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## **‘A ticklish sort of affair’: Charles Mott, Haydock Lodge and the economics of asylumdom**

DAVID HIRST\*

*In June 1846 complaints about the treatment of a Welsh clergyman at the privately run Haydock Lodge Asylum in England heralded a series of allegations about maltreatment of pauper patients at the institution. These prompted a number of Parliamentary reports on the institution. Allegations were also made about connections between the asylum and officials at the Poor Law Commission. This article demonstrates that many of the problems at Haydock Lodge relate to the character and personal circumstances of its first Superintendent, Charles Mott, a former Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. Despite this specific causation, the Haydock Lodge affair had a more general influence in raising once again questions about the propriety of entrusting the care of publicly funded patients to private institutions.*

**Keywords:** *asylums; England; Haydock Lodge; mixed economy of welfare; Poor Law; Wales*

### **Introduction**

In June 1846 Dr O. O. Roberts, a Welsh GP, a political radical and long-standing critic of both secular and ecclesiastical authorities (see Owen, 1949; Price, 1981), petitioned Parliament about the treatment of one of his patients, Rev. Evan Richards, an Anglican clergyman, during his stay at the Haydock Lodge Lunatic Asylum (Roberts, 1846); this was a private institution located between Liverpool and Manchester, in north-west England. Inquiries subsequently broadened to cover general allegations of maltreatment of patients and high death rates at the asylum (British Parliamentary Papers [hereafter BPP], 1846*b*, 1847; *Parl. Debates*, 1846*b*).

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\* *Address for correspondence:* School of Social Sciences, University of Wales Bangor, College Road, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2DG, UK. Email: j.d.hirst@bangor.ac.uk

The allegations about Haydock Lodge impinged both on matters of policy and on personal affairs. *The Times* referred to both aspects of the controversy in an editorial on 28 August 1846. First, and most directly, it drew attention to what it saw as the inherent contradiction between the public duty of care owed to the insane poor, and the profit motive underlying privately owned institutions. Running

a private lunatic asylum is a ticklish sort of affair. Lunatics . . . ought to be tenderly and skilfully treated. . . . When the asylum is a private establishment, unhappily the object of the speculation seems at variance with the interests of the patient. (*The Times*, 1846*d*)

*The Times* was, however, hinting obliquely at a second aspect of the affair. Haydock Lodge was alleged to have been ‘established as a joint speculation by parties directly and officially connected with the Poor Law Commission’ (Roberts, 1846). Charles Mott, the Superintendent, had actually left the Poor Law Commission in 1842 (Public Record Office [hereafter PRO], 1841), but the financial investment in the asylum had been made by George Coode, an Assistant Secretary to the Commission, and members of his family. After the scandal became public, Coode was required to resign from his post (*Parl. Debates*, 1846*a*). Abuse of office was thus the second underlying theme. As *The Times* (1846*d*) put it: ‘no asylum ever had started under such auspices, with such complete and immediate success’.

Haydock Lodge was a Victorian example of the mixed economy of welfare, in which public funds paid for the maintenance of patients in private institutions. It catered for some private patients, together with a much larger number of pauper lunatics sent by Poor Law authorities. Admitting its first patients in 1844, it expanded rapidly, holding 447 patients (42 private; 405 paupers) by November 1845 (BPP, 1847). Most private institutions of a comparable size and mix of patients were in London – Peckham House (48 private; 203 paupers in 1844), Hoxton House (81; 315) and the Warburton’s asylums at Bethnal Green (226; 336). Most provincial houses with both private and pauper patients were smaller, examples being the Fairford Retreat, Gloucestershire (21; 119), and Belle Vue House, Wiltshire (8; 148) (BPP, 1844*b*).

These private institutions thrived through a combination of an overall shortage of asylum beds, charges competitive with those for ‘out of county’ residents of the county asylums, and the rivalry between boroughs and counties which characterized English local government (Philo, 1995). Those connected with Haydock Lodge hoped to profit from these factors, particularly the lack of capacity in the existing public asylums in the north-west of England, and local disagreements in north Wales about the need for public asylums at all.

The published sources already mentioned and unpublished files in the Public Record Office<sup>1</sup> make the Haydock Lodge affair one of the best documented scandals of Victorian lunacy. They have been drawn upon

extensively by a number of authors discussing nineteenth-century asylums (see, e.g., Mellett, 1982: 113–16; Parry-Jones, 1972: 277–80). This article suggests that Haydock Lodge can only be fully understood by reference to a wider spectrum of archival material relating to the background, character and personal circumstances of one of its key figures, the original manager of the asylum and former Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Charles Mott. Mott had an earlier association with private madhouses catering for paupers, having previously been joint proprietor of the Peckham House Asylum in Southwark (BPP, 1830–31; Harpton Court Papers [hereafter HCP], 1841c). A study of his career thus contributes also to an understanding of the economics of ‘hybrid’ public/private asylums. Despite the growth in asylum studies (for reviews, see Scull, 1993a, 1999), relatively little has been written on these hybrid institutions, either individually or generically (but see Murphy, 2001a, 2001b; Parry Jones, 1972).

