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The Hardwicke Reformatory School, Gloucestershire

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By J. SHOREY DUCKWORTH*

The greatest cruelty is to allow a boy to continue in crime if it can be prevented!¹

Juveniles formed a large proportion of criminals in the first half of the 19th century. Advancing industrialisation along with rural unemployment forced many people into towns which expanded at a rapid rate. This influx combined with a high birth rate and reduced infant mortality created urban populations with large numbers of children, many of whom, by necessity, spent much time idle and destitute on the streets. Many turned to crime. Gloucestershire did not escape the social upheaval. The population of the county almost doubled from 250,000 to 458,000 between the years 1801 and 1851. The population of the city of Gloucester alone rose from 7,700 to 16,000 and that of Cheltenham, the county's most rapidly developing town, from 3,076 to 35,051.² Such population growth brought with it the serious problem of youthful offenders. According to reports of the inspectors of prisons for the five years 1849–53 the number of juvenile offenders in Gloucestershire was above the national average, 11.9% of all the county's prisoners being under 17 years of age. At length the steady increase in youthful crime caused general alarm as it was perceived as a growing social problem. Children aged between 9 and 16 were subject to the same penalties as adults and many were constantly in and out of gaol until they were sentenced to be transported. However by the 1850s transportation had largely ceased to be a sanction available to the courts. The question was what could be done with the persistent young offender. In 1851 the recorder of Bristol, Mr Crowder, expressed more than personal frustration when he addressed the grand jury of that city's Quarter Sessions:³

In 24 cases there have been prior convictions. I am sorry to find from the great number of cases of this description in which young persons have been brought before me for the second, third, or more time, that the punishment awarded has not had the effect of reforming them. It is an evil greatly to be lamented because it was hoped that punishment would have the effect of reform and I am very sorry to find in so many instances that it has failed to do so.

The situation became so grave that a parliamentary select committee was formed to consider the matter of criminal and destitute juveniles. The committee's deliberations lasted from 3 February to 1 July 1852 and it concluded that special schools should be established to reform, educate and train for a trade young people convicted of a criminal act. Its recommendations were included in a Bill presented to parliament on 18 July 1853.⁴ In the spring of 1852 while the select committee was taking evidence, an experiment was taking place in the Gloucestershire countryside that anticipated the committee's recommendations. In evidence to the committee one witness commented on the novelty of the notion that charitable individuals might run such schools but the Gloucestershire experiment was essentially the idea of such a person.

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Fig. 1 Portrait of Thomas Barwick Lloyd Baker (d. 1886), from a drawing by George Richmond, R.A.

Thomas Barwick Lloyd Baker (Fig. 1) of Hardwicke Court, near Gloucester, was a country squire of moderate wealth. As a county magistrate and prison visitor he developed an interest in the causes of crime which would eventually benefit the whole community. Among his other work he was a poor law guardian and was drawn into personal sympathy with the poor and the destitute and with outcasts. It saddened him to see so many children in the county's gaol and houses of correction. In 1853 he wrote that⁵

It is very commonly said that it must be wrong to send a child to gaol; first because the poor child knows no better; it is the fault of the parents who have brought it up badly and they ought to be sent to gaol instead; secondly because it being sent to gaol and herded with older criminals the

child must be corrupted; and thirdly that if the child once has a prison brand upon him he is marked for life and will never again be able to obtain honest employment, and must fall from bad to worse.

The idea of reforming criminal children had been in his mind for many years. In the late 1830s he had met and corresponded with Amelia Murray, a founder member of the Children's Friend Society, who called his attention to the possibility of reclaiming vicious children. She told him of a school at Hackney Wick, near London, run by Edward Pelham Brenton (d. 1839), an ex-naval officer, who took destitute boys from the streets, trained them, and sent them to the colonies to earn their living in a new environment. Baker visited the school and was greatly impressed by it. He talked to friends of the possibility of founding another similar institution but they thought his idea 'grand and wild' and paid little attention to it.

It was not until Baker had some years experience as a visiting magistrate of Gloucester gaol and had seen its pathetic young inmates that he became convinced of the truth of his early ideas. For many years he cherished the ambition of starting a school to reform such children but there were few people to support or encourage him. At last, in 1851, he formed a friendship with George Henry Bengough of The Ridge, Wotton-under-Edge, who asked him why he did not start a school himself. At that time Baker was actively engaged in many activities and told Bengough, then aged 23, that someone was needed who would devote his whole time to the task. To Baker's astonishment the young man declared that he would undertake it if the older man helped him. Bengough, who was heir to a considerable estate including land in Whitminster, near Hardwicke,⁶ could easily have spent his time in hunting and other leisure activities as many young men of fortune did but he chose instead to become involved in an experiment to reform young criminals.

