

THE POOR LAW RECORDS OF BITTON, 1771 - 1830

by J.W. Wyatt

Volume V of Gloucestershire Historical Studies contained a general review of the Overseers' Accounts from 1771 to 1821. Such an article tends to emphasise the more interesting entries in the accounts, just as a newspaper emphasises the more interesting happenings of the day rather than giving a balanced account of the normal life of the populace. To rectify any distortion in the picture given of the administration of the old poor laws in Bitton, this article presents a detailed analysis of the Overseers' Accounts for two periods: the three years 1771-74, and two years 1828-30.

The analysis is not as complete or methodical as could be desired. It fails to show the cost to the parish of the births and maintenance of illegitimate children. The presentation of the accounts precluded this. Entries relating to the support of families stricken by small-pox sometimes give the combined cost of maintenance and 'necessaries', and other ambiguities occasionally occur. To understand the analysis fully the notes on each individual heading which follow it should be read. The writer must also admit to making a small margin of error in sorting out and totalling the individual entries in the account books. Such errors and ambiguities, however, are not sufficient to make any significant distortion of the analysis or the conclusions to be drawn from it.

The accounts give a fairly clear picture of the Workhouse, where the children were maintained and set to work until 1790, but little information can be gleaned from them as to the administration of the Poor House for adults: no mention is made of any master or supervisor; of food being bought for the inmates; only occasionally of coal being provided. As far as one can gather from the accounts the inmates, or families of inmates, were given a weekly allowance of money and lived in the Workhouse rent free, buying their own provisions and looking after themselves or helping each other, though in some years at least a woman was paid 2s.0d. a week 'for looking after the poor.'

In the earlier period, 1771-74, there was possibly more than one Poor House for references are made to 'the Poor House', 'the Little House at Upton' and 'the house at Westdover'. From 1828 to 1830 reference is made only to 'the Poor House'. This must have been a large building: an entry in September, 1827, reads 'For sweeping Nine Chimneys at the Poor House 3s.0d.' Occasional references are made to the purchase of equipment, saucepans, balances, etc., for it. The buying of coal for individual persons stated to be in the Poor House supports the supposition that each family lived and provided for itself separately. As there were at least nine fireplaces the Poor House was big enough for this. When a person entered the Poor House any property he owned was made over to the parish.