### **Mott’s early career**

The Assistant Poor Law Commissioners have been described as ‘the most rural and aristocratic colony of any of the new departments’ (Roberts, 1960: 154–5). Many were Justices of the Peace, three were brothers of peers, five were baronets, and four others appeared in Burke’s *Landed Gentry*. Virtually all the others came from comfortable family circumstances, with a military or professional background. In this milieu, breeding counted. There were only two exceptions: Edward Gulson, a Quaker fellmonger (i.e., a dealer in animal skins and hides) from Coventry and Charles Mott. Mott was ‘a poor boy that was born in Loughton’ (HCP, 1841b) in Essex. His father ‘had a large family’ (HCP, 1841c), and the parish registers of Loughton record Charles Mott’s baptism on 28 August 1788, the tenth of eleven children of John Mott and his wife Ann, née Hewes (Essex Record Office, 1732–1812; 1755–1812). His father was an innkeeper (Essex Record Office, 1772–9). Mott was fortunate to obtain a presentation to attend Christ’s Hospital, the Bluecoat School (HCP, 1841c), which he left on 1 October 1803, discharged by his father who undertook to find him a master.<sup>2</sup> He was apprenticed first to a firm of sugar brokers and then to Baring, Mair & Co., commission agents and insurance brokers. It was here that he might have acquired the skills of persuasive salesmanship so evident in his later career. He then set up in business on his own, claiming later that he ‘lived at Limehouse in credit and respectability for nine years’ (HCP, 1841c).

He had, however, acquired enemies. One anonymous letter to the Poor Law Commissioners accused Mott of being sacked by Baring and living ‘by the industry of his wife’. The writer then alleged:

Having furnished a House he became Master of Ceremonies at several [indistinct: [sail] lofts?] where male and female meet indiscriminately for

Music and Dancing, at which place he got acquainted with a Common Woman who was receiving 3s 6d a week from the Parish of St Annes Limehouse for the support of a Bastard child, a boy, but he introduced her to his wife as the Widow of the Mate of a Ship with two fatherless children. After a time his poor wife found that he and his whore had a house in Burgat[?] Lane, St George's in the East, for the acception of young girls for Prostitution ... (HCP, 1841*b*).

Allegedly Mott subsequently left his wife and attempted to have her committed to his own asylum. This might all be dismissed as malicious gossip, but the allegations about his marriage clearly held some truth. In his response Mott vehemently denied the more lurid allegations, but noted 'with my unfortunate private connection the Board is already acquainted and I think it will not be necessary for me to allude further to those circumstances' (HCP, 1841*c*).

Further evidence of Mott's domestic arrangements comes from the baptisms of seven of his children at St Giles, Camberwell, the parish church for his residence at Forest Hill. The first four of these were recorded between October 1826 and October 1829, the children of Charles Mott and Mary. The last three, born at intervals from 1833, were all baptized together in August 1836, this time recorded as the children of Charles Mott and Mary Stanbury. This suggests some embarrassment at seeking baptism, and an indication that the two parents were not married (London Metropolitan Archives, 1824–9, 1829–34, 1834–9).

Mott was then 'attracted to the subject of the maintenance and employment of the Poor' (HCP, 1841*c*). In the early 1820s, he obtained the contract to manage the Poor Law for the Parish of Newington, Surrey (BPP, 1837–38). This was renewed annually for ten years 'until I relinquished it for the large and more important one of Lambeth' (HCP, 1841*c*). He was simultaneously contractor for the Parish of Alverstoke in Hampshire, which included Gosport (BPP, 1834*c*). Here the inmates of the Poor House were 'farmed for their maintenance at 2s 8d weekly', according to Captain Pringle, the Assistant Commissioner. As part of the arrangement with the parish, Mott benefited from their labour, though in this case it amounted only to the production of sacking and other items. Pringle argued that the potential to profit inherent in the contracting system provided an incentive to retain the able-bodied in the workhouse (BPP, 1834*b*).

Apart from the Poor Law contracts, Mott acquired other business interests. He had an interest in the Ratcliffe Brewery 'for a partnership to take the management of it, and for which purpose I had advanced considerable sums of money' and was also 'principal proprietor and Owner of one half of the Peckham Lunatic Establishment which I had myself funded at great cost and trouble. There were 300 Patients in the Asylum and the profits were nearly £4,000 p. year' (HCP, 1841*c*).

Mott's ownership of the asylum brought further opportunities to bridge

the gap between public and private care. As Captain Pringle reported: 'Lunatics [in Alverstoke] are sent to an asylum at Peckam [*sic*] which belongs to the person who farms the house; the charge is 10s 6d a week each' (BPP, 1834*b*). At Lambeth also lunatics were allegedly switched to his own asylum. Until then Lambeth

always sent their Insane to Sir Jon. Miles MadHouse, Hoxton Old Town, London, but when Mott became Guardian they were all taken away and sent to Peckham House – his Asylum – and I dare say the owners of Miles House would speak of this fact. (PRO, 1846*b*: 73)

While Peckham Asylum is less well documented than Haydock Lodge, some commonalities are apparent which indicate that Mott was already aware of ways to maximize profits. In addition to the charge to the Poor Law authorities, Mott benefited more directly from the presence of the lunatics, for he 'has also a very large house and farm nearly adjoining Peckham House and the Keepers and Patients when the hay was about always went and assisted and also at other busy times' (PRO, 1846*b*: 73).

Surviving records of visits by Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy during 1829 and 1830 (PRO, 1830–31) contain other criticisms that would later be replicated at Haydock Lodge. These include complaints about both the quality and sufficiency of the food: 'The meat, cheese, butter and small beer all seem to be of an inferior quality and we trust an improvement may take place with regard to them'. The Commissioners hinted that the public policies of the asylum were not matched by the actuality, noting that as 'Messrs Mott and Co. have a scale of diet prepared for the inspection of those who place patients in their house, [we] expect that scale to be fully complied with both as regard quality and quantity'. They also disapproved 'of one day only in each week being allotted to the visits of the friends of the pauper patients'. In May 1830 the Commissioners threatened to remove the asylum licence unless the food was improved and visits from relatives and friends allowed more frequently. When the Commissioners next visited on 11 July 1830, the provisions were declared wholesome, and it was reported that the pauper patients were being visited more often.