The Children's Friend School

Thomas Baker and George Bengough provided the money to start the school and they became its managers. Bengough was also the schoolmaster for its first two years. As a site for the school they appropriated an old cottage on Baker's Hardwicke estate, on land between the River Severn and the Gloucester & Berkeley Canal, which was not suitable for letting. Today this site, just across the canal from the church, is known as School Farm. Originally the school comprised a small gabled, brick building, a few rough sheds and six acres of land. At one end of the brick building was the cottage of the bailiff, Bevan Smith, and at the other the schoolmaster's room.

The first boys admitted came from London on the recommendation of Frederick Tracey, Governor of the Westminster house of correction. He suggested three boys who were about to be released as suitable candidates for the Hardwicke school. They had each been convicted at least four times and, undeterred by periods in prison, they were hardened in crime. The life to which they would have returned was so grim that they offered themselves willingly for the experiment. The prospect of being taken to the country to be reformed seemed the lesser of two evils. On 24 March 1852 Bengough travelled to London himself to collect the young thieves. He had no experience in handling young people and his friends and relatives were concerned that he would be murdered or robbed. No one could say what difficulties he would encounter, but he found the boys weak in health and only too pleased to go with him.

On 31 March 1852, a week after the first admissions, the school's constitution was drawn up and the name The Children's Friend School was adopted.⁷ The aim of the school was the reform of boys under 14 who were in the habit of offending against the law. The school was to be run by two managers, assisted by an advisory committee, and to be financed by voluntary

contributions and subscriptions. It was also proposed that parents or legal guardians would pay 52s. a year towards a boy's maintenance and that, while in the school, the boy would earn a living by working on the farm. The document ended by inviting members of the public to send contributions to either of the managers or to any of the committee members.

The committee's members were Sir Thomas Tancred, Bt., of Cirencester, Joseph Mullings, M.P., of Cirencester, E. G. Hallewell, M.P., of Cheltenham, J. Curtis Hayward of Quedgeley, James Francillon of Cheltenham, the Revd. Thomas Murray Browne, canon of Gloucester Cathedral, C. Jellinger Symons of Hereford, and William Phelps of Chestal, near Dursley. Symons, who was an inspector of workhouse schools, gave evidence to the select committee on criminal and destitute juveniles in June and, although he did not mention the Hardwicke school by name, he stated⁸

If you confine a child to prison you must have walls and I think a very different establishment would be more suitable for the purpose of reformation. I would recommend a small farm, a farm of some ten to twelve acres to be cultivated by spade labour and as remote from a town as could be. I have some means of ascertaining that there is no need for confinement.

An important task was to publicize the school's existence to magistrates, police and other people who dealt with criminal juveniles. It was also necessary to stress that the school's purpose was primarily to decrease juvenile crime and not solely to relieve parents from the duty of caring for their wayward children and parishes from the duty of supporting their poor.

Once the three London boys had settled down they were joined by four young thieves from Cheltenham. Later, in October of 1852, two boys from Bristol, one from Gloucester and another from Horsley were admitted. All were aged between 11 and 15 and had been in prison at least once in their lives. Also in October George Bengough reported on the school to the county Quarter Sessions,⁹ claiming credit that it had

kept for so many months out of mischief, at a very small expense, boys who would probably have been doing a good deal towards filling our prisons at a cost considerably greater.

The early results of the experiment were fairly encouraging and during 1853 the school was enlarged to accommodate 20 boys and the area of land under cultivation was increased to 10 acres. In December 1853¹⁰ there were 24 boys in the school. Seven others had left during the year, two had gone into service and one had joined relatives in America. Four boys had left in unsatisfactory circumstances, either by failing to return from a visit to their parents or by being taken away by parents. At that time the school's managers had no legal powers to keep boys at the school. Attendance was voluntary and the only authority they had was the parents' consent given by signature to their son being kept during the managers' pleasure. Most parents managed to contribute towards their sons' maintenance. Only a few paid nothing at all.

The parliamentary Bill drawn up following the select committee's recommendations sparked off a lively debate about reformatory schools and the proposed powers for magistrates to send convicted juveniles to them. In 1853 no children were sent to Hardwicke by the courts and the same was true for reformatory schools elsewhere in the country. Because they relied on voluntary subscriptions such schools were few at that time. Besides Hardwicke the only others were in Bristol, London, Droitwich, Birmingham and Newcastle-on-Tyne. Although magistrates began sending some deserving cases to Hardwicke and other reformatories using an Act of 1838, under which the Crown could pardon young offenders on condition they went to a charitable institution approved by the Secretary of State,¹¹ the new legislation needed to provide magistrates with greater powers.

During 1853 and 1854 meetings were held throughout the country to petition parliament that schools to reform juvenile criminals might be 'fostered and multiplied'. Baker himself spoke of his experience at many such meetings and wrote numerous papers on the subject. On 20 December 1853 the largest meeting was held in Birmingham to discuss the necessity of reformatory schools and to promote such schools throughout the kingdom both by legislation and some pecuniary assistance. Baker gave a full account of the Hardwicke school and other speakers included the eminent philanthropist Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury, and Sir John Pakington, Bt., M.P. for Droitwich.¹²

The campaign led to the passing of a Youthful Offenders Act on 10 August 1854.¹³ The Act laid down that

Whenever . . . any persons under the age of sixteen years shall be convicted of any offence punishable by law . . . it shall be lawful for . . . any two or more justices of the peace . . . before or by whom such offenders shall be convicted, in addition to the sentence then and there passed as a punishment for his offence, to direct such offender to be sent, at the expiration of his sentence, to one of the aforesaid reformatory schools to be named in such direction . . . and to be there detained for a period not less than two years and not exceeding five years.

