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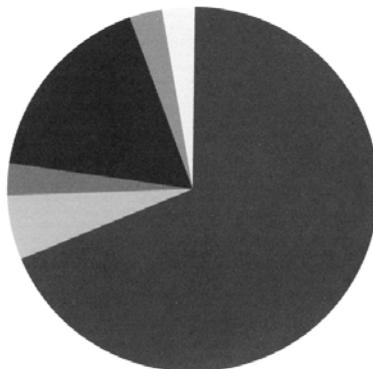
Comings and goings in 18th Century Saffron Walden

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The general picture of an English market town in the 18th century was one of a settled society with only a limited amount of movement of people in and out of the town. To a large extent this picture was accurate, most people did tend to live and work within a single settlement only venturing elsewhere in search of work or, in the case of women, marriage. J.S. Taylor suggests that London acted as a form of magnet for migrant workers, pulling in migrant workers and then pushing out those who managed to survive the conditions.¹ The same image might also be applied to smaller regional centres such as Cambridge.

In the course of this article I intend to show the way that Saffron Walden was affected by both inward and outward migration in the course of the 18th century. The evidence will be drawn from the Saffron Walden Town Archive and from records in the care of the Essex Record Office and will use three types of record: apprenticeship indentures, marriage records and settlement and removal documents.



Index to Apprentices' Indentures 1710-1762, based on ERO T/Z 393/3.

Apprenticeship Indentures

In the 18th century, as had been the case in preceding centuries and would continue into the 19th and, in some cases, the 20th centuries, the main way in which a child learned a trade was through apprenticeship. The length of time an apprenticeship lasted could vary but most were for periods of between four and seven years. The boy, girls were also apprenticed but this was less common, went to live with a master craftsman who taught him his trade and provided him with board and lodging for the duration of the apprenticeship. There were a number of different ways in which apprenticeship were organised. Those families who could afford it, paid a premium to the master of their choice. In these cases the master might well have been a family or business connection. The location of the master and the size of the premium which was paid in order to secure the apprenticeship indentures often depended on the trade or profession concerned. Thus in 1713 when Richard Reynolds, the son of a leading member of Saffron Walden society, was apprenticed to Samuel Mason a London attorney, the premium paid was £215, the approximate equivalent of £24,000 in today's money! Most premiums were not as expensive, although John Wale Esquire paid £157.10s in 1723 to apprentice his son Charles to Henry Hall, a fletcher and citizen of London.² Of the 35 boys from Walden listed in the Index to Apprentices' Indentures 1710-62 only 11 were actually apprenticed outside Walden.³

In the surviving records for Walden, however, private apprenticeships were the exception rather than the rule. The best records concerning apprenticeship in the Town Archives are those of the various charities which made provision for the apprenticing of what they described as 'poor boys' or sometimes 'poor children'. Under the Laws of Settlement current in the 18th century, the completion of an apprenticeship granted settlement to the former apprentice in the parish in which the apprenticeship had been served. This rule was of considerable importance to the Overseers of the Poor of any parish since it meant that if they could arrange for parish, the parish found the cost of the indentures, or charity apprenticeships for their poor children outside of the parish, these people would gain a settlement there and cease to be a charge on the rate payers of the original parish. The Overseers of the Poor of Walden and the Stewards of the various charities were keen to take advantage of this law where possible.

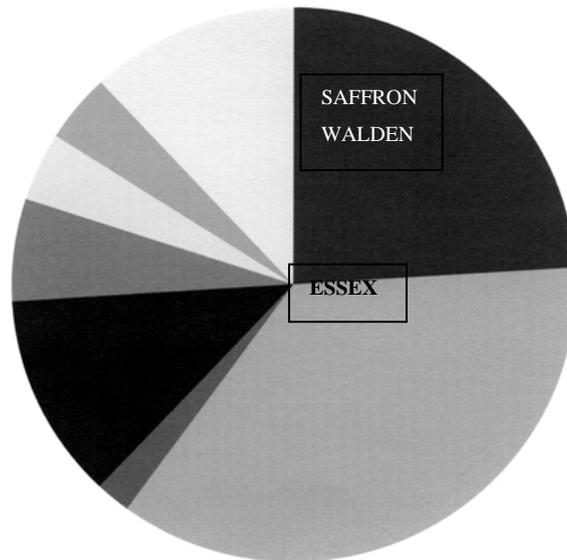
Of 15 parish apprentices for whom indentures survive between 1700 and 1800,⁴ only two were placed in Walden. In 1704 Jane Stubbing was placed with Richard Merriott, a yeoman, presumably to learn the skills of housewifery,⁵ and in 1779 James Whisby, aged 13, was placed with Thomas Wolfe, who practised law in the town, but in what capacity is unclear.⁶ The majority of the other parish apprentices were placed in nearby parishes, but some were placed as far afield as Earith, then in

Huntingdonshire, Cambridge and Hitchin, Hertfordshire. The highest known premium paid for any of the parish apprentices in the 18th century was £11 for apprenticeship to a wheelwright.

