

"...A MANIAC'S CHAIN"

An interim note concerning the
Parish Workhouse in Charlton Kings
1826 - 1842

by M.J. Greet

I. Introduction: Poor Relief

By acts of 1597 and 1601 two churchwardens and up to four overseers of the poor in each parish had to care for the poor (under the direction of the local magistrates). They had to maintain them, set them to work, and arrange for poor children to be apprenticed. A poor rate for their support could be levied on all householders.

An act of 1723 enabled single parishes to erect workhouses in which the able-bodied might be employed, and the children, sick and aged maintained. Parish officials could purchase buildings, and enter contracts for dealing with poor relief matters, which could include the care of lunatics. From 1793 out relief could be provided to the poor without them residing in the workhouse. (No evidence has yet been found, however, to indicate that Charlton Kings possessed a workhouse earlier than 1827, and one must assume, therefore, that the Charlton poor received occasional outdoor relief, as happened for example in 1773-4).

Finally, in 1834, the parochial system of relief was abolished, and parishes were compulsorily amalgamated in Unions. The workhouse in Charlton Kings, built in 1827 joined with the Cheltenham Union, and the building until given up by the Cheltenham Guardians in 1842, was used for accommodation of poor children.

II. Erection of the Workhouse (1)

By 1826 a contract for the erection of a workhouse in Charlton Kings had been placed with a local "bricklayer", William Turner. The estimated cost was £170, but this was expected later to rise with extra costs. The site chosen was central - in Charlton Road, now Church Street, some 225 feet from St. Mary's Church, near the site of the present Nursery School (2), and the bill for erection includes the cost of demolition of an "old Church House", presumably on the site. At least part of the land seems to have belonged to the trustees of the Charlton Kings Charity Estates, but it seems no trustees were appointed (and available to defend its interests) between 1824 and 1834.

Work was apparently in progress by July 1826 and from then until July 1827, Captain Stevenson (3) 'Visitor of the Workhouse', under indemnity from the builder, made 10 staged payments on account of sums varying between £10 and £60 to Turner, on behalf of the Parish officers. £170 had been advanced by 3 February 1827, and £360 by 7 July 1827. (4).

By then Turner had submitted his bill for the extra work arising (£276. 0s. 11½d), and on 7 July authorised Capt. Stevenson to pay the balance of his account to Pitt Gardner and Co. (5). The bill provides interesting detail concerning the construction of the property.