The Act also provided that when parents failed to pay their child's maintenance costs the Treasury could pay those costs either in whole or in part. The Act also laid down that any child absconding from a reformatory would be liable to imprisonment. It also gave guidance on establishing reformatory schools and placed such schools under the supervision of the prison inspectorate.

Government help with maintenance must have been good news to the managers of the Hardwicke school. In 1854 the weekly maintenance fee was 5s. for each convicted boy and in January 1856 it was raised to 7s. The Children's Friend Reform School at Hardwicke was the first county reformatory and, although it was approved by the Secretary of State in 1853, it received no help with maintenance payments until it received its first convicted boys in 1854. The school was awarded its first certificate as a reformatory school on 4 October 1854 and only then did it have a legal power to detain boys. Hardwicke was the first reformatory school in the country to be so certified. Also in 1854 it was renamed the Children's Friend Reformatory School and in 1856 it became the Hardwicke Reformatory.

Life at the School

Once the school was licensed to accept convicted offenders it began to attract attention and receive visits from social reformers, including members of parliament. In January 1854 *The Times* published a short account of the school:

There are at present 17 inmates, who are properly taken care of, and taught and employed. A recent visitor states that when he went there most of the boys were at work at spade husbandry, but two or three were occupied at household work. One was sitting cross-legged mending his trousers. The history of this boy is a melancholy one. Although only fourteen, he was seven times convicted as a thief in London and was brought to Hardwicke by Mr Bengough. The boy seemed willing to answer questions, but did not exhibit the least compunction for his misdeeds. He was neglected by his father, and in order to indulge his taste for cheap theatres he began to rob shop-tills, which soon procured him a cell in the Westminster house of correction. A note is taken of the character and conduct of the boys, and the utmost exertions are used to reform them. The boys have a regular routine of duties to perform, but time is allowed for recreation. They are, of

course, instructed in religion. Their studies comprise writing, reading, and elementary geography. On one day a week drawing is also taught. Their work consists of outdoor agricultural labour, and in wet weather they are employed at basket-making indoors, and some of them at tailoring and shoemaking. They are punished if they behave badly and rewarded for good conduct.

The article attracted considerable attention and was reproduced in many other newspapers throughout the kingdom. Juvenile offenders were a national problem and in London alone there were estimated to be 20,000 children involved in pilfering. Many were orphans and others had parents who did not care for them and, in some cases, sent them out to steal. It was in a quiet backwater of rural Gloucestershire that a new start had been made to help some youthful offenders and it soon appeared that the Hardwicke experiment would be successful.

Baker described the school to a meeting of the British Association at Liverpool on 26 September 1854:¹⁴

Our own school with its plain red brick gables and its low tiled roof will . . . be not an objectionable looking building to see on one's estate. But this excites no envy, no feeling among the honest poor that 'there is a grand place built for thieves while I and my honest wife and children are forced to put up with a wretched cottage'.

With regard to the locality I . . . attribute much of the ease of our success to the fact of the school being placed in the middle of my own estate. Had a committee purchased a piece of land it would hardly have been possible to prevent all the neighbours taking fright at the colony of thieves established close to them . . . For the same reason I would not have it near a village, as the less they see of their neighbours the better. At the same time . . . it should be within a reasonable distance . . . of the church, as if it be much further, weather may occasionally prevent their attending it; and a regular habit of church going I believe to have an important effect on the future character.

The quantity of land required we find to be about half an acre (of stiff clay) to a boy, but after it has been well dug for some years it will become lighter and they can do more . . . The bailiff is a farmer used to superintending workpeople, who . . . treats them [the boys] exactly as experience has taught him to treat his own workpeople or his own children . . . He has a mild gentle manner, with undeniable firmness. He . . . will strictly obey our orders and above all his heart is in it.

[The post of schoolmaster] is a difficult office to fill . . . To find a man who will teach for two hours and a half per day . . . who can . . . believe and feel that the converting the pests of society . . . is as useful and as honourable an occupation as that of giving plough boys a correct knowledge of the position of the antarctic circle . . . is as yet a difficult person to find . . . Many a lad in our training schools is unable to pass the high examination required . . . Many of these may have courage, coolness, discipline and a heart in the right place, and . . . they may possibly make not less useful, not less honoured, men than others who have taken a first-class certificate.

We have . . . taken a labourer at 1s. per week above labourer's wages to work and superintend one of the gangs. He . . . will earn his wages on the land, and with thirty-six boys, with no fence around them, two superintendents are scarcely enough.

