr. Jenkins, or some of the Justices in that neighbourhood, be made acquainted with his character and conduct; and that they be earnestly requested by the Board to bring the offender to condign punishment, in order to deter him in future from a repetition of such gross violation of the laws of society and humanity.' (*Minutes*, 16 April 1796.)

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(3) *Directors.* In 1792 an alteration was made in the constitution of the Weekly Board. Instead of all Trustees being eligible to attend, membership was limited to twelve Directors. The report of the committee recommending this change is no longer available, and the account of the change in the Auditors' Report is somewhat confused. It appears that it was thought that government by a limited number of persons acting for a specific period would lead to more interest in the affairs of the Charity, to greater efficiency, and more continuity in policy. Attendance of Trustees had been falling, and it was considered that this arose 'from the want of power of the Weekly Boards to carry into effect their good intentions and to prevent those good intentions from being instantly frustrated.' This is a little difficult to understand because there does not appear to be a single instance in which a decision of a Weekly Board was overturned by a General Board, and only one in which a decision of one General Board was rescinded by another.\* There cannot but be a suspicion that a certain group of Trustees wished to strengthen their hold upon the Charity and devised this scheme as a means of gaining their end. The idea of management lodged in the hands of Directors was borrowed from the recently established House of Industry. Six Directors were appointed at each Half-yearly Board, each of them serving for one year only, and not being eligible for re-election until twelve months had passed. No person residing at a greater distance from Shrewsbury than five miles could be elected a Director unless at the time of election he signified his acceptance and his willingness to attend regularly. In the event of the death or resignation of a Director his place was filled by ballot, the electors being the Directors remaining in office. In 1793 a Director who failed to perform his duty and to attend meetings regularly was deposed by his fellows and another elected in his place.† There was no statutory ground for this action, but the Director concerned appears to have been completely disinterested and took no action in the matter. No such case occurred again. From the records surviving it would not seem that the alteration in membership of the Weekly Board brought about any significant change in the management of the Charity.

(4) *General Board.* Until the reforms of 1792 General Boards were held quarterly on the first Tuesday in February, May, August and November. After that date they were held only twice a year on the first Tuesday in May and the first in November. All Trustees were members of General Boards, and Physicians and Surgeons attending the Infirmary were ex-officio members with power to vote. The General Boards were responsible for major policy decisions, for authorizing major expenditure, and for the appointment of the principal Officers of the Charity. Delicate matters, such as disagreement among the medical staff, were generally passed by the Weekly Board to the General Board for settlement. Election of senior staff—Physicians, Surgeons, Matron,

\* The re-election of John Salisbury Dod as a surgeon to the Infirmary, following his dismissal for neglecting his patients.

† 'It having been observed that Mr. Joshua Blakeway, who was elected in May last, as one of the Directors of this Charity has never attended any of the Boards since that time, and it being deemed expedient that another Director should be elected in his stead—

'John Bishop Esq. being nominated as a proper person to fill up that station was unanimously elected a Director.' (*Minutes*, 16 November 1793.)

Apothecary and Secretary—were the responsibility of the General Board, but as resignations seldom took place at convenient times Special Boards had as a rule to be convened for this purpose. In theory only the General Board could make or repeal laws, but in fact these measures were generally initiated by the Weekly Board and merely approved and enforced by the 'upper house'. General Boards were attended by larger numbers of Trustees than the Weekly Boards except on the few occasions when the business was known to be negligible. The really large attendances were, however, to be found at the Special General Boards.

(5) *The Special General Boards.* A Special General Board was summoned by the Weekly Board either on its own authority (a quorum of seven being required) or at the request in writing of any twelve trustees. Notice of the meeting had to be sent by letter to all trustees resident within the county whose address was known, the letter being dispatched twenty days in advance of the appointed day and stating specifically the business to be transacted. A notice of the meeting had also to be fixed to the door of the Infirmary, and another had to be displayed in the Board Room. Although not a statutory requirement it became customary to insert an advertisement in the newspapers serving the district, particularly after the establishment of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* in 1772. No fewer than 120 trustees attended the meeting which elected Mrs. Cross matron in 1758, and in June 1777, at the election of Mrs. Harley, seventy-four were present. The election of a Physician or Surgeon did not cause much excitement but elections for the posts of Matron or Apothecary were as hotly contested as parliamentary elections. Appeals were repeatedly made to Trustees not to engage their votes prior to the actual meeting where they would hear the testimonials of all the candidates and be able to form the best judgment, but little attention was paid to such counsel.\* One bitter and unsuccessful candidate complained that it was horsemanship and not professional ability that won the choice of the subscribers; victory fell not to merit but to him who could ride quickest round the county to solicit votes. In an atmosphere of virulent electioneering, parties were formed in support of every candidate and every possible voter was forced out. At the contest between Walker and Wynn for the place of Apothecary in 1764 females appeared for the first time, and exercised their privilege as Trustees to vote on behalf of their candidate. Thereafter the appearance of females became a regular feature of election meetings, although they did not attend the regular General or Weekly Boards.

The election of 5 June 1777 at which Mrs. Harley was appointed Matron was a particularly corrupt one, blatant packing being resorted to. The seventy-four Trustees who were present included five ladies and a number of new subscribers among whom were Mrs. Sarah Holt, Mr. Miles Longmire and

\* The notice of the Special General Board to be held to appoint a successor to Mrs. Cross contained the following advice to subscribers:

'It is earnestly recommended to the Trustees not to engage their Votes to any person, as Experience has abundantly shown the Inexpedience of such Engagements. And considering how much the Prosperity of this Charity depends upon due Administration of it (in which the Matron has a principal Share) it is hoped that none of the Trustees or friends of it, will recommend any Person of whose Integrity, Skill, Diligence and Activity they are not perfectly satisfied.' (*Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 8 March 1777.)