TABLE A. ANALYSIS OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE

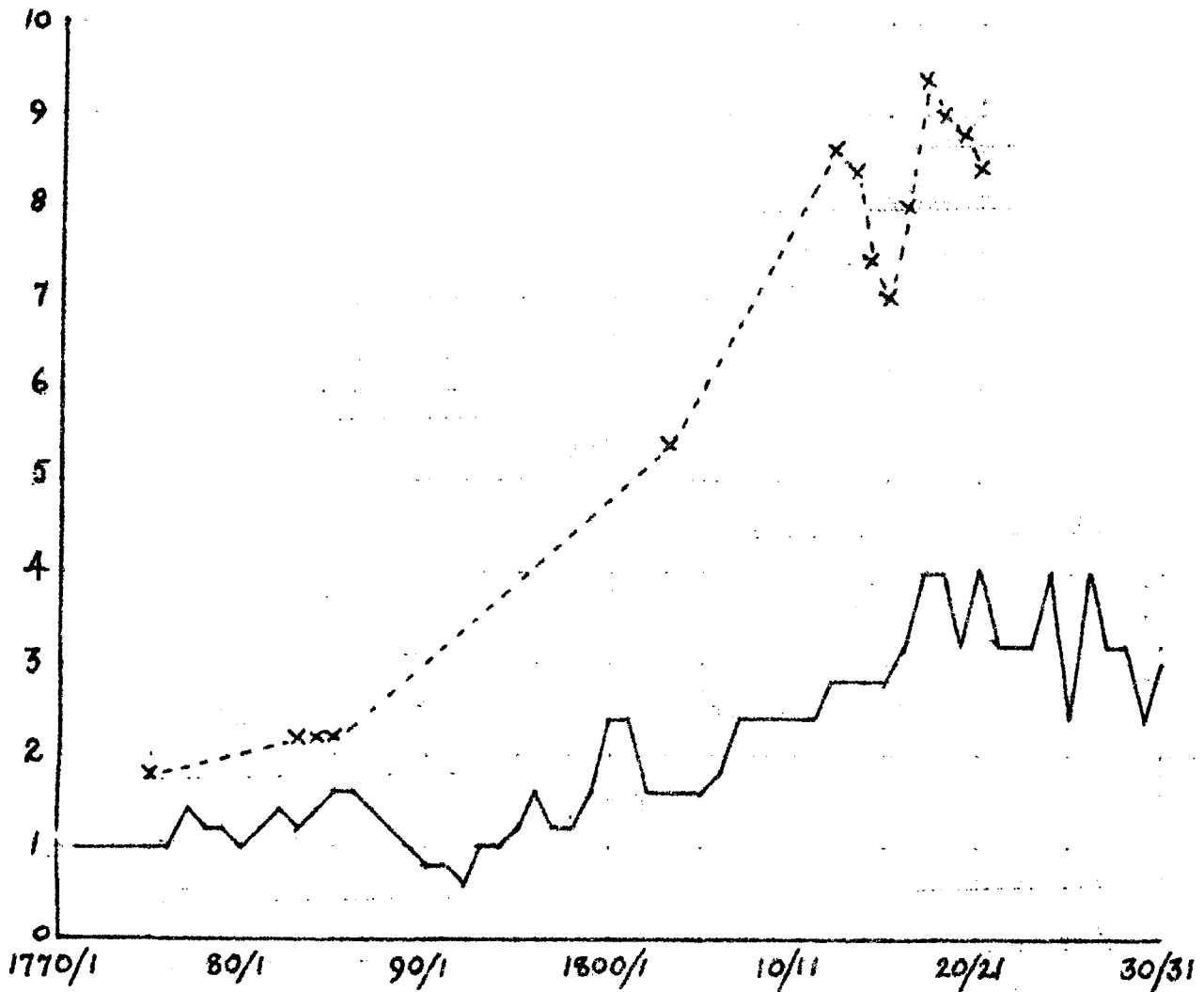
<u>A. ADMINISTRATION & LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>1771-1774</u>			<u>1828-1830</u>		
	£	s	d	£	s	d
1. Parish Meetings	9	10	4½	1	0	0
2. Salary: Acting Overseer	22	19	0	100	0	0
3. Stationery & Postage	1	9	8	6	3	11½
4. Maintenance Parish Property	10	4	1	43	5	3
5. Rent. Workhouse & Poor House	34	14	6	-	-	-
6. Legal Expenses General	19	13	8	35	3	9½
7. " " Bastardy	12	16	11	20	3	3
8. " " Settlement & Removal	11	13	8	25	11	6
9. Inquests, etc.	-	-	-	26	4	9
Total	123	1	10½	257	12	6
<u>B. COUNTY RATE</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>317</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>C. CASH PAYMENTS TO POOR</u>						
1. Weekly List	366	17	6	1006	8	3
2. Casual Payments	105	9	7	198	1	11
3. For Labour	-	-	-	5	14	2
4. To Vagrants	-	-	-	2	5	7½
5. For Children in Workhouse	96	8	2	-	-	-
Total	568	15	3	1212	9	11½
<u>D. HELP TO POOR IN KIND</u>						
1. Clothes & Shoes	20	16	8	19	9	7¼
2. Bedding & Blankets	3	17	1½	1	10	8
3. Coal	-	-	-	1	19	11
4. Coal for Workhouse & Poor House	20	4	6		6	10
5. Rent, Rates & House Repairs	13	5	3	3	0	8
6. Club Money	-	-	-	8	11	1
Total	58	3	6½	34	18	9¼
<u>E. APPRENTICESHIPS</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
<u>F. FUNERALS</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>G. MEDICAL</u>						
1. Doctor	32	14	3	29	11	6
2. Nursing	6	3	2½	2	4	6
3. Soap & Medicine		1	3	1	11	3½
4. Hospitals	3	7	6	141	16	6
Total	42	6	2½	175	3	9½
<u>H. ERRORS</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>2</u>		<u>1</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>10</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>830</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>0½</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>8½</u>

TABLE B. AVERAGE YEARLY EXPENDITURE

A. <u>ADMINISTRATION & LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	<u>1771-1774</u>			<u>1828-1830</u>		
	£	s	d	£	s	d
1. Parish Meetings	3	3	5½	10	0	
2. Salary. Acting Overseer	7	13	0	50	0	0
3. Stationery & Postage		9	10½	3	2	0
4. Maintenance Parish Property	3	8	0½	21	12	7½
5. Rent Workhouse & Poor House	11	11	6	-	-	-
6. Legal Expenses General	6	11	2½	17	11	10½
7. " " Bastardy	4	5	8	10	1	7½
8. " " Settlement & Removal	3	17	10	12	15	9
9. " " Inquests, etc.	-	-	-	13	2	4½
Total	<u>41</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>7½</u>	<u>128</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>3</u>
 B. <u>COUNTY RATE</u>	 <u>5</u>	 <u>8</u>	 <u>0</u>	 <u>158</u>	 <u>18</u>	 <u>8</u>
 C. <u>CASH PAYMENTS TO POOR</u>						
1. Weekly List (inc. Children in Workhouse)	154	8	7	503	4	1½
2. Casual Payments	35	3	2	99	0	11½
3. For Labour	-	-	-	2	17	1
4. To Vagrants	-	-	-	1	2	9¾
Total	<u>189</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>606</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11¾</u>
 D. <u>HELP TO POOR IN KIND</u>						
1. Clothing & Shoes	6	18	10½	9	14	9½
2. Bedding & Blankets	1	5	8½	15	4	
3. Coal	-	-	-	19	11½	
4. Coal for Workhouse & Poor House	6	14	10	3	5	
5. Rent, Rates & House Repairs	4	8	5	1	10	4
6. Club Money	-	-	-	4	5	6½
Total	<u>19</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4½</u>
 E. <u>APPRENTICESHIPS</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
 F. <u>FUNERALS</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>
 G. <u>MEDICAL</u>						
1. Doctor	10	18	1	14	15	9
2. Nursing	2	1	1	1	2	3
3. Soap & Medicine			5	15	7¾	
4. Hospitals	1	2	6	70	18	3
Total	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>10¾</u>
 H. <u>ERRORS</u>		<u>5</u>	<u>4½</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>11</u>	
 TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>276</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>1008</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>

