

THE POOR IN TETBURY

by DAVID GREENHALGH

In Tetbury, as in many other parishes, a large part of the parish records are concerned with the relief of the poor. The Gloucestershire Record Office contains a large number of surviving documents for this parish and this note is a brief account of some of those relating to the period before 1834.

Overseers' of the Poor Accounts

The earliest accounts are contained in two volumes (1) running from 1741 to 1748 and 1749 to 1758. These two volumes give a comprehensive picture of all expenditure including out-poor, workhouse, medical expenses, services and so on. There is a summary of expenditure at the end of each year (or, after 1752, at about Easter). Table 1 gives a summary of these to the nearest whole pound together with the rate. In the table, and those following, 1755 for example means Easter 1755 to Easter 1756.

TABLE 1. RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE 1742 - 1758

	Disbursed	Received	Rate	
	£	£	s.	d.
1742	405	421	3	8
1743	379	385	3	3
1744	410	429	3	8
1745	381	389	3	3
1746	579	583	5	0
1747	261	285	2	6
1748	304	327	2	9
1749	351	375	3	2
1750	375	385	3	6
1751	387	423	3	9
1752	404	420	3	6
1753	389	402	3	6
1754	439	454	4	0
1755	454	488	4	3
1756	404	422	3	6
1757	582	579	5	2
1758	550	563	5	2

The number given relief during this period varied but about 80 paupers received weekly pay and there were usually about 16 in the workhouse although at times twice as many. There would also be those who received occasional relief. The seasonal variations in each year are greater than the changes from year to year.

Typical items from these accounts are:

To Thos. Morton to shave his beard	2d.
½ an ell of cloth for Hester Smith	6d.
pd Fools wench	7s. 0d.
rope for workhouse well	10s. 0d.
bread and faggots for people in ye small pox	19s. 10½ d.
pd John Mitchell for setting ye marks on ye poor ye whole year	5s. 0d.
pd Richard Morris to buy stuff to cure ye people of ye workhouse of the itch	1s. 0d.

Following these two volumes there is a gap in the account books to 1801 but a document from the Estcourt muniments (2) gives the following figures for 1792/3. The figures cover 11 months only but give a partial breakdown of expenditure.

TABLE 2. BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE 1792/3 (11 MONTHS)

	£.	s.	d.
out-poor	110	14	0½
bread	125	4	0½
cheese	29	7	1
meat	57	1	1
malt and hops	26	5	5
firing	15	16	6
furniture	7	18	3
clothing	24	2	5
small necessaries	58	15	0
vegetables	4	15	5
baking	11	5	8
house rent	5	14	8
county rate	33	15	6
bedding	8	12	8
militia relief	9	12	0

Totals for the 11 months are given as:

expenditure	£528	19s. 5½d.	(£576)
poors' work	£160	3s. 11d.	(£175)
neat (net) loss	£368	15s. 6d.	(£401)*

(*The figures in brackets give the extrapolated 12 month equivalents)

When the parish records resume in 1801 the level of expenditure does not appear to be greatly changed but it is not possible to make a true comparison as the later accounts available do not record all the various types of expenditure but are largely a record of regular payments. Presumably a separate record was kept of other items. Accounts are available from 1803 to 1811 but these do not have any summaries and merely

record week by week the regular payments. It is not possible to calculate the yearly sums without the considerable labour of adding many thousands of small payments. For this reason these years are omitted from Table 3.

TABLE 3. EXPENDITURE 1801 - 1822

Taken from (3) with the exception of the figure for 1803 which is from Poor Law Abstracts 1803 and is for out-poor, in-poor, and suits of law and removals. Figures to nearest whole pound.

1801	£789
1802	£542
1803	£886
1812	£2,250
1813	£2,299
1814	£1,516
1815	£1,539
1816	£1,749
1817	£2,166
1818	£2,165
1819	£1,892
1820	£1,823
1821	£1,917
1822	£1,651

TABLE 4. NUMBERS RECEIVING RELIEF

The figures are from the accounts except that for 1803 which is from Poor Law Abstracts 1803. Occasional relief is not included. The figures from the accounts are arrived at by counting a few weeks each year and taking an average. A longer study would be able to take better account of seasonal variations.