Two Walden charities involved in the placing of poor children as apprentices were Bromfield's and Turner's charities. The premiums that the charities could afford to lay out on the apprenticeship of poor children were not high, and this had an effect on the sort of trades to which charity children could hope to be apprenticed. Between 1700 and 1800 Bromfield's charity placed 53 boys as apprentice cordwainers or shoemakers.⁷ Many of these boys were placed in Saffron Walden and the surrounding villages, few were sent more than ten miles away. A few were placed in Cambridge and, in the early years of the century, two were apprenticed to masters in London. The choice of shoemaking as a trade for so many poor boys may have been based on the fact that it was a trade that required low set up costs, but it also offered poor returns and the master shoemakers may have been glad of the income that accepting a charity apprentice brought. Another popular trade for charity apprentices was that of barber or barber and peruke maker. Twenty boys were apprenticed to this trade in the course of the 18th century. Only seven remained in Walden. Eight boys were sent to London and two went as far as Gravesend in Kent. One of the boys sent to London by Bromfield's Charity was William Archer, the son of William Archer, who was apprenticed to one George Warren of St. Olave's, Southwark in 1732. Fifteen years later one William Archer, now of Lambeth in Surrey, accepted the first of two Bromfield's apprentices from Walden. These two apprenticeships give a clue as to how some charity apprenticeships were organised by using connections that the charities had in places outside Walden or by using family and business connections as with private apprenticeships.

The chart below indicates the desire of the Stewards of Bromfield's Charity to place their charity apprentices beyond the bounds of Walden whenever possible. The officials of Turner's Charity were also keen to place apprentices away from Walden where possible, succeeding with roughly one half of their apprentices. For example they placed Elizabeth Rooksby with an Elizabeth Smith of London in 1732 to learn the craft of mantua making.⁸

The furthest any charity apprentice was placed was Redditch in Worcestershire where Daniel Mackenzie was apprenticed to a needle maker in 1793 by Bromfield's charity. Many charity apprentices were placed with family members or former residents of Walden, some of whom had been charity apprentices in their turn. What connection caused Daniel to be sent across the country to Redditch is unknown.



Broomfield's apprentices placed 1726-50.

Many charity apprentices were later to rely on the fact that they had completed their apprenticeship, properly indentured, in a particular place when they faced examination as to their place of settlement. The completion of an apprenticeship guaranteed settlement in the parish in which it had taken place, but only if it had been correctly completed.

Settlement Certificates, Removal Certificates and Settlement Examinations

Under the terms of the 1662 Act of Settlement for the Better Relief of the Poor of the Kingdom, there were a number of ways in which settlement in a particular parish might be obtained. One was the completion of an indentured apprenticeship, another was renting a property worth more than £10 a year, a further method was to pay all parish rates and charges for a year or to hold a parish office for a year. The aim of this act was to ensure that parishes need only be responsible for the relief of their own parishioners fallen on hard times. However it was necessary to allow the movement of people to meet the needs of the economy and to allow people to better their state in life. To this end a system of settlement certificates was initiated. A person seeking to move in search of work would apply to the parish authorities for a certificate which stated that their home parish would be responsible for their relief should this prove necessary. Saffron Walden, like other towns of a similar size and like London itself, acted as a magnet for people looking to improve their lot in life. However, after registering their certificates with the authorities,⁹ most sojourners, that is people with certificates from another parish, were under no pressure unless they triggered the mechanisms of the law; perhaps by being in need of relief. If this was the case the home parish might provide the necessary relief or the sojourner would be returned to

his or her home parish even if they had never lived there, a further method of acquiring settlement was the father or husband's place of settlement. However, people without a certificate were either hurried over the parish boundary or were subjected to an examination by Justices of the Peace, in the case of Walden the mayor and any former mayors held Commissions of the Peace for the Borough, and possible removal to their original parish of settlement.