RATE IN £ LEVIED AT BITTON
 (BASED ON ASSESSMENT IN 1770/1. UNITS OF 2s. 6d)

AMOUNT RAISED BY POOR RATES IN ENGLAND & WALES - - X - X - X - - -
 (YEARS MARKED X ONLY. UNITS OF £1 MILL)



A.1. Parish Meetings 1771-74. Held at an inn - sometimes if not always, at the White Hart - at the usual charge of 5s.0d., though sometimes less. 1828-30 Held in the schoolroom at no charge. The £1 spent was for beer on Turnover Day, March 25th, when the parish officers for the year were appointed and the Weekly List of poor persons to receive regular relief was approved. In some years the accounts state that the beer was for the poor.

A.4. Repair & Maintenance of Parish Property.

1771-74 £3. 14s. spent on hedging and cleaning the ditch around the Poor Tynning; 7s. 7d. for glazing a church window; 15s. 9d. for 'sorting out the Turns' - whatever they were - and sending them to Bristol for repair. The remainder was spent on thatching and repairs at the Poor House.

1828-30 Includes a part charge of £26. 18s. 8d. for surveying and mapping the parish. £100 had previously been paid for this in February 1828. The Poor House was thatched for £5. 7s. 9d., windows repaired, stones hauled to it and rubbish and earth hauled away. The 'privy' was cleaned out for 3s. 0d. and as this operation does not appear to have been carried out very frequently the sixpennyworth of beer provided was, no doubt, welcomed.

A.5. Rent of Workhouse & Poor House

1771-74 A yearly rent of £11 was paid for the Workhouse, or 'Pin House' as it was called, where the pauper children lived and worked. Four year's 'Lords Rent' at 2s. 0d. a year was paid for the Poor House and Charles Whittuck was paid 12s. 0d. rent for the 'Little House at Upton' in 1771/2 and 14s 6d. in 1772/3.

1828-30 The Workhouse had been converted into three tenements, - still standing today - in 1790, and in this period the children lived in the Poor House for which no rent was paid. The Little House at Upton was not mentioned.

A.6. Legal Expenses General This includes the expenses incurred in making and levying the rates; fees paid to magistrates for signing rates and warrants; solicitors' fees; the constable's expenses, and the travelling expenses of the acting overseer and constable, witnesses in court cases, etc. Travelling expenses bore heavily on parishes, like Bitton, far from the county town.

1828-30 Includes £4 for expenses in going to Shrewsbury to arrest Solomon Fry for deserting his family. Joseph Williams was lent £3 'to be returned if he gains his suit'. Mr Wasborough, a lawyer, was paid £3 for 'making a deed from William Green to the overseer'. Green was in receipt of parish relief at the time because of illness and was, presumably, making over his property to the parish.

Solomon Short, a lunatic of Bitton, escaped from Gloucester Asylum. His subsequent arrest and return to Gloucester cost £5 6s. 8d. The constable of Winterbourne was paid £1 3s. for arresting him and bringing him to Bitton; Naish Bush was paid 8d. for making three staples and chaining him in the Poor House; George Bush received 3s. 0d. for attending him during the night, and he and George Haskins were paid £4 for taking him back to Gloucester. The 17s. 0d. paid for a new window in the Poor House is probably connected with Solomon's stay there.

A.7. Legal Expenses Bastardy This includes the cost of taking unmarried, pregnant girls before the magistrates to 'swear the father'; apprehension of putative fathers; etc.

1771-74 John Tyler refused to obey a bastardy order concerning a child born to Betty Tyler. He had been ordered by the magistrate to pay £1 10s. for the 'lying in' and 1s. Od. a week for the child's maintenance. Betty was to pay 6d. a week unless she looked after the child herself. Tyler's arrest and subsequent trial at Gloucester Quarter Sessions for contempt cost Bitton £5 15s. 2d., mostly in travelling expenses. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and fined 1s. Od.

1828-30 The expenses include £11 16s. 3d. spent on the apprehension of Robert Newbury and his forced marriage to the girl he had made pregnant. The accounts record:

'Paid James Bailey and Self going to Pontypool to apprehend Robert Newbury for Bastardy	£3 13s. 9d.
Do. for a licence	£3 3s. Od.
Lent him by order of the parishioners	£1 0s. Od.
Do. fee to Mr Elicombe for Marrying them	£1 6s. Od.
Do. for a Ring	8s. Od.
Do. To our Expences going to Pontypool and bringing Robert Newbury to Upton and Overseers fee their	£2 5s. 6d.'