	weekly	bastards	militia	work-house	TOTAL
1742	82			32	114
1748	52			16	68
1758	93			16	109
1759	82			12	94
1801	160	5	2		
1802	117	10	7		
1803	141			54	195
1813	85	9	1		
1814	78	9	2	55	144
1815	71	7		53	131
1816	76	7		53	136
1817	81	11		51	143
1818	121	15		57	193
1819	97	13		63	173
1820	71	10			
1821	67	13			
1822				50	
1823	67	14		53	134
1824	68	12		45	125

The figures in Tables 3 and 4 show a considerable leap in expenditure some time between 1803 and 1812. The reasons for this increase are less clear. The numbers receiving out-door relief show no convincing long-term trend. The number in the workhouse have increased. There could also have been an increase in the number of casual payments. Changes in money values could also be involved. A thorough analysis of the accounts would perhaps make the situation clearer. According to Poor Law Abstracts 1803 the number of non-parishioners receiving relief in 1803 was 950 which can be compared with the total for the county of 5840 of which it comprises over 16%. The figure is much higher than any other Gloucestershire parish. The only parish which approached this was Morton-in-Marsh with 631. Chipping Sodbury had 424, Dursley 370, and Stroud 188. It looks as if Tetbury exerted a strong attraction at this time although many of those relieved may have been only passing through. Its total population (in 1801) is given as 2500.

Costs do not seem to have changed much between 1814 and 1824. In 1814 the workhouse master was allowed 2s. 6d. per head per week, this rose to 3s. in 1818 and fell to 2s. 4d. in 1824 (4).

There is little reference as to how the level of relief was calculated but a book of Vestry Minutes (6) dated from 1819 to 1825 has a scale of payments at the back which was probably in force for part or all of the period. This gives:

A man, wife, and 1 child to receive	6s. p.w.
A man, wife and 2 children to receive	7s. p.w.
A man, wife and 8 children to receive	13s. p.w.

An earlier (undated but probably around 1800) document from the Estcourt muniments contains a reference to the "new plan" (Speenhamland) and gives the following comparisons (2).

Income of a man who has a wife and 5 children under ten by the 'new plan' without parish relief.

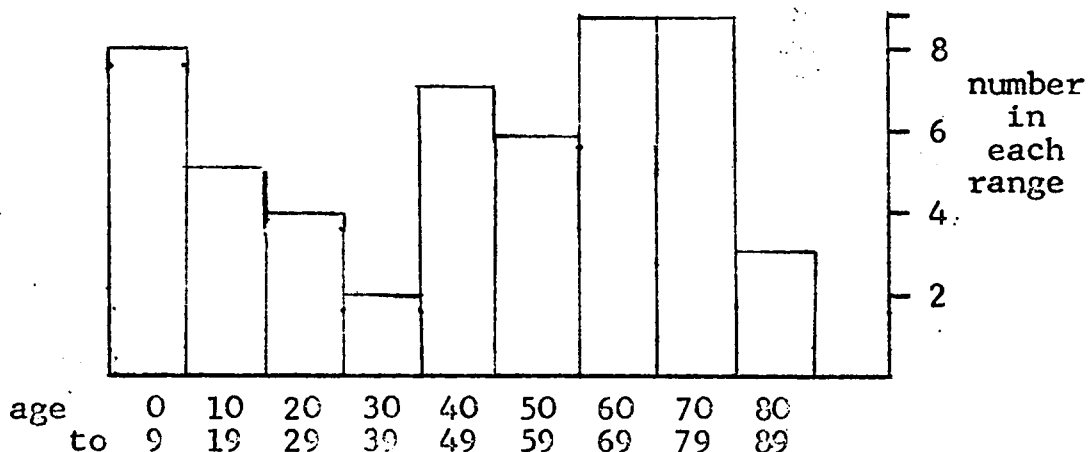
wages 52 weeks	£38	7s.	0d.
carriage $\frac{1}{2}$ load coals		10s.	0d.
victuals on Sunday at 2s. per week	£5	4s.	0d.
beer at 2s. per week	£5	4s.	0d.
wife's earning at 3s.	£7	18s.	0d.
eldest daughter at 1s.	£2	12s.	0d.
produce of rood land	£5	0s.	0d.
TOTAL	£64	15s.	0d.

Income of same man who has parish relief regulated by the price of bread in which he should have an income equal to the purchase of 14 lb. of bread for the man, 10½ lb. for the wife, and 7 lb. for each child weekly.