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Mr. Samuel Harley. Four candidates were proposed. The thirty-sixth statute laid down that where there were more than two candidates for election

if a Majority of the whole Number present does not appear for any one candidate upon the first Scrutiny, the Chairman shall proceed to a second Election, leaving out the Candidate who has the fewest Votes, and so on till such a Majority be found.

At the third ballot Mrs. Harley, who had survived the second ballot by only three votes, was elected with a majority of ten over her main rival, Mrs. Hill. In the following February Mr. Harley withdrew his subscription, in March Mr. Longmire did likewise and Mrs. Holt withdrew hers in May. That the method of election was open to abuse had become obvious to the more responsible Trustees and at the Quarterly General Board on 5 August it had been resolved that subscriptions should not become valid for voting purposes until six months after payment. This was intended to prevent persons becoming Trustees for the sole purpose of voting at some particular election as had been done in the preceding June. An exception was made in the case of heirs continuing the subscription of a deceased Trustee. The new rule reduced abuse to a certain extent, but did not altogether stamp it out. Parliamentary elections in the Borough of Shrewsbury were notoriously corrupt, and contamination not unnaturally spread to all other forms of electioneering. In the Auditors' Report of 1798, following the election of Mrs. Oakes, it was suggested that to obviate the injury the Charity had sustained on many occasions from contested elections for its domestic officers the right of appointment might with 'propriety and advantage' be vested in the Board of Directors. This proposal did not meet with general approval and the Special General Boards continued for some years to be the scene of numerous fierce and exhilarating encounters.

(6) *Anniversary Meetings.* During the period under review the Anniversary Meeting was held annually on the Thursday of Shrewsbury Race Week. The Trustees were summoned to wait upon the Honorary Treasurer in the Board Room of the Infirmary and proceed with him in procession\* to St. Chad's Church, there to hear a sermon preached by his Chaplain upon some subject related to the Charity.† At the business meeting following the service the Trustees invariably requested the sermon to be printed, and when this was done it was generally sold for the benefit of the Charity at sixpence. A collection was taken at the end of the service by two ladies of the County each supported by two gentlemen, the beauty of the ladies, the eloquence of the preacher and the influence of the Treasurer being put to the touch.‡ Following the service the

\* The procession formed in the following order: Mayor's Officer, Mayor, Aldermen, Assistants, House Visitors with their Wands, Physicians, Surgeons, Porter Bareheaded, Treasurer and Preacher, Contributors two by two. (*Minutes, First Anniversary Meeting, 1 October 1747.*)

† In 1779 Thomas Warten preached on 'the Efficacy of Charity to purge Iniquity'. In 1780 the Rev. Brian Hill took as his subject 'Christian Zeal recommended and enforced'. In 1777 Dr. Edmunds preached from the 19th chapter of Job, verse 21, 'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.' The collection on this occasion amounted to £133 3s. 1d. William Adams in 1749 preached on Galatians chapter 6, verse 9 (a favourite text for these occasions): 'And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.'

‡ The first collection in 1747 amounted to £34 13s. 9d. and the last in the period under review (1829) amounted to £180 6s. 2d. The average during the eighteenth century was between £70 and £90. The highest, in 1819, was £312; the lowest, in 1749, £32. (*Records of the Royal Salop Infirmary, Bevan.*)



company adjourned to the Red Lion, the Talbot or the Raven and sat down to an Ordinary which an early resolution of a General Board in 1750 limited to 1s. 6d. At the Anniversary Meeting the accounts and report of the auditors for the year were available for perusal by subscribers. A few new subscribers were generally notified but as a rule little business was done at an Anniversary Meeting.

In the wave of piety which swept Shrewsbury as well as other parts of the country in the 1780's, a correspondent of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* suggested that if the Anniversary Meeting were to be held in conjunction with an Oratorio instead of a Race Week it would prove of greater benefit to the Infirmary by drawing together a more genteel sort of people. But when, in 1832, the Trustees decided to alter the time of the meeting they did so, not to associate it with an oratorio but to change it from the Race to the Hunt Week.

#### *Officers of the Charity*

The principal Officers of the Charity were the Honorary Treasurer, the Under Treasurers and the Auditors. These were appointed at the General Board held in May each year and took up office at midsummer following. The lesser officers—the Agents, House Visitors, Visiting Clergyman and Visiting Apothecary—were appointed by the Weekly Board.

(1) *Honorary Treasurer.* The Honorary Treasurer was invariably selected from one of the families of rank and influence in the County. In the early days of the Charity the tendency was to elect a member of the peerage; later substantial gentlemen of the neighbourhood were preferred, being more able, from local residence, to give attention to hospital affairs. In theory, the Honorary Treasurer was the principal financial officer and by the twenty-first statute a bond for £1,000 could be required of each Treasurer on his assumption of office to guarantee his honesty in dealing with all money handled by him on behalf of the Infirmary; but in fact, all actual financial transactions were carried out by the Under Treasurers. On only one occasion was the Hon. Treasurer called upon to take control of the financial situation—in 1829 when Joshua Peele, Under Treasurer for twenty-two years, floundered into financial difficulties and became temporarily insolvent.