Forced marriages such as this were not uncommon; pressure was always brought to bear on the putative father and sometimes on the mother. In 1830, just after the end of our period, Sarah Morgan gave birth to an illegitimate child and, under a magistrate's order was sent to Dyrham, her place of settlement, but returned to Bitton. An entry for 14th June, 1830, records payment of 5s. Od. to the Constable for 'Apprehending Sarah Morgan and keeping her in hold until Married.'

A.8. Settlement & Removal In addition to the cost of removing paupers to their place of settlement, this includes the cost of obtaining removal orders from the magistrate and of making enquiries concerning the place of settlement of persons chargeable, or likely to become chargeable, to the parish. An entry for 1825/6 records payment of 1s. Od. for 'Examining Register at St James', Bath, to discover if Widow Bright was married and found she was not'. Disputes between parishes were settled by appeal to Quarter Sessions and involved heavy expenditure particularly if parishes were in different and distant counties.

1771-74 Appeal to Quarter Sessions in 1771/2 concerning a dispute between Bitton and the neighbouring parish of St George's about the settlement of Hannah Newman cost Bitton £8 18s. 2d. including 'Counsellor Vernon his Fee' of £1 1s. Od.; 'My Expences with Mr Bridges, Saml Fox and Hannah Newman to and from Gloucester' £4 7s. 4d.; and £2 2s. Od. for a post-chaise and driver'.

1828-30 Expenses in 1828/9 were slight - £2 3s. 5½d. and include a curious entry: 'Ann Brollings from Devises by Order of Removal, paid her towards buying a Bed to go Back and Settle their' 10s. Od.

In 1829/30 expenses were much heavier and the following persons were removed at the costs given for each:

James Morris and family to Hereford	£4	4s	8½d.
Abigail Neat to Bath		17s	8d
'Dolan's wife' to Ireland		12s	0d
Thomas Mager and family to West Wycombe	£6	4s	0d
Elijah Chambers to Salperton	£5	1s	1d
Abraham Cook to Winterbourne		6s	10d
'Whitcum's wife' to Exeter	£3	1s	3d
Elizabeth Gray to Lincombe	£1	18s	2d

In addition 12s 0d was advanced to Edward Moss to take himself, his wife and family to Abergavenny, and a removal order was made for Thomas Mannington. There was no disputed settlement in this period.

All paupers not settled in Bitton were not removed; people from Oxford and Tidenham remained in Bitton but were supported by their parishes. Similarly the Overseer of Bitton supported parishioners living in Bath, Bedminster, Oldland, Newport, etc.

A.9 Inquests etc.

1771-74 Nil

1828-30 In 1828 an inquest was held on Margaret, wife of Arthur Roberts, feltmaker of Bitton, who was afterwards charged with her murder and tried at Gloucester Assizes. In a fit of jealousy for which there was no justification he beat his wife, blacked both her eyes, covered her face with blood and half strangled her. She died two days later and the surgeon who made a post-mortem examination attributed death to throat injuries. The principal witness at the trial was the next-door neighbour William Short who said that Mrs Roberts 'was a very simple woman: she used to go to Sunday School to learn to read, and I don't think her husband liked her so well for that; she never troubled herself about other people's business, and told but little of her own except when her husband was ill-using her.' Roberts was found not guilty of murder but guilty of manslaughter and received the incredibly light sentence of eighteen months hard labour. The sentence is even more surprising in that at the same assizes two men were condemned to death, and subsequently hanged, for a highway robbery: death was recorded against 27 others for house-breaking or thefts; 2 were transported for 14 years - a woman for receiving stolen clothing, a man for stealing a gun and a pig; and 20 others were sentenced to 7 years transportation.

The inquest and trial cost £22 12s 9d. The surgeon who performed the autopsy received £1 1s 0d. and a further £4 4s 0d for court attendance; counsel for the prosecution was paid £10. A pint of gin at the 'laying out' of Mrs Roberts after the autopsy cost 1s 8d. Included in the expense of the trial is £3 10s 0d. paid to 'Mr Bradley at the inn, Gloucester, during Wm Short's wife Lying In,' and 6s 0d paid to Edith Jeffery for looking after her in Gloucester. William Short was the principal witness at the trial and, presumably, his wife, who attended Margaret Roberts before her death, went with him to Gloucester to give corroboratory evidence but was prevented from doing so by giving birth to a child in Gloucester.

Inquests were also held in 1829/30, at a total cost of £3 12s 0d., on Martha Green aged three years, burnt to death when her clothing caught fire; on Robert Hall; and on 'Alexander, a Navigator.'