Most people coming to Walden were looking for a better economic future. For example, journeymen on completion of their apprenticeship might not have the funds to set up in business immediately but would travel around working for master craftsmen whilst they saved. Thus many, but not all, of the people arriving in Walden in possession of settlement certificates belonged to the sort of trades to which the charity children mentioned earlier had been apprenticed such as cordwainers and barbers. For example Philip Darnell and his wife Rosanna from Newport presented a settlement certificate when he came to take up a post at the Grammar School in 1774.¹⁰ Some sojourners made contact before their arrival with members of their own families or friends who sponsored them by taking out a bond indemnifying Walden against the cost of any kind of parish relief should it be deemed necessary. For example in 1755, John Church a bricklayer and his family from Baldock in Hertfordshire, had a bond of £40 taken out indemnifying the parish against any costs of maintenance by John Church himself, Clement Church a bricklayer of Saffron Walden and William Church another bricklayer.¹¹ Quite what the relationship was between the incoming John Church and the resident Clement Church at present remains unclear.

It was not uncommon that once one person had arrived and settled in Saffron Walden for others to follow. For example Jeffery Wolston, a brazier, and his wife arrived from Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, in January 1730 and was followed in May of the same year by John Putt and his wife from nearby Rothwell.¹² It is possible that Wolston came to Walden to work for William Impey, a Quaker and brazier, who had arrived in Walden from Little Harrowden, Northamptonshire, in 1718 bringing with him a Certificate of Removal from his local Friends' meeting.¹³

If an outsider to a parish became in need of financial support and there was no bond in place or funds forthcoming from their parish of settlement, a removal certificate might be issued requiring the pauper to return to their original parish of settlement. The pauper would be examined by local JPs. and, if they were not satisfied that there was a good case for remaining; a removal certificate would be issued. Some of the settlement examinations in the Saffron Walden Town Archive provide a fascinating insight into the lives of some of those less fortunate members of society who had either come to Walden or left it in the hopes of better prospects. Was Henry Rooksbee related to the three girls of the same surname who

were apprenticed under Turner's charity in the 1730s?¹⁴ Henry's settlement examination states that in 1720 he was a cooper lodging in St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, in the county of Middlesex, but that he had been apprenticed to William Archer and had gained settlement in Walden. The settlement examination traces Rooksbee's career prior to his arrival in Shoreditch and falling on hard times through certificated sojourns in Low Leighton and St Botolph's without Bishopsgate.¹⁵

Henry's fall on hard times may well not have been of his own making, however Mary Gascoyne was described as a rogue and vagabond when she was apprehended with her sons aged seven and thirteen in Rickling where she had been wandering and begging. She was returned to Walden because her husband's settlement was there in 1746.¹⁶ Elizabeth Tufts was described as the wife of Thomas Tufts, a private soldier in a regiment of foot, in 1755. She claimed in her examination that her father was legally settled in Walden and that in 1745 she married her husband, an Irishman. Since her husband was an Irishman he had no legal place of settlement in England and she therefore had to rely on her father's place of settlement rather than on her husband's as was usual. She claimed at her examination in Newcastle upon Tyne that her husband's regiment was on the march from North Britain to the southern counties but because she had three children under the age of six, one of them a baby, that she was not able to undertake the journey on foot. For this reason she requested help from her place of settlement to return home. Her removal order shows that she passed through Grantham, Stamford, Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire. Quite a journey!¹⁷

In 1754 another soldier's wife, one Steward Peters and her three children were granted a certificate by the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of Walden acknowledging that they were parishioners of Walden.¹⁸ This certificate was to allow them to travel to Port Mahon where her husband William Peters was serving with the Welch Fusiliers. Port Mahon lies on the island of Minorca was held by the British until it fell to the French in 1756. It was returned to British control in 1762. Given the fate of Port Mahon in 1756, it is interesting to note that in 1756 Stewart Peters, widow of a soldier, and accompanied by two children, was taken as a rogue and vagabond and ordered to be removed to Walden.¹⁹