Under normal circumstances the principal duty of the Treasurer was to preside at the Anniversary Meeting. He nominated the Preacher of the Anniversary sermon and appointed the ladies and gentlemen who stood with collection plates at the west door. The actual attendance of the Treasurer at the meeting was hoped for, since this tended to increase contributions if he was a man of influence, but it was not essential; his place could be filled by a Deputy. Of the eighty-three treasurers from 1747 to 1829 twenty were so represented. This was more frequent in the early days of the Charity when for prestige reasons non-resident members of the aristocracy were appointed to the office. From 1758 to 1768 all but one of the Treasurers was represented by Deputy. After 1789 all but one Treasurer attended in person. The office was considered one of honour and almost invariably accepted. Almost the only reason offered

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for refusal was inability to be present at the Anniversary Meeting, for even those who subsequently sent Deputies usually expressed an intention of being present on first acceptance. A few persons approached doubted their fitness to deal with the financial aspect but were assured that the responsibility was nominal. On only one occasion, in 1806, was any difficulty experienced. In that year two nominees in succession declined office, but an embarrassing situation was finally resolved by a descendant of the Treasurer at the first Anniversary Meeting in 1747, Thomas Whitmore of Apley Park, who gracefully accepted office as third choice.

(2) *Under Treasurers.* Until 1799 two Under Treasurers were appointed each year, but on the retirement of Mr. Richard Harris in May 1799 it was decided not to appoint a successor and to continue with one Under Treasurer only, on the grounds that the existence of two Under Treasurers had led to some confusion in the subscription list. The Under Treasurers had to be resident in Shrewsbury and to be men of substance, a bond for £500 being required on assuming office. Those appointed were men of business in the town. William Oswell and Henry Blakeway were drapers, John Flint and Joshua Peele were wine merchants. The Under Treasurer accepted subscriptions, arranged for payment of accounts as directed by the Weekly Board, and held a kind of current account for the Charity. At the end of each financial year—midsummer—any money lying in the Under Treasurers' hands was forwarded to London to be held in Child's Bank or invested. Once appointed, an Under Treasurer was automatically re-elected each year until he announced his intention of withdrawing from the post.

(3) *Auditors.* Two auditors were appointed yearly, but they had probably little active function, the accounts being carefully scrutinized by the Weekly Board when passed for payment. The Report presented to the subscribers before the Anniversary Meeting each year was said to be 'by the Auditors'; but it seems likely that in most cases this was a nominal authorship only.\*

(4) *Agents.* From the foundation of the hospital, Agents, sometimes referred to as Correspondents, were appointed to represent the Charity in all the major towns of the County—Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Whitchurch, Newport, Shifnal, Market Drayton, Ellesmere, Oswestry, Bishop's Castle and Wenlock. The majority of the Agents were local merchants, but on occasion the duty was undertaken by one of the apothecaries; for example John Lovett, Apothecary to the Infirmary from 1774 to 1777, subsequently served as Agent in Oswestry when settled as apothecary in that town. The duties of the Agents were limited to accepting subscriptions for transmission to the Under Treasurers and

\* The thirty-first report of 1776 opens with the statement that the report had hitherto been drawn up by 'a gentleman who was eminently instrumental in its first establishment, perfectly acquainted with the principles upon which it was founded, and who, by his long attention to the management of it was particularly qualified to point out such improvements in it as might conduce to its more extensive usefulness. The performance of this service falls, for this time, into the hands of one, who can lay claim to none of these advantages, and who undertakes it only because he is not willing to suffer a work to be undone, which long Custom seems to have made requisite, and is presumed to be, on the whole, beneficial to the Charity to which it relates.' The gentleman referred to may have been the Rev. William Adams who in 1775 left Shrewsbury, where he had been Vicar of St. Chad's, to become Provost of Pembroke College, Oxford.

distributing to subscribers the Annual Auditors' Report and other papers about hospital affairs. Agents remained in office until they expressed a wish to retire. On retirement they often recommended a successor, a recommendation which the Weekly Board usually accepted. The Charity was as fortunate in its Agents as in its Under Treasurers and lost by an Agent's default on only one occasion.\*

(5) *House Visitors*. A vital part in the administration of the Charity was played by the House Visitors, and two contributors were appointed each week by the Weekly Board to carry out the duties of this office. They were obliged to visit the House every day, together or by turns, and in the event of their being unable to do so they had to employ deputies. They were required to ensure that the rules of the Charity were being duly observed by Officers, Servants and patients, that the patients were being properly attended and that there was no neglect on the part of the medical and nursing staff. They were to inquire whether Prayers had been duly read, and whether patients or staff had been guilty of any swearing, drunkenness, immorality or indecency. They were to inspect provisions and satisfy themselves that they were good. They were to make sure that no food other than that supplied by the Charity was brought into the House, and that none was taken out of it. In addition to these routine duties special duties might be assigned to them by the Weekly Board when any particular abuse or impropriety was suspected.† Upon their arrival in the Hospital, the Matron, Apothecary and Servants were to be ready to wait upon the House Visitors in the Boardroom to answer any questions put to them. On the entry of the House Visitors into the Wards all servants of the House were required to withdraw and the patients to 'stand by their respective beds', so that the House Visitors might proceed upon their inspection unimpeded and be accessible for confidential communications or complaints. The observations of the House Visitors were recorded in a book provided for the purpose and presented each week to the Weekly Board.‡ If the Visitors were not Trustees they were for the week concerned appointed ex-officio members of the Weekly Board, which they were expected to attend to justify any complaint that they had made. The House Visitors could in an emergency exercise powers normally vested in the Weekly Board itself, discharging patients for flagrant irregularity and nursing staff for gross error.§

\* In 1795 the Market Drayton Agent failed. At the time of his bankruptcy he held £25 4s. belonging to the Charity; a dividend of 10s. in the £ was paid up. (*Minutes*, 4 October 1795.)