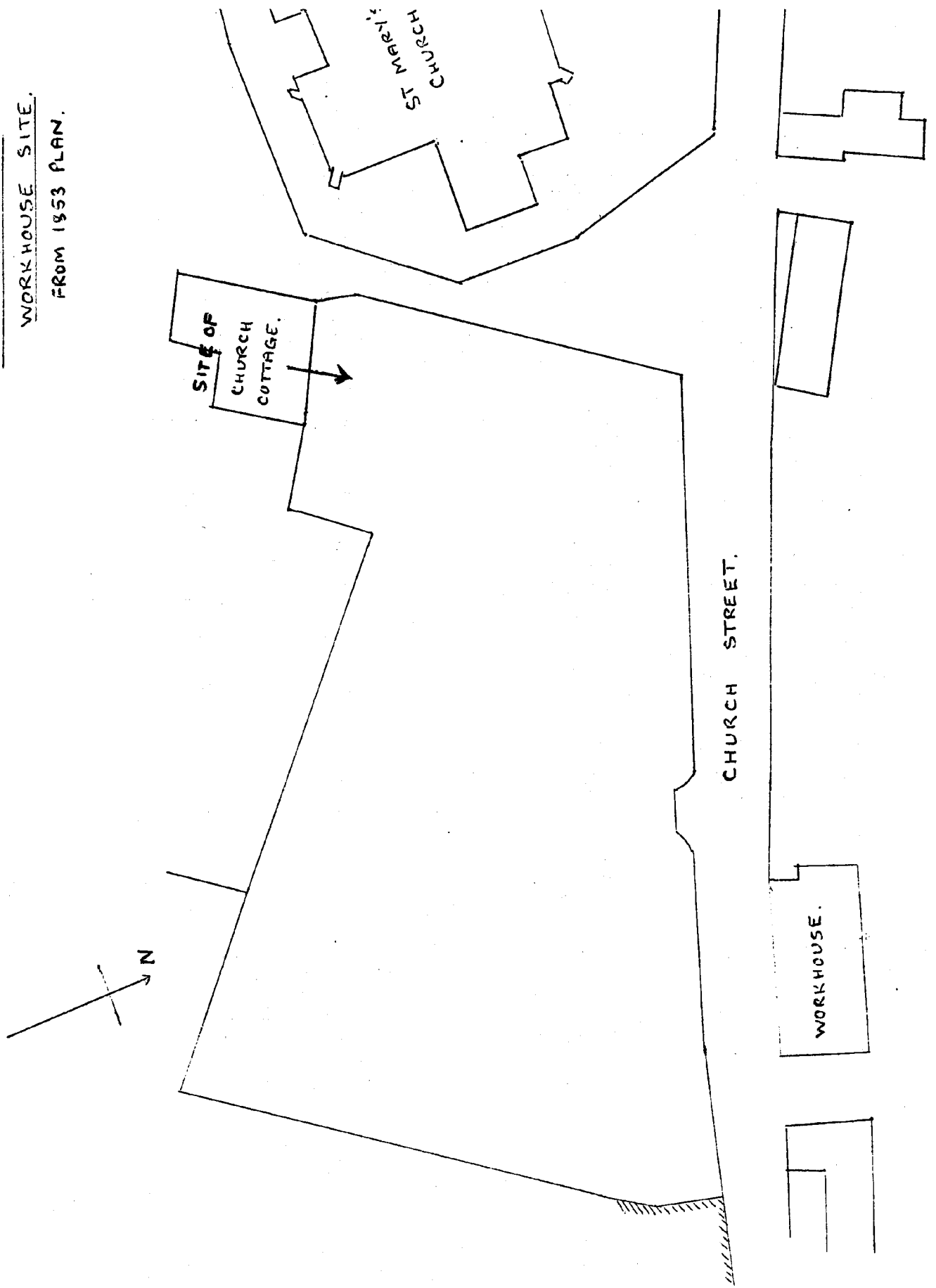
	£.	s.	d.
"To all materials to laying Floors 4-7" Forest Stone steps to Doors, 8 hearth stones 14 Stone Chimney Fronts & Coves Stone Fronts to Grates & paving laid at the outer doors with water grate & stones over the drains.	109.	2.	0.
Digging Foundations to Walls and Vaults to Privys. Building Yard Walls, Privies, Bake house & Oven including all Brick work to Work house	108.	8.	0.
To Day bill for pulling down old Church house. Cleaning and stacking bricks and hauling away rubbish	20.	12.	10.
To day bill for hauling sand to fill up floors in New house, wheeling in, setting grates, hanging furnace, finding bricks and mortar.	19.	13.	1.
To bill for putting in Culvert & drains finding bricks Lime and Paving	18.	5.	0½
	<u>£276.</u>	<u>0s.</u>	<u>11½d</u>

The total bill thus amounted to £446. 0s. 11½d, for what seems to have been quite a substantial building some 50 feet x 25 feet. Unfortunately the bill seems to have been disputed, as a second, undated, bill exists, and payment was evidently delayed for a long time - a further payment on account, being made by Capt. Stevenson to Turner of £30 on 30 November 1829.

The second bill for the extra work was for a reduced sum of £257. 15s. 0d, £253 of it being made up as follows.

	£.	s.	d.
Stonework	98.	10.	0.
Brick (work)	118.	15.	0.
Setting grates	10.	10.	0.
Pulling down Poor house	25.	5.	0.
	<u>£253.</u>	<u>0s.</u>	<u>0d.</u>

SKETCH PLAN OF
WORKHOUSE SITE,
FROM 1853 PLAN.



0 50 100
SCALE OF FEET

The different figures are not apparently reconcilable, and the difference between £253 and £257 is not explained. It does appear from an annotation on an accompanying document that Turner's account also puzzled those who had to pay it at the time, since he did not charge for putting in culverts and drains in his second account, and it is still not known if these were in fact constructed.