B. The County Rate, usually called Bridge Money or Sessions Money. This paid for the maintenance of the County bridges at Chepstow, Over, Bitton and Keynsham; the gaol and houses of correction; the courts of Quarter Sessions and Assizes; salaries of county officials; transportation of criminals; removal of vagrants to their place of settlement; maintenance of the families of embodied militiamen. In the second half of the 18th century the removal of vagrants in peace-time, and the maintenance of militiamen's families in war-time were the principal items of expenditure. Expenditure on the latter was also heavy during the Napoleonic Wars. From the later years of the 18th century onwards the principal item of expenditure was lawyers' fees for the prosecution of criminals. The County Rate soared in consequence of the building of the new gaol and four houses of correction (1785-88); the Shire Hall (1813-20); the new Over Bridge (1826-9) and the first County Lunatic Asylum (opened 1823).

The County Rate varied considerably from year to year; Bitton paid £221 in 1828/9; £96 in the following year.

C. Cash Payments to the Poor

1. The Weekly List of paupers who would need permanent relief throughout the year was drawn up and approved at the parish meeting at the beginning of each financial year and included all who were too aged or infirm to work, widows and orphans, cripples, the insane, and illegitimate children. In the earlier period the list of such persons, together with the amount which the overseer was authorised to pay to each, was recorded in the overseer's account book and each weekly payment was individually recorded. The list does not, however, state why relief was necessary, i.e. old age, infirmity, illegitimate child, or other reason. In 1828-30 the list was not written in the account book and, instead of recording each individual payment, the overseer made one inclusive entry each month. E.g. 'Weekly Pay £35 16s 6d.'

C.2. Casual Payments These were made to persons not on the weekly list and, therefore, expected to need only temporary relief: the sick, injured, or unemployed; wives deserted by husbands; and also mothers of illegitimate children during the period of 'lying in'. Occasionally extra casual payments were made to people who were on the Weekly List but were 'in distress'.

1771-74 £105 9s 7d. This includes £3 16s 6d - possibly a little more - for 'lying in' expenses at the birth of illegitimate children. The £20 2s 6d included for the maintenance of illegitimate children should, perhaps, have been added to the figure for the Weekly List but as the payments are recorded as being paid to someone's 'bastard' one cannot tell whether the child was on the Weekly List or not. Supporting families 'in the small pox' cost at least £10 19s 0d. Part of this sum was payment for 'necessaries' and should be included under the heading of 'Help in Kind', but one cannot determine what proportion. Possibly the same applies to the expenses for 'lying in'. At least 10 families were stricken with small pox in the period and were receiving parish relief for a considerable time. Usually, though not always, the reason why relief was necessary is stated - most often illness or injury - but no mention is made in this period of any relief being given because of unemployment. If any relief was given for this purpose it formed an insignificant proportion of the total casual payments.

1828-30 In this period relief was given to a small number of men recorded as being unemployed: three in 1828/9, eight in 1829/30. One cannot state categorically that these were the only men in receipt of relief because of unemployment but it can be stated with certainty that relief of the unemployed was a very small charge on the rates. About the end of January, 1830, casual payments totalling £3 14s 6d were made to 19 'excavators', one presumes that they were working on the Avon and Gloucestershire Railway from Mangotsfield to Bitton, then in course of construction, and rendered temporarily unemployed by the severe frost and heavy snow which occurred at this time.

C.3. Payments for Labour 1829/30 These payments pose a problem. They include payment of £1 3s. 8d to three boys for breaking stones and to seven men or boys 'for labour'. This labour could have been on the roads or at the Poor House or other parish property. Usually, however, labour of that kind was specifically recorded as such. Among the seven men or boys was Thomas Gibbs who had been in receipt of parish relief because of unemployment. The Overseer's accounts record that William Tyler paid the Overseer 3s 6d for Thomas Gibbs's labour. The accounts also record that Daniel Burnell paid 6s 0d and William Builder paid £1 14s 0d for the labour of Charles Strong who was 'on the parish' for long periods because of illness and unemployment. These entries suggest that the 'roundsman' or some similar method of hiring out pauper labour was to a very limited extent in operation in Bitton though the system was not in such general use in Gloucestershire as it was in many of the counties of Southern England.

C.4. Payments to Vagrants 1771-74 - No payments.

1828-30 Eighty-two small payments varying from 1d to 1s 0d made to people 'on the road', and four larger payments of from 1s 8½d to 3s 6d to families un-named so, presumably, strangers to Bitton, who were in distress in the Poor House.

C.5. For Children in the Workhouse 1771-74

At this period pauper children were not living with the adult paupers in the Poor House but were lodged and also employed in a separate workhouse where Ann Weston was paid 1s 8d per child per week for their maintenance. As the Workhouse was frequently referred to as the Pin House, the children were, presumably, making pins. During the period William Farley paid the Overseer £60 14s 9d for 'the children's work' so that the charge on the rates for the children's maintenance was only £35 13s 5d. There was an average of 7 to 8 children in the Workhouse throughout the period.

About 1790 the Pin House was converted into three tenements - which are still inhabited - and after that date the pauper children were lodged in the Poor House. There is no evidence that they were put to work after 1790.