† 'Ordered that Rice Soup be made for the Women's Ward to-morrow and on the usual Days, and that the House Visitors be desired to Discharge immediately such persons that refuse to eat the same.' (*Minutes*, 22 January 1757.)

‡ 'A complaint having been entered in the House Visitors' Book, against the Men Patients in general belonging to the Upper Ward, for spending their time at Cards, cursing and swearing, refusing to assist in cleaning the Ward, and behaving with great Rudeness and Insolence to the poor old Nurse who is much indisposed,

'Being called before the Board and examined, they were severely reprimanded by the Chairman for their scandalous Behaviour; and promised never to be guilty of any future Misconduct.' (*Minute*, 15 January 1774.)

The death of the 'poor old nurse', Nurse Richards, is reported a few weeks later.

§ In 1783 Sarah Ward, Nurse in the Women's Ward, was discharged by the House Visitors 'at the particular Request of Mr. Sandford, the Surgeon, for imprudently administering an opiate to one of the Patients without any Direction from the Physician or Surgeon under whose care she was'. (*Minute*, 4 October 1783.)

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The House Visitors were, in many respects, the eyes and ears of the Weekly Board, and on their efficiency and enthusiasm depended in large measure the good government of the Infirmary. Their value was widely recognized. An attempt was made by the clergy to 'corner' the office by their proposal that it should be a requirement that one of the Visitors be a clergyman. This, however, was evidently resisted by the laymen, for there is no record of the proposal ever being approved or of any alteration being made in the mode of appointment of the House Visitors.

(6) *Visiting Clergyman*. The Visiting Clergyman was elected by rotation from among the clergy of the town by the Weekly Board, and remained in office for one week. It was his duty to visit the Infirmary each day to read Prayers, to visit the sick, and to administer the Communion at proper times. In consideration of this service clergymen who were non-contributors were allowed the privilege of recommending one patient a year. A clergyman could, if he wished, withdraw from the 'pool' by notifying the Weekly Board. In the life of the first Salop Infirmary only two did so. The attendance of the Visiting Clergyman was recorded by the Matron in a book kept for the purpose, and the Visiting Clergyman for his part kept a register in which the attendance of the Matron at Morning Prayer was entered for the information of the Weekly Board.\*

(7) *Visiting Apothecary*. This office remained in being for a very short time. The officiousness of town apothecaries in inquiring into the professional care of the hospital medical staff inevitably caused resentment, and ultimately the presumption of one who demanded that the Physicians' books and records be handed over for inspection led to a crisis. A regulation was passed prohibiting any apothecary or any other person from inspecting the Physicians' books or pharmacopoeia without leave of the Physician concerned, and this regulation was incorporated in the statutes. Thereafter the appointment of a Visiting Apothecary lapsed.

The local apothecaries continued to be concerned with the supply of drugs. It was laid down in the statutes that no drugs or medicines purchased could be deposited in the dispensary stores until they had been inspected by the Committee for buying drugs assisted, as an assessor, by one of the apothecaries resident in Shrewsbury.

#### *Officials of the House*

The officials of the House were the Apothecary (later designated House Surgeon and Apothecary), the Matron, the Secretary, the Schoolmaster and the Proveditor.

(1) *Apothecary*. The administrative position of the Apothecary is summed up in the 9th Rule for patients: 'that you regard the Apothecary and Matron as Master and Mistress of this House'. The Trustees regarded the Apothecary as the equivalent of themselves in their own households and the tasks allotted to

\* This regulation was introduced in 1807 in an attempt to reform Mrs. Moore, a worthy Matron satisfactory in all respects apart from her predilection for the bottle. The Weekly Board on the occasion consisted of four clergymen and a colonel. (*Minutes*, 10 October 1807.)

him followed naturally in consequence. He was held responsible for the maintenance of discipline and was expected to reprimand patients showing any tendency to misbehave. He had to support the nurses in seeing that those patients who were fit to do so assisted in the work of the House, and to ensure that those patients who were able went to prayers daily and attended church on Sundays. He had also a part to play in the domestic management. In 1788, for example, when the Weekly Board was much disturbed by the uncleanness of the wards, the nurses having been reprimanded, the Apothecary was called in and desired to see that the directions given were carefully and constantly observed by nurses and patients.

There were, in addition to these general responsibilities, more particular administrative duties. He was required to affix two tickets to each patient's bed, one specifying the name of the patient and the physician or surgeon in charge of the case, the other the diet prescribed by the physician or surgeon. He had to submit to the Weekly Board a return of all medicine and medical stores taken out of the House, except for patients entered in the books, and to report by whom such stores were taken out. He was required to report to the Weekly Board on all patients admitted to the House in the foregoing week, and to deliver a list at every Board of such patients as had been two months in the House. He was required to supply to the Matron each prescribing day a list of diets as directed by the Physicians. In 1794 as a means of preventing embezzlement of wine it was ordered that the Matron should not supply any to the wards until a note had been received from the House Surgeon authorizing its being given, and that the House Surgeon should keep an account of all wine dispensed and present it for inspection every Saturday to the Weekly Board. The Apothecary was responsible for the maintenance of discipline among the Surgeons' pupils and when the post was altered from that of Apothecary to House Surgeon this was one of the reasons advanced in support of the measure. The Hospital pupil was officially apprenticed to the Apothecary and trained by him. For this work he received a small part of the apprenticeship premium, the greater part going into the Infirmary funds. By the early years of the nineteenth century the premium was fixed at 200 guineas to the Infirmary and twenty pounds to the Apothecary House Surgeon.