The link with Peckham was recalled by critics long after Mott said his association with the asylum had ceased. O. O. Roberts (*The Times*, 1846*e*) quoted the 1844 Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners, which noted that 'Peckham Asylum ... has been a source of trouble to us on the subject of diet. It has on several occasions been specially visited on this account, and frequent remonstrances have been made.' Now, continued Roberts,

I should like to know who the proprietors and managers of this establishment were between the years 1836 and 1842, and whether or not there was a farm appertaining to it on which the patients were employed; and if so, the name of the owner, or occupier, of that farm?

Mott's business activities as Poor Law contractor and asylum owner allowed him to live in some style. By his own account (HCP, 1841*c*), immediately before he joined the Poor Law Commission, Mott's

returns from my various engagements were £50,000 per annum and at the time I joined the Poor Law Commission the following was my position[:]

I lived in my own Freehold House at Forest Hill which cost me £2,500.

I kept my carriage and a suitable establishment.

The reform of the Poor Law was to end Mott's contracts, but his association with the system continued. He criticized the Old Poor Law in a letter to Lord Brougham, the Lord Chancellor, in which he proposed a plain, uniform, coarse diet throughout England 'sufficient to keep the body in good health, but devoid of any expensive articles of food now given in most workhouses.' He also suggested the abolition of cash relief, and some differentiation between the classes of inmate in the workhouse, rather than the prevailing system in which 'young, idle, dissolute paupers' get the same as the 'old and deserving poor' (Brougham Papers, 1832). These views were largely in sympathy with those of the Poor Law Commissioners. Interviewed by Edwin Chadwick, his opinions were extensively quoted in an Appendix to the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (BPP, 1834*c*). The Report itself contained an adulatory reference to him as 'a witness of the most extensive practical experience of any witness examined under this Commission' (BPP, 1834*a*: 173). It is therefore not surprising that he was offered one of the posts as Assistant Poor Law Commissioner.

However, this meant a change in his economic fortunes. As an Assistant Commissioner he received £700 plus expenses (BPP, 1846*c*), but as a Government servant he was required to relinquish any external commercial activities. Mott claimed he at first believed that 'I could retain my interest in the Lunatic Asylum and the Brewery' when he took on the appointment (HCP, 1841*c*). He subsequently sold his interest in Peckham House, which was said to be worth £20,000 (HCP, 1841*a*), though divesting himself of all his external interests proved difficult. As subsequent legal action was to reveal, the investment in the brewery had proved particularly problematic and costly (Chadwick Papers, 1836).

### **Assistant Poor Law Commissioner**

Mott stood out from the other Assistant Commissioners, not only by virtue of his unorthodox domestic arrangements, but also through his relatively humble origins and his background in trade, rather than aristocratic descent or professional occupation. The differences sometimes grated, as one of Mott's letters to Chadwick indicates:

If to want money – which is occasionally the lot of all Tradesmen is to be considered a crime, I must freely plead guilty, for I commenced my career

without any ... if the length of pocket, and extent of credit are to form the tests of qualification of those employed by the Commissioners, I must submit and if I cannot boast of hereditary property, or large independent fortune I am still not destitute, and I can easily prove that in pecuniary matters I have not been made better by my connection with the Commissioners. (Chadwick Papers, 1836)

Despite or perhaps because of these characteristics, he was an effective Assistant Commissioner. After working in London, he was later given responsibilities covering Lancashire and Yorkshire, where the opposition to the imposition of the New Poor Law was strong (see Edsall, 1971; Knott, 1986). By his own account, he appears to have dealt pragmatically with this opposition, discussing issues with Radical and Chartist leaders when necessary (PRO, 1843). His standing with opponents of the Poor Law was, however, undermined by his involvement in two key controversies.

The first of these arose from events at Bolton. In August 1841 the local MP, Dr Bowring, made allegations about three cases of severe distress in the Bolton area (*Parl. Debates*, 1841a). Mott was the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner sent up to investigate (Ferrand, 1844: 5). Although he allegedly refused to see key witnesses, his report was subsequently used by the Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, to discredit Bowring's allegations during another Commons debate on the matter (*Parl. Debates*, 1841b; see Ferrand, 1844: 5–7).

Mott then performed a similar task at Keighley, where the Poor Law Commissioner, George Cornewall Lewis, had told him:

It has been represented, *in a confidential manner* to the Commissioners that great abuses with respect to the payment of wages out of the rates exist in the Keighley Union. It has been stated to them that the Manufacturers in the Board combine for the purpose of lowering the wages of their workpeople, & making them up from the rates which are mainly levied upon the agricultural classes.

I should be glad if you would take an early opportunity of visiting this Union, & inquiring into the system of relief practised there, without creating suspicion, or assuming the appearance of making a special investigation, and I sh[oul]d be glad if you would communicate to me the results of this inquiry. Pray let me know whether the Union has any & what Workhouse, & what use the Guardians make of it. (HCP, 1842a; original emphasis)

A further letter stressed it was desirable that the report should be public (HCP, 1842b), but the Keighley inquiry remained unpublished until it was also used by Graham, during a debate, to discredit one of his most persistent critics, W. B. Ferrand, the MP for Knaresborough (*Parl. Debates*, 1842a). The subsequent furore resulted in an enquiry by a Commons Select Committee which exonerated Ferrand from the charges laid against him by Graham; these were held to be the responsibility of the previous Board of

Guardians (BPP, 1842). However, to Ferrand's dislike of the Poor Law the episode added a personal hatred of Graham, Cornwall Lewis and Mott, evident in the vituperative pamphlet he then published (Ferrand, 1844).