Besides this, we receive help kindly given us by many of our neighbours. Our vicar and his curate occasionally call in a class from the field and give that instruction which a layman cannot give with the same authority. Mr. Watts . . . has offered to be our gratuitous medical officer on the condition that we sent for him exactly as often as if we had paid him . . . Mr. Wilton, . . . a solicitor of as high standing in Gloucester as can well be, gives us our indentures for our apprentices and any advice which may be needed. Mr. Thompson, the eminent drainer, had draining tools made for us, and sent a ganger for as long as we required him to teach our boys how to use them. But in truth all our neighbours help us in a way we could scarcely expect them to help paid Government officials, or even a large establishment set up by the county under an official committee.

The school buildings – a cottage for the bailiff and his family, two rooms and a schoolroom for the schoolmaster, a dormitory for twenty boys, a carpenters' shop, pigsties for sixteen pigs, stalls for three cows and a barn – had been provided at a cost of £250. They were of such a construction that had the school been closed they could at any time have been converted into labourers' cottages. The school's running costs in the first eighteen months, including the provision of furniture and the payment of salaries, amounted to £400. Taking into account the value of capital stock, the net cost was £230, or a little more than £11 a head annually. Despite the lowness of that figure Baker apologized to his supporters, pleading initial inexperience as the reason for the cost not being lower.¹⁵ The managers quickly dismissed the idea of sending boys out to the colonies as it was felt to be too drastic a measure. Instead it was decided to train them to be farm labourers. Baker described his plan for apprenticing boys to farmers in a letter to the *Gloucester Journal*:¹⁶

I would propose that a farmer wishing to take an apprentice should go to his landlord or his clergyman or some gentleman residing within 2 or 3 miles of him. That this gentleman should write to me something in this fashion – 'I know Mr A. I know that he is a good intelligent farmer, a strict master but a kind one. He will give his servant a sharp word or a sharp cut if he does wrong, but if he does right he will give him a good word or show that he takes an interest in him. I undertake to receive from him and to pay you the necessary sum and moreover I will see the boy now and then – about once in 3 months – and will let you know how he is going on'. The farmer would then come in and take a boy who appears to suit him. He is bound by indentures on the following terms. The farmer takes him for 5 years. For the first 2 years he gives him his board, lodging, washing and clothing only. The third year he gives to a neighbour six pence a week to keep for him; the fourth a shilling a week, the fifth one and sixpence a week in addition to keep. This sum will be given to the boy if he serves out his time with a good character; if not it will be given to the support of the school. If at any time the boy turns out ill, or turns out unsatisfactory, the master simply returns him to us and we are bound by a clause in the indenture to receive him again and to release the master from the apprenticeship. If the boy behaves well and serves his time with credit it is most probable that his master will retain him and he will start a new life with a good character, a good place and some £7 or £8 in the savings bank. Some object that this militates against our first principle, not to allow the effects of crime to lead to a rise in life. Very little consideration would obviate this objection. We do not give our boys any advantage which the sons of honest labourers could not get if they so pleased.

The educational achievements of the boys arriving at Hardwicke varied. While many had been taught reading, writing, elementary arithmetic and geography, some were completely ignorant and did not know the letters of the alphabet. Some had a considerable knowledge of scripture and others did not know the first elements of religion. In the school two hours at night were devoted to instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and general knowledge. Those who were very backward were given additional teaching for a short period during the day. Religious instruction was by a short practical lesson at the daily morning prayers. The catechism of the Church of England was taught one day a week and the boys were all taken to church twice on Sundays. The boys must have looked forward to attending church. There they had an opportunity to see other people and, although they were forbidden to talk to the villagers, they must have lost no opportunity in contacting some of them. Baker's wife, Mary, wrote in her diary for 22 July 1852 of a fracas at the new school, following the discovery that boys had been writing love letters to girls in the village. The entry in her husband's diary for the same day also referred to the incident. The outcome of the affair is unknown.

An inventory of 1853¹⁷ listed two deal tables, six benches, a shoemaker's bench, three maps, a

stove and pipe and an easel and blackboard in the schoolroom. The dormitory accommodated twenty boys and allowed a space of 3 by 6 ft for each one, leaving a narrow passage down the centre of the room. On each hammock was a stuffed straw mattress, a pair of sheets, a blanket and a counterpane. The inventory also recorded 59 shirts, 58 pocket handkerchiefs, 58 neck cloths, 58 pairs of stockings, 29 caps, 29 pairs of boots, 31 jackets, 16 waistcoats with sleeves, 29 pairs of trousers and some material not made up. The school uniform also included a suit of cord and a jacket replaced on working days by a short smock of duck worn over the waistcoat. The school diet consisted of skimmed milk, bread (about 10 oz at each meal of which it formed the main part), vegetables, rice, cheese, soup and meat in small quantities three times a week (4 oz cooked to each boy). Occasionally about half a pint of common cider and a little tea and butter were provided on Sundays. The boys were bathed once a fortnight except during the summer months when they were allowed to bathe once or twice in the canal and to learn to swim. The school timetable changed very little over the years.

