

RODBOROUGH WORKHOUSE

The late 18th and early 19th centuries was a period when parish workhouses existed all over the country and were to be found even in small villages like Rodborough, which in 1763 consisted of 160 houses with 750 inhabitants (20 freehold) and an average of 33 people on parish relief.

At the vestry meeting in 1766 "it was agreed that several people living in the church house should be given notice to quit, and the furniture removed, as it is to be repaired and let". Subsequently it was turned into a workhouse and in 1777 Mr. and Mrs. Tuner were appointed the first overseers. Mr. Gordan became surgeon and apothecary of the poor at £5. 7s. per annum. By 1797 James Hodges (late of London) was appointed Governor, at £30 per annum, and in 1818 the old workhouse was pulled down, the new building being opened in 1820.

It is possible to learn quite a lot about the inhabitants of the Workhouse. For instance, their food - items for 1820 included:-

May to July, side of bacon	£3	6s.	6d.
Beef & mutton, 20lbs		16s.	4d.
Cheese, 30lbs		16s.	3d

Tea and butter were for sick persons, also treacle. 32 bags of potatoes and their haulage cost 10s. 6d. a bag. Wine for sick - 1s. 2d (sometimes recorded as gin). Other items included bread, turnips, salt and ashes! (this last item being recorded in every list). "It was agreed that $\frac{1}{4}$ of barley flour be mixed with $\frac{3}{4}$ of best wheaten flour for consumption of workhouse" - a rather ambiguous statement, as there were regular payments to a local tradesman for bread. Clothes from March to December, 1823 cost £4. 14s. 6d. and included calico, serge, black hose and shoes.

The list of expenses also mentioned

1	1 ton of coal and haulage,	£1	5s
	Plants and seeds (regularly)		1s. 6d.
	Hair cutting		2s.
	Worsted thread & buttons		4s. 6d.
	Shoes and mending		12s. 4d.
	Payment for loom, now in Poor House	£1	5s.
	Paid Jurymen on 3 inquests		£1. 4s.

Men in the workhouse were employed on the repair of the turnpikes 'Item March 20th 1820, for work on turnpike £29. 13s. 8d. also for work in the house'. '3rd July, for 5 weeks, 4 workers £3. 8s. 6d., also for cleaning - 3 workers, £1. 16s.(man), 12s (woman) and 8s (woman)' This work also comprised whitewashing, spinning, hemp, pulling down houses, building a garden wall and stone breaking.

Poor outside the workhouse obtained relief when it was considered necessary and the churchwardens kept meticulous

accounts of the items paid. In August 1795 the total sum given (ranging from 1s. to 3s. 6d, 3d for children), was £188. 3s. 5d. In most cases these were widows and children, a number of "bastards" and awards for "militia". There were also articles of clothing supplied 'Shirt for Delby, 2s. 6d.' A case of "spotted fever" is recorded in 1795, also smallpox in the Davis family in 1795, a reported case in 1819, and in the Watts family in 1821, the last named with a further item "for whitewashing Watts' house, and for bedding and change of clothes".

Children of the poor were apprenticed at an early age: (June 1787) 'The eldest girl of James Shides to be clothed and put to Mr. Bamford till Michaelmas and rest of family to workhouse' and (Oct. 30th) 'James Heaven, 10 years, to be apprenticed to Daniel Pagler, Bowbridge, weaver, until 21 years. The latter being paid 1 gn. $\frac{1}{2}$ for clothes for James. Thomas Williams of Salisbury hired for 3 years Pricilla Fletcher as a menial servant, and "is to find her in meat, drink, washing and clothese and teach her the art of spinning". (The said Williams signed his contract with his mark) John Plummer, 13 years, apprenticed for 7 years to Thomas Philpot, weaver, of Minchinhampton for 2 gns., the boy to be provided with shirt and pair of shoes. His brother, name not recorded, 11 years, to be allowed 1s. per week, and a younger brother, also no name recorded, aged $4\frac{1}{2}$, to have 3s a week until able to work. These children were orphans, but there is no mention of them being sent to the workhouse.

"Passes" were issued for paupers who moved into other parishes, and there are early certificates, dating from 1707 complete with seals, and signed by Nathaniel Cambridge, beginning

'according to the late Act of Parliament in the reign of our Sovereign Lady Anne John Chapman (7th son of Timothy) and family, wife, children and 2 apprentices, every one of them and all he may hereafter have declare to be legal inhabitants of the parish of Kings Stanley'

another

'1712 ... we acknowledge William Hollins, broad-weaver, Deborah his wife and Richard Eliots his apprentice, to be legal inhabitants in the parish of Horsley ...'

With few exceptions, the paupers came from surrounding villages and towns. Later "oaths" (for 1801) out of 55, only 17 are signed (4 women) the rest made their mark. Nearly all these people had lost their parents at an early age and were themselves married with a family. Their ages were on an average 20 plus.

(1801) Mary Browning, married, then husband left her, she heard he was dead and married again, but then first husband turned up for 1 week and then went away, so she continued to live with the second one.

A man from Ashton Keynes was hired at Cirencester Mop Fair to shop-keeper of Stround. He "never received

£10 a year, or served any parish office...."

Several young women applied because they "are with child".

(1809). Samuel Wynn, who on his oath says he is now about 53, that he is a brother of George Wynn, who was father of James Wynn, who was drowned about one month ago, that his brother George was legally settled in Painswick and that he was killed in a quarry when his son was about one month old. That he verily believes the said James never gained any settlement but of Painswick, except he gained a settlement by living with Mr. Lewis of Brimscombe, Stroud after he was married (about 9 years ago) to Hannah, his widow who has two children, Sarah 2 and George 11 weeks, which are becoming chargable to the Parish of Rodborough. (Samuel is able to write, and signs his name).

There is only one recorded case of anyone in the asylum a regular half-yearly payment for Lea Simms in Gloucester Asylum of £15. 12s.

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SOURCES

Rodborough vestry minutes and overseers of the poor accounts, GLOS. R.O., P272a.