The Apothecary was bound to reside in the House, and could not sleep out of it without permission of the Weekly Board. He was not permitted to be more than three hours out of the House at any one time, and never when the Matron was absent. When out he had to remain on call, leaving word with the Matron where he could be found, and he was never to be out later than ten o'clock at night. Leave was infrequent and hardly ever for more than two or three days except in the case of illness. When on leave he was under an obligation to employ a person in his place approved by the Physicians. The Salop Infirmary was particularly fortunate in the constitution of its Apothecaries and House Surgeons: none died in office.

(2) *Matron*. As the Apothecary was Master so the Matron was Mistress of the House. She was responsible for its general management, the care of all household

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goods and furniture, the preparation of diet, the brewing of beer and the purchase of lesser articles of food not covered by contract. She was answerable to the Weekly Board for the use of all foodstuffs and other domestic stores. It was her duty to visit the wards and offices twice daily and to see that the beds, clothes and linen were kept clean. She was to ensure that each patient had clean sheets on admission, and that they were changed every fourteen days or oftener if that was thought necessary by the Physician. She was to make certain that the patients were being regularly supplied with their medicine, and that the nurses were not neglecting their duties. She was to cause the names of the patients to be called over in each ward every morning and evening, and enter in the Visitors' Book the names of those who were absent. She was to take care of the keys of the doors, and see that the outer doors were always locked at nine in the evening from Michaelmas to Lady-day, and at ten in the evening from Lady-day to Michaelmas. She herself was required to lock the doors each evening which divided the men's wards from the women's. In the event of any improper behaviour on the part of the servants or patients she was to complain to the next Weekly Board. She was to keep the key to the provision stores in her own possession, and to be present in person at all times when provisions were taken out of the stores to prevent any being stolen. Only limited quantities of each item were to be taken out at any one time so that the Matron could be certain all were used for the benefit of the Charity. She was directed to supervise the patients' meals, taking care that they were served at the right time, that none of the food was wasted, and that the meals were eaten by all up-patients in the room set aside for that purpose and not in the ward. Finally, she was ordered to attend Prayers every day and to see that such patients as were able did likewise.

The Matron's position was primarily that of housekeeper rather than senior nurse. In cases of complaint regarding cleanliness of the wards or nursing duties the Weekly Board dealt directly with the nurse concerned and the Matron was in no way held responsible. On the other hand, complaints regarding the state of the beer or of cooked food were held to be the responsibility of the Matron, and it was she, not the brewer or the cook, who was reprimanded.

The Matrons were not of such strong constitution as the Apothecaries. Of the eight matrons from 1749 to 1826, three died in office, two retired worn out by the labours of office, and two after dismissal complained of ill health, genuinely in at least one case, for the Board refrained from prosecuting her for her dishonesty on account of it. The eighth sought consolation in the gin bottle and was dismissed for drunkenness.

(3) *Secretary*. The first Secretary of the Charity was one of the Trustees and founders of the Infirmary, the Rev. Job Orton. With the appointment of an Apothecary the office of Secretary was joined to it and William Harland, the first Apothecary, took over the duty of recording the minutes on the 11 April 1747. A temporary division of the offices took place in 1763 when the first Apothecary's apprentice, Joseph Sparkes, was appointed Secretary at a salary of £10 per annum, but the experiment of having an independent Secretary

cannot have been considered entirely successful, for on his resignation in 1767 the Apothecary, John Walker, was appointed to the joint post of Secretary and Apothecary. His successor, Thomas Tudor, was appointed to the combined office, but, realizing perhaps that all was not well with the accounts, he resigned the post of Secretary three months later. On the 8 September 1770 Mr. William Jones, the first full-time professional Secretary, was elected at a salary of £12 per annum. He remained in office until his death in 1803.

The duties of the Secretary were somewhat indefinite. His principal duty was to attend meetings of the Boards, to keep accurate records of the proceedings, and to prepare and dispatch all correspondence relating to the admission and discharge of patients. He was required to keep a Register in which were entered the names of patients admitted as In-patients and of those accepted as Out-patients, the Parish to which they belonged, their age and illness, the date of admission, the date of discharge, and their condition on discharge. He had to give notice in writing every Saturday to the House Visitors appointed for the following week, and to the Trustees appointed half-yearly by the General Board. Finally, in addition to these strictly administrative duties he was directed 'to visit the Wards and Offices, and report whatever shall appear necessary to the Board'. The office of Secretary was thus becoming something more than that of simple clerk to the Trustees and from such beginnings developed the modern conception of a Hospital Secretary.