GENERAL TIME TABLE¹⁸

WEEKDAYS		SUNDAYS	
A.M.		A.M.	
5.30 to 6.00	Rise, Dress, Private Prayers, Wash, &c.	7.00 to 8.00	Rise, Dress, Private Prayers, &c.
6.00 to 7.45	Schooling, Winter months. In Summer, out to Work.	8.00 to 9.00	Breakfast, Family Prayer, &c.
7.45 to 8.45	Family Prayers, read Psalms for the day, and Breakfast	9.00 to 10.0	Religious Instruction
8.45 to 1.00	Industrial Employment. On wet days, Schooling	10.00 to 1.00	Church
P.M.		P.M.	
1.00 to 2.00	Assemble, Wash, Dinner, Recreation	1.00 to 2.30	Dinner and Recreation
2.00 to 5.30	Industrial Employment	2.30 to 4.30	Religious Instruction, Collects and Gospel, or Church in Winter
5.30 to 6.30	Assemble, Wash, Supper	4.30 to 5.30	Supper and Recreation
6.30 to 8.30	Schooling	5.30 to 6.00	Prepare for Church
8.30 to 8.45	Family Prayers, Private Prayers, and bed	6.00 to 8.00	Church or Religious Instruction, Singing Hymns, Reading, &c., and bed
*	Stock boys, Cooks, Tailors, rise at 5.30 a.m., in charge of Officer, and changed alternately.		Stock boys rise at 6 a.m., with Officer In charge, also Cook and Post Boy.

NOTE: - On Saturdays the boys cease to work out of doors at 1.30 p.m. Saturday afternoons and evenings are spent in preparing for Sunday - bathing, changing linen, recreation, Scripture, and learning Collects and Gospels, &c., &c.
Every inmate is thoroughly bathed once a fortnight, and during the summer months the boys are allowed to bathe once or twice in the Canal, and learn to swim.
August, 1870. (Signed) THOMAS GEE, Governor.

To encourage those who were inclined to work well and were of good general conduct, a scale of rewards was adopted in 1854. The highest reward was 6*d.* a week and all rewards were subject to deductions for infraction of any of the school rules. The amount earned by each boy was put to his credit or was sometimes paid in goods like additional luxuries at mealtimes. The mark system was described in 1858:¹⁹

Each boy can earn 6 daily marks, namely 2 for general conduct, 2 for work in school and 2 for labour – the last not being given on Sunday. At the end of the week he receives 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 judgement marks according to the number of weekly marks earned. The school is divided into four classes and a probationary or disgrace class in which all boys spend their first fortnight. At the end of this time if their conduct is fair they enter the 4th class and here they remain for one sixth of their sentence and until such time as they have gained the full amount of judgement marks that by excellent conduct could have been gained in that time. They then move up gaining certain immediate advantages and have to obtain a similar number of marks in each class. In this manner by the best possible conduct a boy will reach the first class exactly at the end of half of his sentence, plus the first fortnight spent in probation. Until they have attained this position they are not entitled to the privilege of a licence to leave the school which is permitted by law at the expiration of half the sentence.

The managers avoided rigid military-type discipline. Order and general obedience were enforced ordinarily by a system of fines and in some cases by a light use of the cane. Heavier infractions of school rules were treated by a short period of solitary confinement in a lighted cell and on bread and water. Only twice during the first two years was punishment administered publicly with a birch rod. Any petty acts of dishonesty, of which the instances were very few and slight, were usually dealt with by deprivation of certain liberties and privileges.

In the summer of 1861 the Hardwicke school received a visit from Professor von Holtzendorff, a German philanthropist, who met Baker at a conference in Dublin. By that time Baker was universally recognised as having established the first reformatory school for young criminals and thereby having turned the tide of legislation in favour of such schools. Von Holtzendorff described his visit to the school:²⁰

in a quarter of an hour, during which time the squire explained to me the principles of his agricultural work, we reached the Hardwicke Court Reformatory. The superintendent expected us and had assembled his lads, most of them between 12 and 15. Their tools were lying near them and they had just begun digging. We went among them. Baker raised his finger and conducted a song which was given in unison and with spirit. Then we went into the simply furnished schoolroom. The result of an examination in elementary subjects was to obtain accurate and ready answers to our questions. After the lapse of an hour the field work, which had temporarily suspended, was resumed. In a brief address the boys were exhorted to prove themselves worthy of the honour shown to them by the visit of a foreigner, and with a 'Hurrah', we left . . . What struck me most was the unmistakable look of cheerful industry and the shade of complexion which made such a striking contrast to the pale, cadaverous, expressionless faces of the young shoemakers and tailors in the industrial reformatories in the towns.