A letter to Capt. Stevenson in March 1830, however, makes it fairly clear that the parish officers were concerned about the state of the building. A survey of the building had revealed

"Many cracks in the internal walls which are in consequence of the Foundation not being of a sufficient depth to get a sound bottom, or else from the footing courses not being of a proper width to carry the weight of the building as the Walls appear to have gone down a little out of their places".

The surveyor did "not think the building would get worse" as the weight of the walls"(had) "by this time taken a proper bearing".

Turner received his final payment of £37. 15s. Od. on 10 December 1830 for work done "at the Work and Poor Houses". The reference to both "Work" and "Poor" houses is puzzling since this amount of money was exactly that required for the final payment for the workhouse. (Possibly Turner had also been doing work on one of the three cottages in Charlton Kings which belonged to the parish, (these were let and the rents applied to the reduction of the poor rate - hence the name 'Poor houses') and was guilty of some confused thinking in presenting his account).

As well as possible worries about the quality of the work, a more cogent reason for the delay in payment may well have been shortage of funds. An undated letter (probably early 1830)(6), from G.S. (George Stevenson?) to a person called Streford says

"There is no end to our troubles. I enclose you William Wheelers accompt £4. 3s. 2d., he is a bankrupt, and the village of Charlton will soon be the same if our bills are not more regularly discharged".

Another request for parish payment "forthwith" as it was of "very great consequence" was sent on 21 June 1830 "being waiting so long".

III. Operation of the Workhouse

The workhouse started to operate in May 1827. Accounts are available from then until 1 January 1836, and enable a number of deductions to be made concerning the way the workhouse was run.

At the beginning its officials were:

Visitor: Capt. Geo(rge) Stevenson

Deputy Visitor: one Greenwood, who acted sometimes for Stevenson

Guardian of the Poor: William Robinson (replaced by Samuel Herbert in May 1829)

Governor: (resident with his wife, at the workhouse) John Wilton (or possibly Hilton). Wilton was paid 12s. a week board wages, but only after he had apparently worked for six months. Wilton was replaced by one McGregor from March 1828.

Records show the name, age, sex, marital status, and occupation of the workhouse residents and dates of admission and "dismissal". (A detailed analysis of these records and workhouse accounts is still in progress). Thus the first two (male) residents were:

Henry Russell, aged 67, "Taylor", admitted 9 May 1827
John Varnish, aged 78, "Carpenter", admitted 9 May 1827

The monthly accounts of the workhouse which follow are fairly typical of its first years of operation.

Extract of monthly 28 day accounts 1827

<u>Bill for:</u>	Period starting:											
	8 May 1827			5 June 1827			3 July 1827			31 July 1827		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
Butcher:	1.	3.	9.		18.	6.		18.	0.		18.	0.
Baker:		18.	8.		16.	0.		13.	4.		13.	4.
Flour:			6.			8.			8.			
Butter:		2.	8.									
Milk:		3.	0.		3.	0.		3.	6.		3.	6.
Beer:		11.	8.		11.	8.		5.	10.		5.	10.
Coals:				2.	9.	0.				1.	6.	6.
Sundries:		15.	10.		19.	4.		17.	6.		19.	6.
Fagotts:											15.	0.
<u>Total:</u>	<u>3.</u>	<u>16.</u>	<u>1½.</u>	<u>5.</u>	<u>18.</u>	<u>10.</u>	<u>2.</u>	<u>18.</u>	<u>10.</u>	<u>5.</u>	<u>1.</u>	<u>8.</u>

Extras:

Bacon												
Cheese		6.	1.					7.	4.			
Clothing		9.	4.	2.	15.	6.				1.	11.	6.
Utensils								16.	3.	2.	10.	8.
<u>Total</u>	<u>4.</u>	<u>11.</u>	<u>6½.</u>	<u>8.</u>	<u>14.</u>	<u>4.</u>	<u>4.</u>	<u>2.</u>	<u>5.</u>	<u>9.</u>	<u>3.</u>	<u>10.</u>

Bread (per quartern loaf)												
			8d			8d.			8d.			8d.
Mint (per pound)			7½d			6d.			6d.			6d.