D. Clothing & Bedding The greater part - if not all - of the clothing was provided for the children in the Workhouse, or, in the later period, in the Poor House. The cost includes the purchase of cloth for making into clothes and also shoe repairs. The names of the persons for whom clothing or bedding was bought were recorded but no indication was given as to whether the person

was in one of the institutions or not. Usually, however, several children were fitted out with clothing at the same time; thus it may be inferred that they were in one of the institutions. Included in the total are a number of small charges for washing beds in the Poor House.

D.3. Coal for Workhouse & Poor House

1771-74 All the coal provided was for the Workhouse. The total cost includes £2 11s 6d spent on coal for William Farley who employed the children there. The coal provided for him could have been for heating the workshop or for use in the pin manufacture.

1828-30 Some of the coal provided was stated to be 'for the Children at the Poor House.' Possibly all of it was.

D.5. Rent, Rates & House Repairs

1771-74 Widow Brooks's house rent of £2 a year was paid throughout the period and other smaller payments of rent were made. House repairs cost £2 4s 9d. Hannah Collings's house was thatched for 10s 7d. Judith Brain's chimney was swept for 6d. No assistance to poor persons for the payment of rates was given in this period.

1828-30 Simon Hopes's rent for a year, £1 10s 0d., was paid, so were several other rents totalling £2 11s 6d. Nothing was paid towards house repairs. A total of 9s 2d in small sums varying from 3d to 1s 4d was expended to help poor persons pay their rates.

D.6. Club Money

1828-30 There were Friendly Societies or Sickness Clubs at four of Bitton's five inns and the subscriptions of several men were paid in order to prevent them from falling into arrears and losing possible benefits, thus becoming a greater burden on the rates. Two shillings was also paid to enable one or more men to attend the annual Club Dinner.

E. Apprenticeships

1771-74 One boy was apprenticed; Richard Lear, aged 12 years, to Aaron Webb, cordwainer of Tormarton, until he attained the age of 24 years. A premium of £2 was paid and the indentures cost 6s 5d. Molly Battman was fitted out with clothes to go into domestic service at a cost of 15s 7d. One shilling was spent on getting another girl to service. In 1773/4 £1 9s 2d was spent on the following items of clothing for Betty Joy, who was going into service: stuff for a gown, 5s 9d; for lining and making it, 2s 4d; shoes, 3s 6d; cloth for a coat and making it, 5s 6d; stockings, 1s 2d; a shift, 3s 5d; caps, 1s 6d; second-hand stays, 4s 0d; for repairing them with leather and buckram, 2s 0d.

1828-30 No payments for this purpose.

F. Funerals 1771-4

There were 21 funerals in this period. The usual expenditure on the funeral of an adult was 16s 6d; a child's funeral cost a little less. The funeral of Mary Packer, a stranger, who was taken ill and died when travelling through

Bitton on a 'pass' to her place of settlement, cost £1. 0s 10d.

1828-30 The total number of funerals cannot be ascertained from the accounts. There were eight in the year 1829/30 and these cost £8 15s 6d. Expenditure on funerals in 1828/9 was £8 3s 0d. so there were probably 15 or 16 funerals in total. Usually £1 was paid 'towards the funeral' of an adult, though £1 13s 0d was spent on the funeral of Mary Chilcott. Usually, perhaps always, the bellringers tolled a knell and bearers were provided for the funeral.

G. Medical

1. Doctor It appears that application for the services of the parish doctor had to be made through the Overseer.

1771-74 Expenditure on the doctor was not itemised but recorded as 'To Mr Palmer his Bill, £8 17s 0d' etc.

1828-30 Dr. Watts was paid a salary of £14 a year plus a fee of 10s 6d for attendance at childbirth. If he attended at the birth of an illegitimate child the fee was usually recovered from the putative father.

G.2. Nursing Small sums paid to various women for attendance on sick persons.

1771-74 Ann Pierce was paid 12s 0d for curing Robert Gunning's leg. Ann Joy - herself in receipt of parish relief - was paid 1s 0d a week for eight weeks for tending Joseph Harding. A woman was paid 10s 0d for caring for 'Brown's family in the small pox'. Small sums were paid for washing the clothes of sick persons.

1828-30 This includes 2s 10d for the regular shaving of a sick man over a long period.

G.3. Soap & Medicine

1771-74 'Salve for Judith Braine, 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d' gin for a boy in the workhouse, 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

1828-30 Includes 6s 0d for a strait waistcoat - presumably for Solomon Short. £1 5s 0d was spent, a shilling at a time, on soap for 'Strong's boys'.

G.4. Hospitals

1771-74 The only payments were £3 'causion' money deposited with Bath Hospital when a patient from Bitton was admitted, and 7s 6d spent by the overseer in taking him to hospital and visiting him. 'Causion' or 'caution money' appears to have been a deposit to cover possible damage or other expense incurred by the patient and was usually refunded when the patient left hospital.

1828-30 Payments were made to four hospitals.