Mott's appointment as an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner was ended in 1842, ostensibly because of a reduction in the permitted number of appointments from ten to nine (PRO, 1841). This does not explain the process by which Mott was selected from the existing Assistant Commissioners for redundancy and, when later pressed for an explanation, Cornwall Lewis failed to give a clear answer (see BPP, 1846*b*). Ferrand thought Mott had been dismissed to silence him, alleging that 'by his [Mott's] dismissal, he ceased to be a public officer, and was placed, by the parties who "dismissed" him, beyond my power of calling him to the Bar of the House of Commons' (Ferrand, 1844: 28). Ferrand also claimed that although no longer an officer of the Poor Law Commission, Mott continued to be favoured by them. There is evidence that Mott also felt that the Commissioners and the Home Secretary owed him some support. In a long valediction noting the various supportive motions by Boards of Guardians and others, Mott listed numerous incidents of verbal abuse and threatened physical violence he suffered while labouring to implement the 1834 Act. He concluded by suggesting that he was owed some loyalty by the Commission, and sought their support for a publishing venture (PRO, 1843). Mott became 'editor of ... the *Poor Law Guide*, edited in London, Bradbury and Evans, published by Mr Oswhyn' in March 1843 (*Parl. Debates*, 1846*a*). This was apparently unsuccessful, and ceased publication in December 1843 (*British Union Catalogue of Periodicals*, 1955–58).

Again, this aroused Ferrand's suspicions. In an appendix to his pamphlet, he printed Mott's prospectus for his proposed publication, dated 30 November 1842 (Ferrand, 1844: 33–5), claiming, wrongly, that it showed that the Longport Poor Law Union, of which Sir James Graham was a member, had been advised that subscriptions to such publications were an allowable expense. Here Ferrand was in error; as Sir James Graham explained, Longport Union had been allowed to subscribe to a different publication entirely, and Mott had simply implied that his own publication would be covered by this dispensation (*Parl. Debates*, 1846*a*).

From all of this evidence, three things are clear. First, for a vocal and embittered group of opponents of the New Poor Law, Charles Mott was seen not merely as an average official doing his duty under a detested system, but as someone willing to work actively to discredit them and thus serve the political ends of the Home Secretary and the Poor Law Commissioners. Second, this same group believed that Mott had ultimately been sacrificed to safeguard the political career of Sir James Graham and that, consequently, the Poor Law Commissioners and the Home Secretary retained a sense of obligation to their former servant for the efforts he had made on their behalf. Official approval for, or at least support of, Mott's venture into publishing

was regarded as an indication of this. Finally, from the lengthy valediction which Mott himself wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners after he had left the Commission, there is the same sense that he too considered that they had some obligation towards him. That there might be substance to this is suggested by the employment of Mott's son in a situation where patronage secured appointment. His putative eldest child, Henry Mott, first appears in the *Imperial Calendar* for 1845 as a fifth-class clerk in the office of the Poor Law Commissioners (*British Imperial Calendar*, 1845). His presence was noted by the anonymous complainant to the Poor Law Commission: '... can you believe the eldest Bastard is now receiving Two Hundred pounds a year and that in the false name of Henry Mott?' (HCP, 1841*b*). Henry Mott was to remain with the Poor Law Commission until 1869, when he had reached the position of second-class clerk (*British Imperial Calendar*, 1869)

### Opening Haydock Lodge

Mott was clearly in financially straitened circumstances after his contracts ended with the introduction of the New Poor Law and he withdrew from his other business interests, following his appointment as Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. His salary did not compensate, and when this was lost and his journal failed he had no source of income. At this point, he saw an opportunity to profit from his previous experience. The political climate was clearly pointing towards an expansion of provision for pauper lunatics, as indicated by Parliamentary debates (1844) and the 1844 Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners (BPP, 1844*a*). Although the 1845 Asylums Act emphasized the need for public asylums (*Public General Acts and Measures*, 1845), the opportunity remained for entrepreneurs to offer private provision. In the large industrial counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire, the existing county asylums were 'crowded to their utmost limits' (BPP, 1847: 3) and public accommodation for the numbers of the insane confined in workhouses would not be provided quickly. In north Wales, moreover, disagreement between the county justices meant that no progress was being made in providing asylum accommodation (Michael, 2003). In this context, a private asylum for pauper lunatics could be a profitable option. Without money, however, Mott could not proceed, and he therefore approached a contact with family money to hand. This was George Coode, a younger man, a lawyer and one of the Assistant Secretaries to the Poor Law Commission. Although Parry-Jones (1972: 278) says the two men were related, there is no evidence that this is the case: Coode stated the two men had not met before they became acquainted through their work for the Poor Law Commission (PRO, 1846*d*: 186). Mott had identified Haydock Lodge as a potential site for a private asylum and put the idea to Coode, who claimed he was not at first inclined to join. Coode did have some sympathy with Mott's apparent destitution, but was aware that Mott's financial affairs were in such disarray that simply lending the money would be risky.