In 1806 after the embezzlements of two successive Matrons had been discovered it was resolved that the Matron must pass her accounts to the Secretary each week for scrutiny, together with all vouchers for money expended by her. She had also to give to the Secretary an inventory of the effects of all patients dying, and this was to be entered in a Register kept by him. The Secretary was to replace the Matron as keeper of the wine account, and persons purchasing goods from the hospital were to settle their accounts with the Secretary and not with the Matron. In 1828 a further set of regulations was brought into force largely legalizing a situation already in existence. Among these was one authorizing the Secretary to accept subscriptions on behalf of the Under Treasurer and his receipt was to be considered valid evidence of payment. He was to circulate all notices and letters relating to the Infirmary and attend regularly at his office, invariably doing so between the hours of one and two o'clock each day.

The Charity appears to have been fortunate in its first Secretaries, and the fulsome tributes to William Jones on his death in 1803\* and to John Jones on his retirement in 1829 show the value that the Trustees placed on their services.

(4) *Schoolmaster*. A Schoolmaster was first appointed by the Trustees in 1750. The Seventh Report in 1752 commented on the usefulness of such an appoint-

\* 'Resolved that the Trustees impress'd with the deepest sense of the loss of Mr. William Jones, their late Secretary, acknowledge gratefully his faithful, zealous, and assiduous attention, to the interests of the Institution, for three and thirty years, by which the Charity, has receiv'd the most essential Services, and his own Character, been very honourably distinguished,

'Resolved. That in order to show every respect to his Memory, all the Servants of the House be directed to attend his Funeral, and all those of the Patients whose health will permit their attendance.' (*Minutes*, 19 March 1803.)

For the occasion the Matron was supplied with gloves and hood, the four nurses and three servants with gloves and ribbons, and the porter with gloves and hatband at the expense of the Charity.

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ment: 'A number of Children and young Persons being often detained many months together in the House, the Trustees have thought it worth the while at a very small expense to procure a Schoolmaster to employ their idle hours in reading and sometimes in writing; and to instruct them on a Sunday in the Catechism; which has been found attended with very useful effects.' For the first seventy years the Schoolmaster was allowed to labour according to the dictates of his own conscience, no regulations governing his duties being formulated until 1820. It was then laid down that he should attend for two hours on three days each week, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, one hour being devoted to the instruction of males and one to the instruction of females. He was to attend the hospital on Saturday evening about supper-time to read over and explain to the patients in each ward the Rules of the Infirmary governing the behaviour of patients while in hospital. The House Surgeon and Matron were to inform him if any particular rule was being ignored in which case he was to expound the meaning of that rule carefully. In return for these services he was allowed a modest salary of £4 per annum and his dinner on Sundays.

(5) *Providitor*. The official with this unusual title was first appointed by a General Quarterly Board in 1758:

Ordered that Mr. Richard Sparkes be appointed Providitor to the Infirmary, with a salary of eight pounds per annum to commence from the 18th day of March last for which he is to buy all the Provisions and Furniture for the House which shall be required of him.

The purpose of the office seems clear—that of an early supplies officer, and the salary suggests a fair amount of service was required, but apart from regular payment of salary and periodic appointments (including a contested election in 1766) there are few references to the Providitor in the minutes. In the November of the year of his appointment Mr. Sparkes was directed to buy a quantity of hops for the use of the Infirmary, and there are one or two similar entries at different dates, but it is difficult to be certain of the field within which he worked and the exact division of responsibilities between the Weekly Board, the Matron and the Providitor, all of whom purchased supplies. The duties of the Providitor must have gradually lessened in importance for in 1774 the salary was reduced to £6 per annum, and seven years later, in 1781, the Providitor disappeared entirely from the list of staff salary payments.

*Administrative Procedures*

(1) *Transfer to Hospital*. The friends of the patient were in the main responsible for securing his transfer to and from hospital. For use of emergency cases within the town a sedan chair was kept at the Infirmary, being replaced from time to time as it wore out by secondhand ones purchased from the local chair hirer.\* In 1778 Dr. Pryce Owen, one of the Physicians, pointed out that a sedan chair was unsuitable for transporting fractures, and a flat stretcher-like conveyance made of sacking, referred to as a bier, was introduced. Patients from the country

\* In 1780 a sedan chair was bought from John Hall, Chairman, for £4 4s., he being required to fit it with blinds. (*Minutes*, 1 February 1780.)



were generally conveyed on carts, a painful mode of travel attended at times by fatal consequences. In the Auditors' Report of 1802 it was suggested that for the future, patients should be placed on a bedstead, hurdle, or bier, and carried to the Infirmary on men's shoulders, a surgeon being called in before departure 'to render the accommodation as comfortable as possible to the patient'. For the first time the Board expressed in this report its willingness to pay the expense of conveying patients to hospital if such a mode of transport were used. It was not until 1831 that the Infirmary possessed an ambulance carriage, this being the gift of Lord Hill.

(2) *Admission procedure.* All patients requesting admission to the Infirmary were required to present a letter of recommendation from a subscriber. For every guinea subscribed, and every ten guineas given in Benefaction, one in-patient could be recommended annually. For a Benefaction of less than ten guineas, one in-patient could be recommended for every two guineas given, in the year of Benefaction. No contributor could have more than one patient in the House at any one time, and no recommendation was accepted if the subscription was in arrears. If a poor person requiring admission to the Infirmary was unable to secure a letter of recommendation from a contributor but brought to the Secretary of the Infirmary a letter from a Physician, Apothecary, 'or any Person of Understanding', the Secretary was required to try and procure a recommendation from a contributor. Recommendatory letters were of course not required in cases of emergency, these being admitted immediately by the Apothecary or the Matron. One bed in each ward was reserved for accident admissions. The number of out-patients which could be recommended by any single contributor was unlimited.