To Bristol Infirmary, £1 5s 6d this consisting of £1 deposited when Henry Warn was admitted and 5s 6d for horse-hire to take him there.

To Bath Hospital, £21 19s 0d. A yearly subscription to the hospital of £2 2s 0d was paid 1828/9, plus arrears of subscriptions for the previous eight years, making a total subscription of £18 18s 0d. In addition £3 'caution money' was deposited with the hospital when a patient, Charles Cary, was admitted, though this was refunded later in the year. Taking Cary to hospital cost 1s 0d.

To Gloucester Asylum, £60, for Solomon Short who was a patient there at a weekly cost to Bitton of 12s Od. This was the First County Mental Asylum at Wotton, Gloucester, which had been opened in 1823.

To Dr. Bompas, £58 12s Od for the maintenance and treatment of J. Lewis who was a patient in his private lunatic asylum at Bristol from 24th June 1827 to 28th March 1829.

H. Errors made by the writer in transcribing and analysing the entries in the accounts.

	<u>1771-74</u>			<u>1828-30</u>		
	£	s	d	£	s	d
1. Payments by putative fathers for the maintenance of illegitimate children and cost of the mother's lying-in (including doctor)	2	19	6	80	1	8
2. From Overseers of other parishes	2	10	0	23	0	0
3. For labour	-	-	-	2	3	6
4. For work of children in Workhouse	60	14	9	-	-	-
5. From husbands for money advanced to their wives	-	-	-		18	6
6. 'Caution money' returned by hospitals	-	-	-	3	0	0
	<hr/>			<hr/>		
	66	4	3	109	3	8

To ascertain the actual charge on the rates the following deductions should be made. The total of Weekly and Casual Payments should be reduced by the amounts recovered from other parishes; from husbands; and from putative fathers, less £1 1s Od which was paid to the doctor for attendance at illegitimate childbirths. (It was not possible to ascertain what portion should be deducted from the Weekly or from the Casual Payments.) The amount received for labour should be deducted from that paid for labour. The cost of maintaining children in the Workhouse should be reduced by the amount received for their work. The cost of the doctor should be reduced by £1 1s Od paid by putative fathers for his attendance at childbirths. The caution money returned by hospitals should be deducted from the expenditure on hospitals. The various totals should be correspondingly reduced.

To show the actual cost to the ratepayers, therefore, the Analysis of Total Expenditure should be amended as shown below:

<u>C. Cash Payments to the Poor</u>	<u>1771-74</u>			<u>1828-30</u>		
	£	s	d	£	s	d
1. Weekly List	466	17	7	1101	11	0
2. Casual Payments	-	-	-	3	10	8
3. For Labour	-	-	-	2	5	7½
4. To Vagrants (No amendment)	35	13	5	-	-	-
5. For Children in Workhouse						
	<hr/>			<hr/>		
Total	502	11	0	1107	7	3½

G. Medical

1. Doctor	32	14	3	28	10	6
4. Hospitals	3	7	6	138	17	6
	<hr/>			<hr/>		
	42	6	2½	171	2	9½
	<hr/>			<hr/>		
Total Expenditure (From Rates)	764	5	9½	1907	15	0¼

Conclusions So that expenditure in the two periods may be compared, Table B gives an analysis of the average yearly expenditure in each. In order that like may be compared with like, the cost of maintaining children in the Workhouse during the first period has been added to expenditure on the Weekly List as the maintenance of pauper children is included under that heading in the second period.

The most obvious difference in expenditure in the two periods is the great increase - by 364% - in the second. This increase was by no means peculiar to Bitton, in fact the percentage increase in Bitton appears to have been considerably less than that in the nation as a whole. It is difficult to obtain statistics concerning national expenditure on poor relief for each year in the period under review but a comparison of the amount of money levied in England and Wales for this purpose in 1776 and in 1817 - the year when national expenditure on the poor reached its highest peak - shows an increase of 541%. The corresponding figure for Bitton is 400%.

The great increase in expenditure on the relief of the poor from about 1795 to 1817 and beyond, and the consequent rise in the Poor Rates, are usually attributed to the Speenhamland system of poor relief and the economic depression following the Napoleonic wars. It is often forgotten that much of the increase was due to the rise in population which approximately doubled in England and Wales between 1771 and 1831. The population of Bitton in 1771 cannot be ascertained. According to the first census it was 1,094 in 1801; twenty years later, in 1831, it had more than doubled and was 2,258. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that it approximately trebled in the fifty nine years between 1771 and 1830.

In comparing expenditure in the two periods allowance must be made not only for the rise in population but for an increase in the cost of living. The average price of wheat from 1771 to 1774 was 51s 11d a quarter; from 1828 to 1830 it was 63s 8d., an increase of 22%. Calculation made from the Schumpeter-Gilroy and the Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz statistics in the Abstract of British Historical Statistics show that the price of consumer goods including cereals, was about 9% higher from 1828 to 1830 than from 1771 to 1774.