As Coode explained, Mott

had before he was an Assistant Commissioner successfully established a Licensed house for the acceptance of Lunatics. He was sanguine in his hope that he would be able to make another successful establishment and to introduce a greatly amended treatment in the management of the insane. I was inclined to assist him as well in his private as in his public object, but could not on account of the involvement of his pecuniary affairs lend him money with any safety. (HCP, 1846a)

Coode's problem was that, as a public servant, he was subject to the same restrictions that had caused difficulties for Mott, and could not therefore be associated directly with a commercial undertaking. During the various inquiries into Haydock Lodge, Coode maintained that his role was largely a passive one, acting as agent for family members who were the actual investors. However, he was finally to admit that from the outset his involvement was active and substantial. After speaking to Mott he went to Liverpool and, even before consulting family investors, on 'seeing Haydock I was struck with its advantages and immediately entered negotiation with [the owner] Mr Legh's agent.' The negotiations were successful, and Coode found himself with a verbal agreement for possession of the house (PRO, 1846d: 186).

Coode then sent a long memorandum to his fellow, and junior, Assistant Secretary, William Lumley, seeking

your opinion whether there is any legal objection to my entering into the whole, or any part of the following arrangements. . . . Bearing in mind that I am Assistant Secretary to the Poor Law Commissioners I request your attention to the 51st Sec of the 4 & 5 W<sup>m</sup> 4, C. 76, and to the 55 Geo 3 C. 137 there referred to . . . (HCP, 1846a)

Lumley replied cautiously, saying that as long as there was no suspicion that Coode was obtaining a share of the profits from the enterprise, he did not think the legislation would apply (HCP, 1846a). Coode claimed that he had no interest in the asylum except as lessee of the property. His sister, the licensed proprietor, was to be sub-lessee of the house, together with some 60 acres, paying Coode rent plus a further sum to cover the cost of alterations required to make the establishment fit for use as an asylum. Mott was to be the Resident Superintendent 'so as to afford him the means of livelihood' (PRO, 1846d: 186); he would be paid a fixed sum of £200, together with board and lodging. When profits after the payment of the rent to Coode exceeded £500, Mott was to get half the net profits as his salary (PRO, 1846d: 185, 187). This clearly provided an incentive to Mott to reduce costs to a minimum.

Mott's need for money meant that he was unable to wait for the asylum to become profitable. Once resident near Haydock, he used his connections and, possibly, the hospitality of the asylum to put his name forward as a

candidate for election as District Auditor to the local Poor Law Unions, a post elected by the Guardians. After a run-off with the other leading candidate, Mott was elected to the post, which brought him an additional £379 per annum (HCP, 1847*a*; *Parl. Debates*, 1847). This also caused comment when the Haydock Lodge scandal became public (*Parl. Debates*, 1846*a*). Showing a resourceful desperation typical of people in severe financial trouble, he seems to have received and retained the audit fees from the Unions directly, while simultaneously receiving payment from the Poor Law Commissioners for his duties. Recovering the double payment from Mott took some time (HCP, 1847*a*). His presence at the asylum had already diminished: 'except for the first few months, he didn't take active part in management of the asylum' (PRO, 1846*d*: 20). Following his election, which was estimated to occupy him about 20 weeks in the year, his absences became 'longer and more frequent' (p. 20). Many of the witnesses to the inquiry testified to his detachment from its affairs: he was 'frequently absent, sometimes for a fortnight at a time' (p. 132); 'Mott never looked after business – hardly ever about at all' (p. 3); he was 'not generally speaking here regularly, especially of late' (p. 33); and he was 'really rather detached' (p. 65).

Mott's difficulties were not simply a need for current income, but to redeem debts caused by borrowing to fund poor investments. Legal actions in the years following the Haydock Lodge scandal reveal the depths of the financial difficulties now facing him. On 1 August 1846, he was sued by a Mr Price for the return of £3000 lent to him to invest in the Ratcliffe Brewery. The debt was longstanding, dating back to 1833, and Mott tried to avoid liability by citing the Statute of Limitations, but judgment was entered against him (*The Times*, 1846*a*). Price had subsequently been the Master of the Oxford Workhouse, and had resigned while under investigation for unspecified irregularities by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Alfred Austin. That he was then recommended for appointment to the post as Master of the Andover Workhouse by another Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Henry Parker, was one of the key charges laid against the Poor Law Commission during the Andover Workhouse inquiry (BPP, 1846*a*). This episode raises obvious questions about relationships between Mott, the other Assistant Poor Law Commissioners and Price, and about the source of Price's wealth, which was well in excess of that expected of someone employed as a Workhouse Master. In August 1848, he was sued for the recovery of £6000 from the estate of his brother-in-law William Hould the elder, which Mott and Elizabeth Hould had been given on trust to invest in government securities or in trading. Mott seems to have defended this action successfully by arguing that the money was lost in the brewery speculation, rather than through investment in Haydock Lodge (*The Times*, 1848).

### **Running the asylum**

It was thus fortunate for Mott, though not for patients or investors, that he

had almost a free hand in operating the asylum. Coode was unable to visit often, and had to conceal his presence at Haydock Lodge (Chadwick Papers, 1846), while his sister, the nominal proprietor, actually lived in Jersey but with a postal address in London (PRO, 1847*a*: 254–7). The local curate held a service weekly, and the first resident doctors, the only other people of equivalent social status and potential influence, were fleeting presences. The first doctor, a ‘young man’ named Martin, was dismissed for fighting (PRO, 1846*c*: 69). Only with the arrival of the third incumbent, Dr George Bullock Portus, did Mott have a rival. Following a breakdown in relations, Mott had Portus removed by accusing him of irregularities leading to some of the problems of the asylum, and persuaded the Lunacy Commissioners to require his dismissal (BPP, 1846*b*: 9; PRO, 1846*a*).