Admission of patients was carried out each Saturday at the Weekly Board. All patients were required to attend at 11 a.m. when they were examined by the Physician or Surgeon of the week who recommended admission, either as an in-patient or as an out-patient, or refusal. Certain cases were inadmissible. The sixty-fourth statute declared

that no woman big with child, no child under seven years of age (except in extraordinary cases such as Fractures, Stone or where Couching, Trepanning or amputation are necessary), no persons disordered in their senses, suspected to have the small-pox or other infectious distempers, having habitual Ulcers, Cancers not admitting of Operation, epileptic and convulsive Fits, consumptive Coughs and Consumptions, or Dropsies in their last stages, in a dying condition, or judged incurable, be admitted as In-patients.

There were also some other bars to admission. These consisted of irregular dismissal, except in exceptional cases, cases of venereal disease who had already been in-patients and been cured of the same disease, and (after 1790) known consultation with a quack practitioner. Subscribers were warned against supplying recommendatory letters to known 'regulars' with chronic complaints who made a habit of looking around for some sympathetic person whom they could persuade to send them into hospital when the cold winter weather set in. Contributors were also earnestly requested to ensure that patients were clean on admission, free of the itch, and supplied with clean linen.

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Actual attendance of the patient was not essential in the first instance. If the patient lived in a distant part of the county, a letter drawn up by a Physician or Apothecary and setting forth the principal features of the case could be sent to the Board by the recommending contributor, and on this the Physician or Surgeon would give an opinion as to the suitability of the patient for institutional treatment. The Board, however, reserved the right to refuse the patient when he presented himself at the Infirmary if the case had been misrepresented.

If, as frequently happened, the number of cases applying for admission exceeded the number of beds available, preference was given firstly to those living at the greatest distance, secondly to any person recommended by a subscriber who had not recommended any in-patient within the year, and thirdly to the person recommended by the largest contributor. Those who could not be admitted were accepted as out-patients and were admitted at the first vacancy. In certain circumstances such temporary out-patients might receive diet from the Infirmary, and if they took lodgings near the Infirmary could be attended there by the Apothecary, but in no case did the Infirmary defray the cost of lodgings for out-patients. Exceptions to this rule were patients already in hospital who developed smallpox or some other infectious disease. These had to be removed from the Infirmary and nursed in lodgings, and the Charity defrayed the cost of both nursing and lodgings.

In the first year of the hospital's existence a sum of 12s. was demanded on admission to defray the expenses of burial or removal, but within twelve months this was discontinued because it was considered too great a demand on poor persons. In 1788 an admission deposit of one guinea was re-introduced for patients admitted by Parish Officers. This was returnable on removal of the patient by the Parish, and had become necessary because of the unwillingness of Parish Officers to accept their poor back and remove them from the Infirmary when cured. Soldiers, unless on furlough, were not admitted until their officer had undertaken to pay their subsistence money to the Charity. No soldier with venereal disease was admitted under any circumstances.

In the early years of the Infirmary a letter was sent by the Board to every person recommending a patient informing them of his or her disposal. In 1792 this custom was discontinued as it kept the Directors 'sitting to an unreasonably late hour'. Thereafter a letter was sent only in case of refusal, explaining the reason for it.

(3) *Discharge procedure.* At discharge, all patients both in and out were required to appear before the Weekly Board to give thanks to the Charity for the assistance they had received. Failure to do so resulted in irregular dismissal with the penalty of exclusion for the future. Before leaving the Boardroom each patient was

strictly questioned as to the treatment they had received, so that no instance of neglect or unkindness in the higher departments—no attempt to procure from them fee or reward in the lower—may pass undetected.

Before departure copies of the *Christian Monitor* and *Advice to Persons recovered from Sickness* were placed in their hands, and they were sent forth again to the world, strictly enjoined to return public thanks the following Sunday in their respective places of worship. A letter was dispatched to the recommending subscriber informing him of the successful outcome of the case.

In 1797 a Convalescent Fund with a limited subscription of 5s. was established to supply clothes and other necessities to needy patients on discharge. Suitable cases were recommended by the House Surgeon and assistance awarded by the Weekly Board when the patient made his appearance before them prior to discharge.

(4) *Irregular Dismissal*. This as a rule was authorized by the Weekly Board only after investigation of an alleged misdemeanour. Patients guilty of flagrant misbehaviour could be discharged irregularly by the Weekly Visitor or the Physician or Surgeon in charge of the case. These dismissals were subsequently confirmed by the Weekly Board. In 1817 the House Surgeon was authorized to dismiss immediately any venereal patient misbehaving, but he had no power to discharge any other class of patient.\* A letter was dispatched to the recommender informing him of his protégé's disgrace and the reason for it.

(5) *Death*. On the death of a patient the nurses were required to give immediately to the Apothecary a report of all the effects in his possession. An inventory had also to be supplied to the Matron who forwarded it to the Secretary for entry in a Register that he kept. In 1825 it was ordered that no corpse be left in the ward more than half an hour after death. Until that time there had been no specific regulations on the subject. A 'dead house' for the reception of corpses was situated on the ground floor. Burial of patients was the responsibility of relatives, but sometimes the cost fell on the Charity. A contract was held by a local firm for the supply of coffins, the agreed price in 1801 being 7½d. per foot lengthwise.