WEEKLY	14 lb. for man at 15d.	4s.	4d.
	10½ lb. for the mother	3s.	5d.
	35 lb. for the children	10s.	11½d.
	for other necessaries	2s.	0d.
		<hr/>	
		£1	0s. 8½d.

(In 52 weeks this comes to £53 15s. 9d.)

One of the account books lists the 75 inmates of the workhouse in 1816 (7). Of these some have been deleted or have 'out' or 'died' against their names so not all would be present at any one time. The ages are given and these are tabulated below and show, as one might expect, that the dominant inmates were the elderly and the young.



Some idea of the diet of the inmates can be gathered from a document in the Estcourt muniments (2) dated 1799. The document is a large sheet giving the food provided for a week and seems to have been sent from the workhouse master to some higher authority. The information in it was used as the basis for a public notice which was published shortly afterwards by the magistrates T. Saunders and John Paul Paul in order to prevent "...false Reports maliciously circulated setting forth that the Poor in the Work-House are starving". The number of paupers was 94 but about 35 of these were young children.

WORKHOUSE DIET 1799

MONDAY

Dinner bread 24½ lb, cheese 7 lb, beer 3 gall.
(8s. 2d.)

Supper as above

TUESDAY

Breakfast as above

Dinner broken bones and meat left from sunday
dinner, potatoes, bread 12 lb (2s. 6½d.)

Supper milk 3 gall, oatmeal 15 pt, water 3 gall.
(4s. 7d.)

WEDNESDAY

Breakfast milk 4 gall, water 3 gall, rice, treakle

Dinner meat 22 lb, potatoes 38 lb, oatmeal left
from Tuesday supper (6s. 2d.)

The week continues with a little variety. Breakfast on Friday and Sunday is described as a 'capital good breakfast' but it is not clear whether this was an unsolicited accolade from the recipients although it was clearly meant to give this impression. This was for: milk 4 gallons, rice 10 lb, treakle 1 lb (5s. 4d.). Six paupers who did hard labour in the manufactory were given an extra meal of bread, cheese and beer at 4 o'clock. The total expenditure on a week's food is given as £7 1s. 4d.

At one time dogs seem to have become a problem. An entry in the Vestry Minutes (6) provides that "all persons.....keeping dogs shall be made subject to pay rates and also not be allowed any relief from the Parish untill such dogs are put away." At least one instance is on record of this last sanction being put into effect.

The workhouse, like all institutions, seems to have been a place of petty intrigue. In 1827 a pauper was caught stealing as can be seen from her examination (8):

'May 16th 1827: The examination of Mary Lamb respecting the things produced at the town hall that was lost from the Poor House Tetbury. Mary Lamb says that on Sunday afternoon May 15th 1827 she told Hannah Thompson what she proposed doing and she advised her to so to do and also stood at the Chamber Door to acquaint her if she heard of any person coming and as soon as Mary Lamb had brought the things to the Chamber Door Hannah Thompson received them and we both consulted what had better be done with them she said

to me why take them up Stair and put them under your bed which I did so then I spoke to Sarah Barrett a pauper in the Poor House and I asked her to endeavour to see James Height on the Sunday after Divine Service and tell him I shall be glad to see him on the Morrow morning which he come about a half past two O'Clock and I brought the things down stairs and tied it up in a bundle and handed over the back wall near the Pigsty to James Height he never knew what the bundle contained at that present time he wish'd me well and was a going away then I said Mr. Height I wish to speak to you he asked me what it was I told him I had heard that his wife was very uncomfortable and that he did not use her as well as he ought to do the answer made me was that he did not I asked him what reason he told me he never should untill I had liberty to go out on the Sabbath Day for I know that it was my wife's fault your being taken into the workhouse.'

The Sarah Barrett mentioned in that examination may well have been the same Sarah Barrett who in 1840 was sent to another institution. (8).

To the Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of Tetbury in the County of Gloucester.

We the undersigned being two of her Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the said County do hereby order you to pay Daniel Webb Smith the sum of one pound and ten shillings being the reasonable charge of conveying Sarah Barrett and William Withers two poor persons proved to be insane from Tetbury to the County Lunatic Asylum at Gloucester.

Given under our hands this second day of September 1840.

Attitudes to Authority were the same then as now: from the same bundle (8) we have:-

"The Information of Daniel Cole one of the Overseers of the Poor.....taken on oath before us.....May 1834.