This lack of supervision by the Superintendent and proprietor contributed to the casual cruelty of which O. O. Roberts complained. A further factor was the financial regime prompted by Mott’s financial needs. This revealed itself in various ways, including the staffing of the asylum. The implication of ‘moral treatment’ was that there should be more and better trained staff than under traditional regimes (Parry-Jones, 1972: 24). While some have followed W. A. F. Browne’s view that asylum attendants were ‘the unemployed of other professions’ (Scull, 1991: 151), other commentators have suggested that even by the mid-Victorian period, a cadre of professional attendants was emerging (see Wright, 1996, 1999). The evidence provided by Haydock Lodge is that the pay determined the calibre of the staff. When challenged by O. O. Roberts on the failure to recruit sufficient or satisfactory staff, Mott ‘stated it was difficult to get them’ (PRO, 1846*b*: 4). The difficulty might, however, be attributable to Mott’s drive to squeeze as much profit from the institution as possible. Low wages would affect the quality of recruitment. When Coode intervened in the asylum management, he felt a better class of keeper was required, and appointed from a list of recently discharged non-commissioned officers from the Army, engaging ‘about a dozen’ (PRO, 1846*d*: 193).

As with Peckham, problems with the institutional diet were also evident. The publicity for Haydock Lodge proclaimed that the ‘dietary has been fixed under the sanction of the Medical Officers of the Establishment, and will be varied, under their direction, as circumstances may require’ (Lancashire Record Office, 1845), but actual arrangements were left in the hands of Mott (PRO, 1846*d*: 190). His attendants made little attempt to ensure the palatability of the diet. Sometimes the soup would be thinned to ensure there was sufficient (PRO, 1846*d*: 72), or the stew would not be stirred properly, so some would get a thin stock and others a rich, concentrated meal (PRO, 1846*d*: 73). By far the least popular meal was the ‘rice milk’ on Friday. In part, the distaste was cultural; ‘it was not a popular dinner because they liked potatoes and meat or the soup better than that’ (PRO, 1847*b*: 114), but problems with the preparation of the rice meal did not help. It was burnt,

and not stirred, so some got very thick, others thin (PRO, 1846*d*: 73). Just as relevant, however, were the shortages of milk which made proper preparation of this meal impossible; the asylum was generally about ten quarts short each day (PRO, 1846*d*: 131). While the farm provided some milk, the farm buildings had been sacrificed to provide more space for patients, so that there was no possibility of having self-sufficiency (PRO, 1847*a*: 168). Some tradesmen were reluctant to supply the asylum after bills were left unpaid by Mott (PRO, 1847*b*: 101–2).

Again, like Peckham, it was suggested that the official dietary tables concealed less adequate provisions. John Lloyd, the former storekeeper denied that any diet table had been shown to Commissioners or Visitors other than the one in use, and swore he never said ‘here is a diet table that is shown to the Commissioners, here is one for Visitors and here is the one actually in use’ (PRO, 1846*d*: 129). Nonetheless, Lloyd believed that the dietary at Haydock Lodge was superior in both quantity and quality both to ‘that of the peasantry in this neighbourhood’ and to those of both Buckingham County Gaol and Knutsford Workhouse, the two other institutions with which he had been connected. At the asylum, the whole carcass of the animal was available for the meal, while elsewhere ‘only the coarse bits’ were used (PRO, 1846*d*: 130–1).

Similarly, Haydock emulated Peckham in having a farm attached. There has been some discussion on the role of the work performed by patients in the county asylum system. While the therapeutic value of labour to patients is often stressed in the annual reports of county asylums, other analysts have suggested that the work was more attuned to the needs of the institution and its sponsoring authorities, using effectively captive labour to keep down costs (see Smith, 1999: 227–46). Where private institutions provided for public patients, as at Haydock Lodge and Peckham House, the evidence is unambiguous: the labour of the patients was used to enhance further the profits of the asylum proprietor and manager. At Haydock, the farm was a mixed enterprise – arable, dairy and beef – and patients also worked in the gardens and stable of the house itself. Altogether, the farm, including the asylum land under cultivation, extended to some 500 acres (PRO, 1846*d*: 190, 86).

The farm and the asylum were separate entities for accounting purposes. This meant that as about 60 acres of land belonging to the asylum lease were cultivated as part of the farm, the farm accounts were charged rent for those acres, but the asylum was then charged for the produce (PRO, 1846*d*: 191). While some produce such as hay was sold out of the farm to external buyers, the bulk of the produce seems to have been sold to the asylum. This covered both consumables such as beef and milk, and straw, hay and other products. It was claimed that the asylum paid the same price to the farm as to other contractors (p. 190).

A key element of the separate accounting systems, however, was the use by

the farm of the labour of the patients, and confused accounts were given of the arrangements. According to Coode, the labour seems to have been valued at about 6d per day on average, and the bailiff credited the asylum with the value of the labour minus the amount actually paid (PRO, 1846*d*: 87, 193). Other witnesses claimed there was no accounting of labour between the farm and the asylum (p. 103). Whether the farm or the asylum ultimately benefited, the Poor Law authorities got nothing. No 'deduction was made to parishes on account of this labour, it being though[t] that the benefit the men derived from the labour compensated for the profit derived from it' (p. 87). Coode argued that 'I am of opinion that there is not any or very little profit in such labours, as the expense of a double set of keepers to accompany them is nearly equal to any profit arising from their work' (p. 193).

### **Aftermath of the scandal**

After Coode's resignation from the Poor Law Commission, he moved to Haydock and discovered the extent of Mott's fraud and venality. Even on Mott's own accounts, there was an unexplained deficit of £3,600.<sup>3</sup> An accountant employed by Coode put the sum missing as £6,800 (PRO, 1846*d*: 48). This was partly misappropriated fees due to the asylum, and partly unpaid bills due to tradesmen. Coode blamed Mott for all his difficulties, but even as late as January 1847 he remained relatively optimistic. Asked how far his problems stemmed from 'Mr Mott's having misappropriated moneys' he replied (PRO, 1847*a*: 247–8):

A: I believe I should be in no difficulty at all, for all my present difficulties are much less in amount than the amount which disappeared entirely whilst he was there.