If allowance is made for the increase in population and in the cost of consumer goods, the real expenditure on poor relief in Bitton per head of population was little higher in the second period than in the first; indeed if one considers only the amount spent in direct help to the poor in cash or in kind it was probably a little less.

The increase in expenditure by the Overseer was not evenly divided under the various sub-headings: the cost of Administration and Law Enforcement, and of Cash Payments to the Poor, increased, like Total Expenditure, about three and a half times; Help to the Poor in Kind and expenditure on Apprenticeships actually decreased. Expenditure on Funerals increased very little, so did the cost of Medical services except for the dramatic rise in expenditure on Hospitals, mainly as a result of the provision of mental hospitals. The most dramatic rise was in the County Rate, for reasons previously stated.

The most interesting fact brought to light by the analysis is under the heading of Cash Payments to the Poor. In the first period, 1771-74, 81% of this was paid on the Weekly List, that is to those in need of relief because of infancy, old age, widowhood or permanent disability; only 19% went in casual payments to the temporarily sick, injured or unemployed. From 1828 to 1830, a period usually associated with economic depression and unemployment, 83% of cash payments to those on the Weekly List, only 17% in casual payments. Unemployment was not a serious problem to the parish officers of Bitton.

The accounts indicate that during the first period the Overseers administered the Poor Law humanely and with a certain amount of generosity and there is reason to believe that the magistrates, who had supervisory authority, supported them in this policy. In the year 1773/4 the Overseer charged 9d for 'Hors and expenses to Mr Creswick to Answer Frances Strongs Complaint.' Mr Creswick was a magistrate, Strong was in receipt of parish relief. It is significant that following the complaint Strong's relief was increased by a shilling a week. Judged by modern standards the life of the pauper was wretched but the disparity between the standard of living of the indigent and that of the working population was probably less than it is today for the pauper had to be kept at subsistence level and the labourer's wage was little above that.

In the period 1828 to 1830 provision for the poor was less generous. Expenditure on help to the poor in kind, such as provision of bedding, clothing, etc., was less than in the first period, despite the rise in population. Medical care was not given so generously except in so far as parliamentary legislation had enforced the provision of mental hospitals. From 1820 to 1828 the Overseers had not paid the annual subscription to Bath Hospital, and though the population of the parish had probably trebled the amount paid to the parish doctor had not doubled. If one assumes that the number of paupers had increased threefold like the total population, and that the cost of living had increased by 9%, cash payments to the poor were on a slightly less generous scale.

One can sympathise with the parish officers of Bitton who were faced with a very difficult problem, for the amount of rateable property had not increased at nearly the same rate as the population. Before 1810 rates in Bitton were levied at 6d in the £, and in any year as many 6d rates were levied as were necessary to cover parish expenditure. From 1810 rates were levied at 1s 0d in the £, as and when necessary. In 1818 all properties were re-assessed, the assessment of almost every property being exactly doubled. A shilling rate in 1830 was, therefore, the equivalent of four sixpenny rates in 1771. Now four sixpenny rates in 1771 brought in £202 9s 8d; in 1830 a shilling rate brought in £280 0s 6½d. The rateable value of Bitton had increased by only 38% whereas the population had certainly more than doubled and had almost certainly trebled. Under these circumstances it was only to be expected that the parish officers should have economised on the provision of the 'fringe' benefits available to the poor.

It would be interesting to know how far the rateable value of the nation as a whole had kept pace with the rise in population between 1795 and 1830. The amount of money raised by the Poor

Rates in England and Wales during certain years in the period can be ascertained from Appendix A of the Report of the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Report V.1822. (Taken from The English Poor Law 1780-1930, Michael E. Rose. David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1971.) This is shown in the graph, Table 3. Statistics regarding the rateable value of the nation, if extant, are not readily available.

It would also be interesting to know what proportion of the increased national expenditure was paid on Weekly Lists to those incapable of supporting themselves because of infancy, old age, widowhood, or permanent physical disability, and what proportion in Casual Payments to those in temporary need because of sickness, injury or unemployment. As the accounts of most parishes, like Bitton, distinguished between these two kinds of payment, it should be possible to ascertain these proportions for a large number of diverse parishes, even if not for the whole nation.

If not already done, research into these two questions might help to explain the breakdown of the old Poor Law. In Bitton the old system was ceasing to maintain the poor at as high a standard of life as it had done fifty years previously though the factors to which failure of the system is usually attributed, Speenhamland and a high level of unemployment, were not operative there. It would be absurd to draw conclusions about the national system of poor relief from a study of one parish, though in some respects Bitton was a microcosm of the nation, for with its coal mines, brass works and other manufactures, it was half industrial and half agricultural, and its population had increased rapidly. The Poor Law was failing in Bitton because the rates were not bringing in sufficient revenue to relieve the poverty in this increased population. How true was this of the nation as a whole? Had a system of poor relief supported solely by rates on property ceased to be a viable proposition once industry and commerce had replaced property as the principal source of wealth and provided a livelihood for a vastly increased population?

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