Who saith that Isaac Cleaver of Tetbury aforesaid labourer did on Monday the nineteenth day of May instant in the Parish of Tetbury aforesaid swear one profane oath in these words to wit 'I don't care a God damn for you nor the constable neither' against the form of the statute in such case made and provided.

Taken and sworn.....".

It was mentioned earlier that Tetbury had a large number of poor from other parishes. This is further evidenced by a fairly large number of settlement examinations, settlement certificates, and removal orders.

There are 129 certificates dated between 1669 and 1833. No particular pattern emerges other than the broad observation that most of them are from the counties of Gloucester and Wiltshire and many from neighbouring parishes. In only a small minority of cases is an occupation given. These are:

Labourer	5
cordwainer	4
tailor	3
woolcomber	3
carpenter	2
shoemaker	2
joiner	1
feltmaker	1
rope-maker	1
chandler	1
writing master	1
mason	1
slatter	1
butcher	1

A typical example is that of Thomas Bishopp from Devizes: (9)

'Burgo Devizes We shose names are hereunto
in Com Wilts subscribed the Mayor and
 Recorder of the said Burrough
together with the Minister, Churchwardens and
Overseers of the Poore of the Parish of the
Blessed Virgin Mary within the said Burrough do
hereby certify that the bearer hereof Thomas
Bishopp and Mary his wife are inhabitants of the
said Parish of the Blessed Virgin Mary and hath
desired this our cirtificate to Certify the same.
We therefore desire you the Inhabitants of the
Towne of Tetbury in the County of Glocester to
permitt and suffer the said Thomas Bishopp and
Mary his wife and their ffive children to live
within you said Towne of Tetbury. And we do
hereby for us and our successors promise at any
time hereafter when we are thereunto required to
receive the said Thomas Bishopp and Mary his
wife and theire children as inhabitants within
our said parish. Given under our hands and
seals the one and twenty day of June in the
ffifth yeare of the Raigne of our Sovraigne
Lord and Lady King William and Queen Mary of
England 1693.'

The examinations are more numerous and many of the examiners are single women with a young child or pregnant. A typical case is that of Elizabeth Barrett in 1812 (10)

'...Who saith she has heard and believes she was born in the Parish of Tetbury about 19 years ago And that her parents settlement is at Didmarton in the said County that about a month before Michaelmas 1811 she was hired by Mr. (.....?) Surgeon at Didmarton in the Parish of Oldbury-on-the-Hill in the said County for a year at wages of Five Guineas that she accordingly entered upon and duly performed the same service for a year in the Parish of Oldbury-on-the-Hill aforesaid. And hath not done any act since to gain a settlement. And that she is now with child.'

(She was ordered to be removed to Oldbury)

It was generally in the interests of the parish to establish paternity so that the father could be made to marry the woman or indemnify the parish. So we get:

"17th January 1816 Ann Davies of Tetbury singlewoman Who saith on the twelfth day of December 1815 at Tetbury she was delivered of a female Bastard Child and that the said Bastard Child is likely to become chargeable to the said parish of Tetbury and that James Box of Shipton Moyne in the said County Labourer did get her with Child of the said Bastard Child sworn before T. Estcourt'

This note has only covered a small part of the total material available. Much of the material is almost identical with that from many other parishes. Nevertheless a closer study of this material and the rest should add to the overall national picture and show up better the points of variance. More accurate information could be obtained on the relative financial and administrative burdens by the 'resident' poor and the 'visiting' poor.

SOURCES

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|-----|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | Glos.R.O., P328a OV2/1 & 2/2 | accounts |
| 2. | Glos.R.O., D1571/R20 | from Estcourt
muniments |
| 3. | Glos.R.O., P328a CV 2/3 & 2/4 | accounts |
| 4. | Glos.R.O., P328a CV 2/5 | accounts |
| 5. | <u>Poor Law Abstracts 1803</u> | |
| 6. | Glos.R.O., P328a VE 2/1 | vestry minutes |
| 7. | Glos.R.O., P328a OV 2/6 | accounts |
| 8. | Glos.R.O., P328a CV 7/30 | miscellaneous
documents |
| 9. | Glos.R.O., P328a OV 3/1/2 | settlement
certificate |
| 10. | Glos.R.O., P328a OV 3/4/2 | " " " " " " |