(In this period the workhouse contained the governor and two male residents).

The workhouse seems to have been thought a success to judge from a note in the Cheltenham Journal of 19 October 1829.

"The Workhouse has been productive of immense advantage not only to the Parish in point of a reduction in expenses but even to the morality of the poor and of course to their well-being. Cases are there properly investigated and ... the guardians have a legal right to insist upon applicants becoming inmates of the Workhouse or to forgo all charitable assistance. Rather than be subjected to the discipline of a workhouse, the poor will sometimes waive all claims to relief, and will necessarily trust more to their own exertions, become more industrious ... nay even ashamed to become a burden to their parishes."
(7)

IV. The End of the Workhouse

In December 1835 the churchwardens and overseers of Charlton Kings were told that a survey made jointly by the parish and the Cheltenham Board of Guardians had valued the poorhouse and its fixtures and fittings at £850, and the annual rental at £42. 10s. 0d.(8). The cost of the survey was £5.

The survey was undertaken prior to the transfer of responsibility for the workhouse to the Cheltenham Union. On 1 January 1836 the four existing residents including "one idiot" were transferred to Cheltenham.

On 6 February 1836 an inventory of the "Furniture Fixtures Utensils and other effects in the Poor House" put the value at £81. 1s. 0d. Details of this property make interesting reading, and are given in the Appendix.

For some years after this "the ... old Charlton Kings workhouse (was used) for the children" (9) It was apparently usual for (older) children in workhouses to spend half their time in school subjects and half learning a trade (10). In June 1837, for example, it was decided "a Basketmaker would attend at the Charlton Workhouse at the rate of 3s. per day to teach the boys there to make baskets."

Finally, in 1842 the Guardians of the Cheltenham Union gave notice of giving up the possession of the workhouse premises. The building was sold in 1851.

References

1. Gloucestershire Record Office, P.76. OV8/1; and P76a OV/81 Charlton Kings Workhouse Accounts and Correspondence, 1826-42
2. Local History Centre, Old Bakery, Cheltenham
W.H. Bridgman: "Old Charlton Kings Records" (WHB)
3. G. Hart, "A History of Cheltenham" Leicester University Press (1965)
4. The Poor Law in Gloucestershire. Glos. R.O. (1974)(PL)

5. Edited B. Smith, Gloucestershire Historical Studies, IX, page 50 "Rodborough Workhouse" University of Bristol, 1978, M. Walstan (M.W.)

Footnotes & References

1. Glos. R.O. P76. OV8/1 and P76a OV 8/1 records are the main source for this paper.
2. Oral information from local inhabitant, the late Mr. W. Keen.
3. The spelling is given variously as Stevenson or Stephenson. The former is used here. Capt. Stevenson lived at Bafford House (WHB Vol.III p.25) and apparently had founded a school for the instruction of children of the working classes (Cheltenham Journal, 12 October 1829 quoted by WHB, Vol.III,p.25). He was Visitor of the workhouse. (Under Gilbert's Act, 1782, a salaried Govenor of the workhouse and a salaried Guardian of the Poor, were appointed by the J.P.s and were subject to an unsalaried Visitor of the Poor).
4. New workhouses were also built at Cheltenham in 1809 and at Rodborough. The old one at the latter place was pulled down in 1818, the new one being opened in 1820. (There is a reference to a Church House subsequently turned into a workhouse at Rodborough)(M.W.)
5. A firm of Cheltenham Bankers
6. A solicitor's letter of 14 January 1830 refers to the account of William Wheeler, a bankrupt, and requests early payment (from the parish).
7. Quoted WHB, vol.III, p.25
8. For comparison, the new Cheltenham Workhouse, from 1809, was to be rented at £246 for 7 years, and was then bought for £2,578. (Hart, p.276)
9. Hart, p.287
10. PL, p.xii
11. PL op.cit. p.27 from original reference, G.R.O. G/CH 8a/1.
12. WHB in Vol.V,p.53 explains about the acquisition of the workhouse site. A meeting of the trustees of the charity estates of Charlton Kings held in the vestry room (on 22 December 1851) to determine the course to be taken to recover the lands of the charity on which the building lately used as a workhouse still stood. From this meeting it appeared that after the death of Samuel Higgs in 1824 (who had survived all his co-trustees of the charity) until 1834 there were no trustees of the charity appointed to protect its interests.