The Boys

What effect did the reformatory have on its earliest inmates? Of the three boys brought from London by Bengough one aged 12 had been neglected by his father and convicted seven times as a thief. In January 1854²¹ Baker described him as a

repeatedly convicted boy who at his first coming was a shameless liar thoroughly intractable, frequently obliged to be locked up and exceedingly irreverent in his general behaviour; but within six months he became amenable to discipline and desirous of doing better for his own sake. I watched this poor boy gradually becoming obedient, steady, truthful and trustworthy to a degree which gives us hope that he and others may yet be saved from their own destruction.

After spending 27 months in the school the boy was helped to emigrate to Australia where he did well. The second London boy spent 19 months at Hardwicke before being placed in service at Aust where he too did well. The third boy absconded from the school after 16 months while visiting his parents at their request. Of the other eight boys admitted in the first year, one absconded without trace and another returned to bad company and was eventually sentenced to penal servitude. The other six were found suitable positions and all did well. Baker felt strongly that boys who had erred should have the chance to redeem themselves and opportunities to make amends.

At the end of 1853 there were 24 boys in the school – 14 from Gloucestershire, 3 from Bristol and 7 from elsewhere. During the year three boys had left and gone into service but four others had absconded, two of them returning to their parents. The managers expressed their disappointment and blamed their failures on inexperience and the lack of legal powers to detain boys against their parents' wishes. The school report of January 1854²² gave an account of the progress of individual inmates:

Number 6, 18 months in the school, a vagrant, never convicted – with all the restlessness, idleness and nastiness of his class, is becoming greatly accustomed to the habit of steady industry. Number 10 aged 14, 16 months in school, repeatedly convicted, at first thoroughly intractable and violent, unmanageable by his father, is now steady and obedient and likely to help his father who is anxious to have him return home. Number 5 although, from having been allowed to leave too soon, he slightly deteriorated from the improved condition to which he had been brought and has now returned again to the school after having partially relapsed into crime, is still very far removed from the utterly degraded listless and apathetic state to which he had been reduced, mainly by his father's ill-usage when he was first received. Number 14 at first manifested a thoroughly undisciplined and discontented disposition has very greatly improved.

In early 1854 Hardwicke began receiving boys pardoned by the courts on condition they spend a certain number of years in the reformatory. The first boy admitted that way, Daniel Wayman, aged 15 of Cheltenham, had been found guilty of stealing hay and sentenced to three months' hard labour. He was pardoned on 10 February and was immediately collected from Gloucester gaol and taken to Hardwicke by George Bengough. On 21 February Robert Emmerson and Thomas Hayes, both aged 13 and of Cheltenham, were charged with stealing and sentenced to three months' hard labour. A month later they were pardoned conditionally and went to Hardwicke. Ragan Williams, aged 10, of Chedworth was convicted on 20 August 1853 for setting fire to a hayrick. His sentence was four years' penal servitude but on 10 May 1854 he too received a pardon and went to the school. On 17 October of the same year George Dee, aged 9, of Cheltenham was charged with stealing and sentenced to four months' hard labour. He soon received a pardon on condition that he went to the reformatory.

Daniel Wayman spent only eight months in the reformatory, probably because of his age, and was apprenticed to a farmer at Brimpsfield. Another boy apprenticed in 1854 was George Cole of Randwick. According to the Gloucester gaol records on 27 March 1850, when aged 10, he was charged with breaking and entering and sentenced to three months' hard labour, including several days in solitary confinement. By 1854 he was an inmate of the reformatory and had earned a degree of trust for the managers apprenticed him to John Kimbury, a farmer at nearby Quedgeley. The third boy apprenticed in 1854 was Stephen Philpotts, of Moreton-in-Marsh. On 5 February 1853, when aged 13, he had been found guilty of stealing a fowl and sentenced to a month's hard labour. As his mother was dead and his father was to be transported, it appears that Stephen was sent to Hardwicke at the end of his gaol sentence. Baker wrote to his lawyer Robert Wilton²³

Will you kindly draw the indentures according to the enclosed form binding Stephen Philpotts as farm servant to Thomas Pipon, Joyce Grove, Nettlebed. I enclose his note thereto. Philpotts' father was I believe sentenced to transportation for life for an abominable crime this assizes, so the son is well to be out of it. Poor fellow, he showed excellent feeling towards his beast of a father. Thank God he is likely to turn out well.

With the passage of the Juvenile Offenders Act in August 1854 magistrates had the power to commit children to reformatories at the end of their gaol sentence. The first boy sent to Hardwicke from Gloucester gaol under that power was Benjamin Cummings, aged 10, of Cheltenham. He had been charged on 17 October 1854 with stealing a mare and had been sentenced to three months' hard labour to be followed by two years at the Hardwicke reformatory. In January 1855 John Cox and William Priest, both aged 14 and of Gloucester, were charged with stealing sweetmeats and sentenced to fourteen days' hard labour in the house of correction followed by two years at Hardwicke. On 2 June John Jackson and Thomas Palmer, both aged 14 and of Wotton-under-Edge, were charged with stealing and sentenced to three months' hard labour and two years at Hardwicke. On 12 June Charles Workman, aged 12 of Coaley, charged with breaking and entering, had a similar sentence as did Alfred Betteridge, aged 14 of Coberley, who was charged with stealing from his master.