It can be seen from apprenticeship indentures and records and from settlement papers that people moved to and from Walden over quite considerable distances. Although the last examples referred to women travelling alone, these were the exceptions rather than the rule. In the vast majority of cases women travelled as wives, following in their husbands' footsteps. My last example of comings and goings in Walden in the 18th century refers to marriage, for it was only through marriage that the vast majority of women came to leave the parish of their birth, either joining their husbands in their home parishes or travelling with them in

search of new opportunities. On marriage a woman relinquished the settlement granted through her father and took on the settlement of her husband. The parish registers and banns provide evidence of the sort of moves that women made on marriage.²⁰

In the period between 1700 and 1725 twelve men (approximately 15 per cent) marrying brides from Saffron Walden gave their home parish as outside Saffron Walden. Five of the grooms came from the adjacent parishes of Littlebury, Little Walden and Little Chesterford. A further two came from Elmdon and Duxford, Cambridgeshire, further away but still well within the hinterland of Saffron Walden in its capacity as a market centre. The remaining five came from further afield: Horseheath and Little Shelford, both in Cambridgeshire, Ely, St. Edmundsbury in Suffolk and Flaxley in Gloucestershire. Both Horseheath and Little Shelford are on routeways that would have been in regular use, Horseheath on the route east to the wool towns and Little Shelford on the road to Cambridge; but Ely and St. Edmundsbury, although both important towns would fall within the region rather than the hinterland of Saffron Walden and would have involved a considerable journey of more than one day's duration. It is possible that these grooms met their brides whilst on business or through a family connection. An explanation of the marriage of the marriage of Joseph Coles of Flaxley, Gloucestershire and Elizabeth Francis of Saffron Walden in 1725 is harder to arrive at and shows a link socially, at least, between Saffron Walden and the rest of England. The women involved in these marriages would usually have taken up residence in their husbands' parishes on marriage providing yet more strands in the web that linked Saffron Walden with its local hinterland, its region and the rest of England.

As well as women leaving Walden to take up residence in their husbands' parishes, women also came to live in Walden on their marriage to Walden men. In the same period of 25 years however only four brides (approximately 4.5 per cent) marrying Walden men are shown as having a home parish outside Walden, from Great Chesterford and Heydon and from further afield in Haverhill and Nayland near Colchester. The records for this period also show marriages where neither bride nor groom acknowledged Walden as their home parish. This was not particularly unusual at the time when many marriages were conducted by licence.

At this point in the 18th century marriage records are somewhat confusing due to the introduction of banns as result of Lord Hardwick's Marriage Act of 1753. In Saffron Walden the old registers continued to be used until 1766 whilst the new banns books were in use from 1755. This inevitably led to a certain amount of confusion and duplication, although the intention of the act had been to ensure that all marriages were conducted and recorded legally.

In the period between 1751 and 1775, 22 per cent of Walden men chose a partner from outside of Walden, 3 per cent less than in the previous quarter century, and predominantly from the neighbouring counties of Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk. Brides marrying grooms from Saffron Walden in this quarter century came only from Essex, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. This may seem a more limited range of places than in the first quarter of the century, but only Suffolk fails to be represented and the range of places within the three counties was more extensive.

It is only to be expected that the range of places that grooms came from was more extensive than the home parishes of brides given the greater freedom that men had to travel, but equally this meant that women originating in Walden might well find their married homes in quite a wide range of places thus extending ever further the network of links that Saffron Walden had with other places in the 18th century. It was, in part, this network of links which fuelled the comings and goings to and from the small market town of Saffron Walden at a time when a population might at first sight have been expected to be much more static.

Notes

1. Taylor, J.S., *Poverty, Migration and Settlement in the Industrial Revolution* (1989), p.14.
2. ERO T/Z 393/3 Index to Apprentices' Indentures 1710-62.
3. ERO., T/Z 393/3.
4. ERO D/B 2/PAR 7.
5. ERO D/B 2/PAR 7/26.
6. ERO D/B 2/PAR 7/38.
7. ERO D/B 2/CHR1/5.
8. ERO D/B 2/CHR9/7/35.
9. ERO D/B 2/ PAR 4.
10. ERO D/B 2/ PAR 4.
11. ERO D/B 2 PAR 9.
12. ERO D/B 2/ PAR 4.
13. Archive of the Friends' Meeting House.
14. ERO D/B 2/CHR 9/7.
15. ERO D/B 2/PAR 6/1.
16. ERO D/B 2/PAR 6/7.
17. ERO D/B 2/PAR 6/9.
18. ERO D/B 2/PAR 4/134.
19. ERO D/B 2/PAR 6/10.
20. ERO D/P 192/1/4-7.

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