During this interval under the authority of the vestry the ground of the charity was taken over and used as a site for part of the workhouse.

Appendix: Inventory of Workhouse Contents. February 1836.

<u>Room</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Govenors Room	4 Rush seated chairs, 1 Iron Fender Fire,Irons 2 Deal cupboards in recess Hot (or Hat) rail and 4 Iron pins. 26 in(ch?) stove grate. Twin screw hammers Sundry tools (small)	A salaried govenor of the workhouse was appointed under an Act of 1782 by local J.P.s
Committee Room	1 Square Deal table 1 Tin fender poker and shovel 1 Tailors Bench 1 Shoe Makers Stall 4 Stools 2 Elbow Chairs 12 Ash Ditto 2 Deal cupboards in recesses with shelves and 6 drawers in each 1 Stove grate 2 ditto in <u>Schoolroom</u>	
Kitchen	12 Tin Breakfast Cans 12 Pint Cans 6 Half Pint Cans 12 Tin Candlesticks 13 Iron Spoons 7 Small Ditto 1 Long Sqr(?Square) Deal framed table 4 Deal Forms Deal Dresser & shelves Small Kitchen Grate Iron Sway and Links	
Pantry	4 large elm shelves and (?bearers) 4 angular ditto A stout meat Block 1 pair of (7 inch) copper scales 1 set of Iron weights from 2lb to ½ oz 1 pair of steel 210 lb 1 cleaver & 1 cheese knife 1 iron water can 1 bread pan and cover 11 plates, 8 basins 4 cups and saucers Pepper and Salt box 2 tumblers 1 grater	

Brewhouse 2 Washing Benches
 A 2in elm shelf
 2 Washing Tubs
 1-40 gallon Iron Furnace with stack
 and cover
 1-25 gallon ditto ditto
 A 4 fold deal clothes horse
 1 iron boiler
 2 iron saucepans
 1 tin boiler
 2 buckets
 1 bowl
 Towell roller
 Broom & mop
 Coal box
 1 stone jug
 Frying pan & ladle
 Brass skimmer
 a stout cooking grate
 a crane

Bedroom on an iron bedstead
 Ground Floor a straw bed & flock bolster
 an elm box
 a maniacs chain

Yard & 6 line posts
 Garden 3 tons of coal
 47 hurdles
 8 sacks of potatoes
 wheel barrow
 1 shovel
 2 spades
 2 spring forks
 2 hoes
 1 rake

Bakehouse An oven
 Baking trough
 scraper & pell (sic)
 a poker and shovel
 a beam and scales
 3 shelves & knifeboard
 coal riddle
 a hatchet & coal hammer

Passage Dinner bell
 Cloak rul & 9 pegs

Storereroom Windowframe partly glazed
 3 door bars
 2 stout elm shelves
 Straight waistcoat
 Whitewash brush
 9 Towels
 2 Table clothes
 2 square hand baskets
 Ironing blanket

2 Flat irons
2 battered marking irons
1 bush of onions
1 brass (cask)

Bedrooms 4 cold (?coloured) sacking bottom stump
bedstead
2 plain lath bottom ditto
2 half tester ditto
2 sacking bottom Iron Bedsteads
1 'sml 9?small) Turn up ditto
9 flock beds and 8 Bolsters
3 straw pallets
31 Blankets
8 coverlets
1 White Counter pane
3 pairs of stout sheets
8 pairs of very old ditto
2 Night Commodes
6 Elm Cloths boxes
2 Deal Dressing Tables
An Oak Chest of Drawers
A Basin Stand with blue Ewer basin and
chamber
3 White Chambers
7 Various Grates

(The amounts of furniture and utensils listed above suggest that the workhouse was intended to accommodate about a dozen people at a time. In fact the numbers resident between 1827 and 1836 varied from 2 to 27).