Save for a few exceptions such as that of Stephen Philpotts, parents were expected to pay for their sons' maintenance at Hardwicke. The fee set at the school's foundation was 1s. a week but that seemed too much for some families. Alfred Betteridge's father, Thomas, objected to paying for his son and, in the first case of its kind in the locality, was summoned to appear at the Upton petty sessions where he was ordered to pay. His weekly earnings were 10s. and he had three other children to support.²⁴

Thomas Baker had strong views on the subject of parental contributions. They were expounded in the school report of 1859:²⁵

Payment of maintenance must be guided solely by the magistrates of the district in which the parents live. If they are kindhearted and say 'Here is a poor man earning ten shillings a week, I do not see how he can live on it; we will tell him to pay sixpence a week and not enforce it.' Depend on it! Manage the school as we will, some parents will try to get the children off their hands. If on the other hand, the magistrates say that TB has ten shillings a week, two shillings for rent and fuel which are not ceased by taking the boy away; that leaves two shillings for the man and his wife and one shilling each for four children, therefore he can pay one shilling a week for his boy without being any the worse; but he ought to be worse off than the man who had brought up his children well; therefore we would suggest his paying one shilling and sixpence a week. Were this done, although there might be a parent here and there who did not know the facts and might wish his son in a reformatory, the number of such would be small and decrease rapidly.

By January 1856 the school had admitted 94 boys. Of these, 5 had absconded, 3 had been removed without consent, 15 had been apprenticed or put to a trade, 3 had been placed in service, 6 had gone to sea, and one had emigrated. Another 31 had been sent to other schools and 30, including 6 who had been readmitted, remained in the reformatory. The sending of 31 boys to other establishments was one of Baker's schemes. He knew from experience that it was difficult to start a school with a good moral tone. Where all the boys were unruly it was difficult to reform any of them, but once habits of order and discipline had been imposed on the majority it was easier to pacify and train newcomers. Acting on that idea he suggested to managers of new schools elsewhere that taking a number of boys who had been partly trained at Hardwicke would be of benefit to their reformatories. When boys were sent from Hardwicke

Baker agreed in return to admit half the number of newly convicted boys to his establishment. In that way the Hardwicke Reformatory technique spread over the country.

There were, of course, failures. One was described in the school report for 1861:²⁶

Relapse is occasionally found in a boy with a violent and passionate temperament; this is sad because the boys often have much good feeling in them and a wish to do right. I received one boy of this character from Cheltenham. I allowed him to go into service in a large town where I afterwards found he had been in the habit of going when the Cheltenham police were in hot pursuit of him. In this town he well knew every den of iniquity and yet he continued honest to his employer for more than 12 months; at the end of this time some of his old associates found him out and drove him into leaving his service. The moment he again embarked in crime he became perfectly reckless and after the first punishment went and broke into a house where he could not have hoped to escape detection. He was sentenced to 7 years penal servitude. I saw him on his return from Bermuda apparently hard and reckless but with the aid of others he was persuaded to emigrate and I have ever hoped he would do well.

The boy concerned was one of the four thieves brought from Cheltenham at the start of the Hardwicke experiment.

The Reformatory System

Reformatories are like hospitals – most valuable for serious cases; that is for cases where other remedies have been tried and failed.²⁷

According to the school's managers its success depended on three criteria – deterrence, reformation and detention.

Deterrence was aimed primarily at ensuring that boys were reformed before they were sent to the reformatory. It was to be achieved by the sentence of imprisonment meted out in the magistrates' court. The length of imprisonment, between one and three weeks, varied according to the gravity of the crime. As a general rule a boy convicted for the first time was sentenced to a week in gaol with a caution that for a second offence he would be sent to the reformatory and his parents made to pay for his upkeep there. If that child did appear a second time he was sent to the school for a period of between two and five years.

In those days to spend even a week in prison was to ensure hardship. The diet was incredibly meagre, only bread and water and in limited quantities. The regime was so unpleasant that no child would want to be incarcerated a second time. One boy told his friends that imprisonment had half killed him and believed that a month inside would have done so. Boys were left in no doubt that prison was a most disagreeable place, to be avoided especially as the next conviction would also mean at least two years in a reformatory for which their parents would have to pay. The imposition of parental payment, enforced by the prospect of ten days' imprisonment for non-payment, was intended to persuade parents to ensure their children stayed honest.

In 1881²⁸ Thomas Baker wrote

I have always advocated a short imprisonment, not in order to complete punishment and wipe off the debt to society, but to impress on the boy's mind the feeling that he has done wrong, and to prepare him to receive the milder discipline of the reformatory.

It was not until 1893 that reformatory places became available to boys who had not undergone a sentence of imprisonment.