### *Control of Patients*

Upon the walls of the wards hung two notices, the first setting forth 'What the Patient May Expect' and the second 'What the Charity Requires'. The first assured them of civility and attention from the staff, regular medical care, and every attendance from the nurses. The second notice was much the longer. Patients were forbidden to curse, swear or use improper language. They were forbidden to play at cards, dice or any other game, or smoke tobacco within or without doors without permission. No provisions or liquors were to be brought into the House under any circumstances. No patient was allowed to have a mug in his possession and only hospital dishes could be used at meal times. At the hour of dinner they were to repair to the room allotted for that purpose for they were forbidden to eat in the wards. No man was to enter the women's ward and no woman the men's ward. They were to wash their hands and faces 'very

\* Burd, the House Surgeon, had reported that the conduct of the patients in the Venereal Ward was highly improper. There was 'much impropriety of general conduct, and insubordination is very general among that class of Patient'. (*Minutes*, 16 August 1817.)

clean' every morning, and such as did not use the warm or cold bath were to have their feet washed every Thursday evening. They were to live in the Infirmary as one family, helping one another and assisting as much as their complaint would admit in the working of the House. Those able to be up and about were ordered to attend Prayers daily, and on Sunday forenoons and afternoons to attend their respective places of worship in the town.

Failure to obey any of these rules resulted in a complaint being laid against the misdoer by the Ward Nurse, the Matron, the Apothecary or the House Visitor and his appearance before the Weekly Board. Immorality and theft were invariably punished by instant dismissal. A reprimand was generally considered sufficient in first offences for drunkenness, swearing, unmannerly behaviour of lesser degree, and going out without leave, but the repetition of the offence or aggravation of it (such as a refusal to apologize to an injured party when directed to do so) was followed by dismissal. Refusal of treatment or incivility to the medical staff was uncommon but invariably incurred the penalty of discharge. In cases of theft the Board generally limited itself to expulsion from the hospital, prosecution being considered an unjustifiably expensive procedure.\* The most troublesome patients were those in the venereal wards; almost seventy-five per cent of cases of irregular behaviour occurred among these patients. It is interesting to note the awareness of the public health angle in this disease, because patients who had misbehaved were not discharged until the medical staff considered them safe; only then were they 'turned out the house' by the porter. In one instance where this could not be done, the magistrates were summoned to take the young women concerned into custody and hold them in the House of Correction until they were cured.

Duties upon which convalescent patients were employed were numerous and included the carrying of coals, the carrying of trays, the cleaning of the ward, the ironing of linen, and the scraping of rags to make lint.† They were also employed in some nursing procedures, particularly in the application of fomentations,‡ and they assisted in the making of beds. It was not, however, considered correct for patients to be employed on work other than that for the Charity, and one of the nurses in the women's ward found herself apologizing to the Board for having employed a patient to starch her lace caps.

Visiting was allowed on Tuesdays and Fridays between the hours of two and four in the afternoon, and on other days only if special leave was obtained. No visitor from the town was allowed to visit on Sundays.

To occupy any idle hours suitably edifying works were provided for reading:

\* In the Balance Sheet for 1756 appears the entry: 'Prosecuting a Patient who was whip'd for robbing the Infirmary 0.6.0.' In 1805 a patient was detected stealing five loaves from the Infirmary. He was delivered to a constable and taken before the Mayor 'but it appearing that no punishment could be inflicted without incurring the expense of a prosecution for Felony, it was thought advisable to discharge him.'

† For making lint they were paid 1s. per pound. No payment was made for performance of other duties.

‡ In 1786 the Nurse in the Male Ward complained to the Weekly Board of Thomas Virnall, a patient in the Ward, 'for refusing to give her the customary assistance in fomenting such Patients as are not able to do it for themselves.' He pled in his defence 'that his hands were so very tender that he could not bear the operation'. He was reprimanded. (*Minutes*, 17 July 1786.)

*Preservation from Criminal Offences*, Dr. Stonehouse's *Advice to a Patient*, the works of Bishop Gibson or one of the Bibles or Prayer Books presented by the S.P.C.K. with varying sizes of print to suit the eyesight of all ages. Through such works the Trustees hoped 'to improve and preserve the good Impressions made upon the patients during their period of affliction' and to ensure that the Charity might be 'a source of Health to the Minds, as well as the Bodies of Men'.

One of the striking features of contemporary reports concerning the activities of the Salop Infirmary is the frequent use of the possessive 'our' in references to it. Woods, for example, invariably so refers to it in all news reports in the early *Shrewsbury Chronicles*. A study of the administration of the Infirmary gives perhaps some clue to the source of this proud possessiveness. The main spring of the Infirmary in all its activities was the Weekly and General Boards, which were meetings of subscribers, people of the town and county. Noblemen, gentlemen, merchants, traders, clerics, attorneys, sheermen and packmen, either by personal subscription or through membership of a contributing organization, could all play some part in the management of its affairs. And they would find deeply gratifying the satisfaction of their benevolent impulses in its successful working. There were many like the poor carter whose leg was crushed between two wagons on Pride Hill and who came out of the Infirmary alive and well some weeks later, although with a wooden peg where the leg should have been, that were witnesses to *their* beneficence and *their* humanity. It was a feeling for which the awakening conscience of the eighteenth century craved.

No qualities [wrote Hume], are more readily intitled to the general good will and approbation of mankind than beneficence and humanity, friendship and gratitude, natural affection and public spirit.

All these qualities were richly displayed by the Trustees of the first Salop Infirmary and surely for them it may be claimed, even after the passage of more than a hundred years, that they are indeed entitled to the approbation of mankind.

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