Q: Then in fact you believe that you have supplied money sufficient to have paid all the outstanding bills with reference to Haydock if those monies had been properly applied?

A: That is my belief.

To the misappropriation of funds was added an overlay of venality by both the unsupervised staff and by Mott and his family. Free of supervision, some staff raided the asylum larder (PRO, 1847*a*: 185):

A: I have heard that some persons from the appearance of their coats and their pockets and other suspicious appearances who lodged out of the house have carried away provisions.

Q: From whence do you suppose they got those provisions – from Mrs Mott?

A: No, in all probability by the favours of the cook.

Q: These are workmen employed on the premises?

A: Workmen and male attendants who slept out.

In doing so, they were merely following the example set by Mott and his relatives. Although Mott himself was away frequently, he had taken the opportunity to offer various posts in the asylum to members of his family. Four of Mott's relatives were subsequently dismissed by Coode (PRO, 1846*d*: 69). They had used the resources liberally, as Coode related:

I have heard tales of whole cart loads of provisions and since I have been at Lowton [his residence near Haydock] persons in that house who served Mr Mott have described the quantity of provision which has been wasted – thrown into the privy – whole legs of mutton – that the quantity of provisions wasted at Lowton was such as to strike anyone with astonishment. (PRO, 1847*a*: 178–9)

According to Coode (PRO, 1847*a*: 180–2), it was not only Mott himself who was involved:

[Coode] Then the same thing is said loosely about provision being conveyed to a cottage in Haydock.

Q: To whom or what person?

A: To Mr Mott's brother [in-law] and his wife, Mr Mott's sister ... if provision was abstracted in the way in which some persons alleged that it was, it was possible that after all though the supply to the house was sufficient the supply to some class in the house was not sufficient – ... Mr Mott might have a motive to restrict the diet of some class of the patients, and of course he had a motive to make the thing a paying establishment.

For most of the period of the scandal, the Poor Law Commission had protested that Mott no longer had any association with them. Cornwall Lewis wrote to his father that 'Mott has ceased to be an Assistant Commissioner since 1842 [but] we are still held responsible for him' (HCP, 1846*b*). Now, however, just as he was discharged from Haydock Lodge, Mott regained his value to his political patrons, as the Committee of Inquiry into the Andover Union resurrected the long running dispute with Ferrand over the Keighley Union affair. During his evidence to the Committee on 31 July 1846, Henry Parker, a former Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, claimed that it was notorious that a private letter was written to Mott, urging him to go and examine Ferrand's Union (BPP, 1846*a*: 938). Cornwall Lewis, in his evidence on 4 August, appeared to acknowledge publicly that Mott had indeed been instructed to go to Keighley, saying that he 'may have written to him [Mott] merely suggesting to him to visit the Keighley Union' (BPP, 1846*a*: 1044). This prompted two letters to *The Times* from Ferrand, on 8 and 10 August (*The Times*, 1846*b*, 1846*c*). When the reaction from Ferrand became clear, Lewis quickly sought to qualify and explain his evidence,

telling the Committee on 12 August that the letter he had written ‘was not necessarily official’, though Mott ‘would not have neglected attending to it, [but] at the same time it was not an authoritative instruction’ (BPP, 1846a: 1094–8).

Cornewall Lewis’s reaction to Ferrand’s attack in *The Times* was to bring an action against him for ‘criminal information’, i.e., criminal libel which could result in penal as well as financial penalties. For this, Mott was the vital witness, and by late September Lewis’s solicitors were in contact with Mott asking him to give a deposition for the purposes of the action. On 9 October 1846, they explained to Mott the need for his deposition, that Ferrand had charged

that Mr Lewis instructed you to make a false Report – and that you having made one Mr Lewis, knowing it to be false, placed it in Sir James Graham’s hands – for the purpose of deceiving the Legislature and the Country – Now the fact I wish deposed to by you – always assuming that it is the *fact* – is that you received no instructions to make a false Report – that you did not make one – and that your Report was a true and faithful Report on the evidence before you. (HCP, 1846c; original emphasis)

Contact with Mott was difficult, not least because he had now moved to the Isle of Man to avoid his creditors, although he continued to visit the mainland to audit Unions. By 20 October, however, he had met White, the solicitor acting for Cornewall Lewis, in London for four hours. Mott had found the note Lewis had sent him, and was prepared to give evidence supporting Lewis’s case (HCP, 1846d).

Mott was later apprehended and appeared at the Insolvent Debtors Court in Lancaster on 8 March 1847, describing himself as a ‘brewer and commission agent.’ He was alleged to owe £25,000, and ‘pretended that he had property to the value of £31,000’. His chief creditor was Price (*The Times*, 1847). He was released after making an arrangement with his creditors. His subsequent career was encapsulated in a gloating Parliamentary question from Ferrand, asking:

Whether they have allowed him to hold the office of district auditor of Lancashire, whilst living in the Isle of Man, out of the way of his creditors; after he was seized by a Sheriff’s officer, when on his road to audit the Union accounts; during the time he was a prisoner in Lancaster Castle; and after a public advertisement appeared in *The Times* warning the public not to pay him money belonging to the Proprietors of the Haydock Lodge Lunatic Asylum? Whether he has again abandoned the discharge of his duties, and left England, although holding the office of district auditor? (*Parl. Debates*, 1847).