Reformation, of great importance in the diminution of crime, was a difficult objective. In a letter of 6 December 1856²⁹ to James Francillon, chairman of the county Quarter Sessions and a member of the reformatory's governing committee, Baker wrote

If a boy, in spite of his first warning, does commit another crime, he will merit a very heavy punishment in the reformatory and the longer his sentence the more likely he is to settle into the school discipline and the better his chance of real reformation. However we do not propose to be infallible in turning bad boys into good. We may bend nature but we cannot transform it. Some boys have minds hopelessly deformed and the evil principle at the end of two years is only suppressed but smouldering and ready to break out again at any moment. Others are hopelessly weak, full of good intentions but incapable of resisting temptation, they are as unstable as water. Whether four or five years of discipline might enable them to become stronger I know not. Still if we cannot reform them we can give them a fair opportunity for amendment.

As for *Detention* the reformatory was not a refuge but an institution, aimed at reducing crime. Discipline was absolute, work was hard and even for very young offenders freedom could be curtailed for up to five years. At the end of his stay at the reformatory a boy had the chance of maintaining himself honestly. During his detention he would have had a decent education, including moral teaching, and would have discontinued the practice of crime and bad associations.

The school managers soon realised that crime could be dramatically reduced by detaining those boys more frequently convicted. They were usually professional thieves operating in gangs with the help of even younger associates. In a letter to the *Gloucestershire Chronicle* of 17 September 1856 Baker wrote

As I have stated before, my object has always been not so much a mere reformation of boys who have fallen into crime as to preventing others hitherto uncontaminated from catching the infection. It is known to all who have studied the subject that boys almost always learn crime from other boys. I do not mean to deny the existence of a 'Fagan' but I cannot think but such are extremely rare in all but large towns. All the boys in this county who have had any education in crime have learned it from boys under 16.

Cheltenham alone produced as many young thieves as the rest of the county. During 1852 45 boys from Cheltenham were imprisoned and four years later 53. The police eventually found out who were the leaders of the Cheltenham gangs and in 1856 two master thieves were caught. They confessed to having trained eight younger boys in that year. After a short imprisonment they were sent to Hardwicke. Of the younger boys some were frightened by the loss of their leaders and left the neighbourhood and others turned more or less honest. The following year only 14 boys overall were convicted. The strategy of catching trained thieves to prevent them corrupting others proved very successful.

In a letter to Lord Stanley in October 1861 Baker explained his reformatory principles,³⁰ that

the reformation of the individuals who were committed to us, important as that might be, was but our second object. That our more important and far more effective work was – not the reforming *one* who had fallen into crime, but the preventing *two* from falling. The preventing the hitherto innocent from being infected by the already guilty, and the so dealing with the latter as to effectually prevent his progress in crime. The former object to be gained by weeding out *all* the corrupters from each district, the latter to be attained, if possible, by what is properly called Reformation; but where this fails, as fail it will sometimes, by retaining such a hold on him as to at least incapacitate him from continuing his course of crime. The effect of the prevention I

particularly watched where I could: first in Cheltenham, where I made my first attempt at weeding . . . then in Gloucester, Stroud and the rest of the county, and then in Bristol where I managed better and . . . lowered crime in about six months.

The early success of the Hardwicke reformatory led to a sharp drop in the number of boys convicted at the county Quarter Sessions for a second offence. Between 1855 and 1858 the number of boys appearing following a first conviction fell from fourteen to five. The decrease was a victory for the reformatory idea. From the onset it had been hoped that the Hardwicke school would help lower the incidence of juvenile crime and local magistrates had made a point of committing every boy on his second conviction to the reformatory. By 1858 the number of juvenile offenders had dropped dramatically. The managers of the Hardwicke reformatory must have been elated at the success of their experiment.

By 1857 most English counties had reformatory schools for young offenders. The juvenile crime rate fell steadily from 13,981 convictions in 1856 to 8,913 in 1859, a reduction of 36.2%.³¹

Juvenile crime remained low in Gloucestershire and the Hardwicke reformatory began to take boys from other parts of the country. Baker continued to write reports and letters and to lecture on the subject for the rest of his life. He died in 1886. Thomas Gee, the farm bailiff who was known as the school governor from 1854, was consulted on practical matters as reformatory schools were established throughout the country. George Bengough, the Hardwicke school's other founder, died in 1865, but not before he had helped to start a reformatory at Kingswood, Bristol.

After nearly twelve years as manager of the school Thomas Baker gave up the greater part of the direction because of a breakdown in health and failing eyesight. John Dorrington, owner of the Lypiatt Park estate near Stroud, took on the role of acting manager and he was succeeded by Baker's son Granville Edwin Lloyd Baker. Granville inherited the Hardwicke estate on his father's death. The reformatory continued its work and gradually extended its premises. By 1904 it had accommodation for 100 boys. On the passing of the 1922 Probation Act new forms of treatment for juvenile offenders were introduced and on 25 March 1922, after 70 years of work, the Hardwicke reformatory closed.

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