Graham and Cornewall Lewis were to have the last word. The preliminary hearing against Ferrand took place in the Court of Queens Bench on 24 November 1846, with the Lord Chief Justice presiding. This received extensive

and critical coverage in *The Times* (1846*f*) the following day, with the paper alleging that the proceedings were more political than legal. The case was to progress onwards until late in 1847. From the correspondence in the Harpton Court papers, Sir James Graham was clearly supportive, but also apprehensive about the dependence on Mott's testimony. Writing to Cornwall Lewis in October 1847, he noted the 'weak point in the Ferrand case is the reliance on Mott and I have always found mischief in that direction' (HCP, 1847*b*). The following month, however, Ferrand conceded, and Graham was congratulating Lewis on having 'done much to silence this brawler for some time to come' (HCP, 1847*c*).

Even in the midst of his difficulties, Mott retained a belief in his own worth. Shortly after his release from prison he was lobbying Edwin Chadwick to consider him as an Assistant Commissioner for the Health of Towns Commission:

I am again free and have recovered my exertion, and this a source of gratification that, all those with whom I came in contact in my District sympathise with me, and express the most kindly feelings towards me. I am about establishing an Office in Manchester as the District Auditors Office, with the chance of getting some accountants business.

No one knows better than you do the sacrifices I have made through my unfortunate zeal to carry out the poor law. I trust that you will not forget me if anything can be confided to me under the Health of Towns Commission of which I hope you will be a Commissioner. Do not forget that with an Office in Manchester, in the midst of all the great Manufacturing Towns with a District comprising, even at the last census, upwards of a *million of the population*, well acquainted with the localities of the entire district, and known moreover to all the Guardians and Union and Parochial Officers, and with an experience which it falls to the lot of few to obtain, I may be of service to you ... (Chadwick Papers, 1847; original emphasis)

Now, however, his influence had waned with his political usefulness, and further preferment did not occur. The final years of his working life were spent almost as it began, working as a commission agent, in Manchester. He died of apoplexy on 11 May 1851 at Rusholme (General Register Office, 1851).

Coode, meanwhile, though he had lost his post as Assistant Secretary to the Poor Law Commissioners, was not wholly out of official favour. He found some immediate employment as a Parliamentary draftsman (PRO, 1847*a*: 163). Later, he authored various official reports, including one on the settlement and removal of the poor [1851], on legislative expression [1853] on local taxation [1862] and on fire insurance duties [also 1862]. Further evidence of his continuing favour with politicians and officials came with his appointment in 1853 to be Commissioner for Consolidating the Statute Law and in 1869 to be a member of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in

England (Boase, 1965). Nevertheless, George Coode followed Mott into bankruptcy in 1854, after Haydock Lodge had drained his capital (PRO, 1854). He died on 27 September 1869 (Boase, 1965).

## Conclusion

It has been argued that abuses of the mentally ill in private institutions were most likely to occur in those receiving paupers as well as private patients (Scull, 1993*b*: 81), and those having non-medical proprietors and senior staff (Parry-Jones, 1977: 82). Haydock Lodge matched both these criteria. This article has suggested, however, that both the causes of the Haydock Lodge scandal and the attention it received were attributable to unique circumstances, primarily linked to the character, financial position and political connections of its first Superintendent, Charles Mott. His physical absence, and attempts to avoid financial ruin by cost-cutting and embezzling the resources of the asylum, precipitated the scandal, while his previous connection with the Poor Law Commission, together with that of the largely absentee proprietor George Coode, intensified public and political interest. The political connection is further emphasized by the subsequent importance of Mott as a witness in the criminal libel case against Ferrand.

Haydock Lodge also had a wider political significance; it directly embarrassed both the Poor Law Commission, whose employee and ex-employee were involved in the promotion and conduct of the establishment, and the Commissioners in Lunacy, whose supervision was brought into question. By emphasizing the issue of the private sector profiting from the care of publicly maintained lunatics over the purely economic debate about the costs involved, it reinforced the arguments for the expansion of the public asylum system. Despite the 1845 Act, private sector asylums still attracted support from those opposed to increased public spending. At the time the scandal erupted, perhaps more pauper patients were housed in private asylums than at any previous time (Scull, 1993*b*: 78). After 1846 the private institutions with pauper residents started to decline slowly (Scull, 1993*b*: 81–2). Clearly this is directly attributable to the increase in public sector provision, but by publicizing the disadvantages of the alternative based within the mixed economy of welfare, the Haydock Lodge affair helped to increase acceptance of publicly provided asylums, not just locally (Michael, 2003: 48) but also in the national context.

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## Notes

1. PRO, MH 51/738–746, Minutes of evidence taken before the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy. These files, which are not numbered sequentially, relate to three separate inquiries by the Commissioners. MH 51/738 and MH 51/740–743 are verbatim records of witnesses examined in July 1846; MH 51/746 consists of abbreviated notes on sworn statements by witnesses made in Oct. 1846; MH 51/745 is largely material used to draft the Further Report; MH 51/739 and MH 51/744 are the surviving parts of verbatim records of examinations of George Coode (only part of which survives) and Dr George Bullock Portus in Jan. 1847. From the content of these, there are other interviews which have not survived. There is no extant evidence from Mott.
2. Personal communication, 15 July 1998, from N. M. Plumley, Curator and Archivist, Christ's Hospital, Horsham.
3. Making comparisons of value has many methodological flaws, but for illustrative purposes the purchasing power of £1000 in 1846 is equivalent, by one method of calculation, to £66,326 in 2001 (House of Commons, 2002).

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