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WORKHOUSES OF ESSEX

Why and where did Workhouses start.

The origins of the workhouse can be traced to the Statute of Cambridge 1388, which attempted to address the labour shortages following the Black Death in England by restricting the movement of labourers, and ultimately led to the state becoming responsible for the support of the poor. However, mass unemployment following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the introduction of new technology to replace agricultural workers in particular, and a series of bad harvests, meant that by the early 1830s the established system of poor relief was proving to be unsustainable. The New Poor Law of 1834 attempted to reverse the economic trend by discouraging the provision of relief to anyone who refused to enter a workhouse. Some Poor Law authorities hoped to run workhouses at a profit by utilising the free labour of their inmates. Most were employed on tasks such as breaking stones, crushing bones to produce fertiliser, or picking oakum using a large metal nail known as a spike. As the 19th century wore on, workhouses increasingly became refuges for the elderly, infirm, and sick rather than the able-bodied poor, and in 1929 legislation was passed to allow local authorities to take over workhouse infirmaries as municipal hospitals. Although workhouses were formally abolished by the same legislation in 1930, many continued under their new appellation of Public Assistance Institutions under the control of local authorities. It was not until the National Assistance Act 1948 that the last vestiges of the Poor Law disappeared, and with them the workhouses.

Medieval to Early Modern period

The Statute of Cambridge law fixed wages and restricted the movement of labourers, as it was anticipated that if they were allowed to leave their parishes for higher-paid work elsewhere then wages would inevitably rise. The fear of social disorder following the plague ultimately resulted in the state, and not a "personal Christian charity", becoming responsible for the support of the poor. The resulting laws against vagrancy were the origins of state-funded relief for the poor. From the 16th century onwards a distinction was legally enshrined between those who were willing to work but could not, and those who were able to work but would not: between "the genuinely unemployed and the idler". Supporting the destitute was a problem exacerbated by King Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries, which began in 1536. They had been a significant source of charitable relief, and provided a good deal of direct and indirect employment. The Poor Relief Act of 1576 went on to establish the principle that if the able-bodied poor needed support, they had to work for it.

Elizabeth I, having realised that the extensive use of branding, mutilation, the whip and the gibbet had little or no effect on bringing down the number of people reduced to begging, decided that the question of alleviating the sufferings of the poor was really a religious matter and that it should, therefore, in future, be referred to the lowest unit of the newly established Church of England, namely the parish. This had the effect of elevating the importance of the incumbent priest or cleric in each location, making him directly responsible for his parishioners' physical well-being in addition to the health of their souls. To assist in this venture, power was granted to levy a local tax based on property values and known as "The Rates" in order to alleviate the effects of poverty in deserving cases.

Although in retrospect it can be seen that this granting of extra powers at the parish level in what came to be called "The Vestry" was probably the genesis of improved record keeping (clerics were compelled to maintain records of baptisms, marriages and burials), of government at the local or district level, or, even, of the 20th century's welfare state, there is probably also good reason to believe that the granting of the power to impose a tax was cause of the development of the resentment reflected in the view that nobody should ever receive anything for doing nothing which view, not invariably, gets translated as the idea of "looking after the tax payers' interests."

The Act for the Relief of the Poor 1601, made parishes legally responsible for the care of those within their boundaries who, through age or infirmity, were unable to work. The Act essentially classified the poor into one of three groups. It proposed that the able-bodied be offered work in a house of correction (the precursor of the workhouse), where the "persistent idler" was to be punished.

It also proposed the construction of housing for the impotent poor, the old and the infirm, although most assistance was granted through a form of poor relief known as outdoor relief – money, food, or other necessities given to those living in their own homes, funded by a local tax on the property of the wealthiest in the parish.

Georgian era

The workhouse system evolved in the 17th century, allowing parishes to reduce the cost to ratepayers of providing poor relief. The first authoritative figure for numbers of workhouses comes in the next century from The Abstract of Returns made by the Overseers of the Poor, which was drawn up following a government survey in 1776.

It put the number of parish workhouses in England and Wales at more than 1800 (about one parish in seven), with a total capacity of more than 90,000 places. This growth in the number of workhouses was prompted by the Workhouse Test Act 1723; by obliging anyone seeking poor relief to enter a workhouse and undertake a set amount of work, usually for no pay (a system called indoor relief), the Act helped prevent irresponsible claims on a parish's poor rate. The growth was also bolstered by the Relief of the Poor Act 1782, proposed by Thomas Gilbert. Gilbert's Act was intended to allow parishes to share the cost of poor relief by joining together to form unions, known as Gilbert Unions, to build and maintain even larger workhouses to accommodate the elderly and infirm. The able-bodied poor were instead either given outdoor relief or found employment locally. Relatively few Gilbert Unions were set up, but the supplementing of inadequate wages under the Speenhamland system did become established towards the end of the 18th century. So keen were some Poor Law authorities to cut costs wherever possible that cases were reported of husbands being forced to sell their wives, to avoid them becoming a financial burden on the parish. In one such case in 1814 the wife and child of Henry Cook, who were living in Effingham workhouse, were sold at Croydon market for one shilling (5p); the parish paid for the cost of the journey and a "wedding dinner".

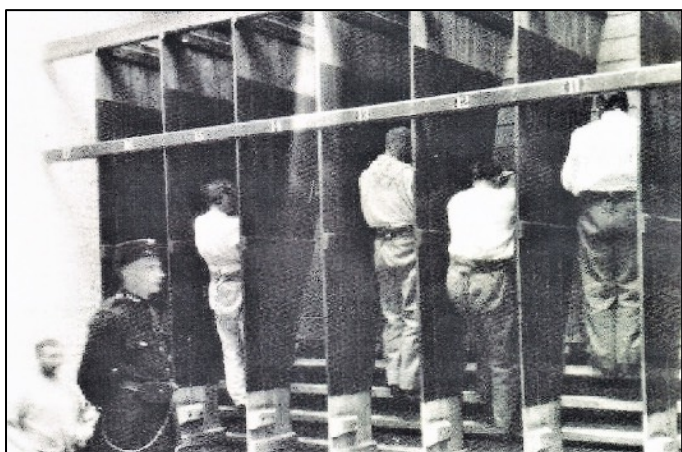
By the 1830s most parishes had at least one workhouse, but many were badly managed. In his 1797 work, *The State of the Poor*, Sir Frederick Eden, wrote:

"The workhouse is an inconvenient building, with small windows, low rooms and dark staircases. It is surrounded by a high wall, that gives it the appearance of a prison, and prevents free circulation of air. There are 8 or 10 beds in each room, chiefly of flocks, and consequently retentive of all scents and very productive of vermin. The passages are in great want of whitewashing. No regular account is kept of births and deaths, but when smallpox, measles or malignant fevers make their appearance in the house, the mortality is very great. Of 131 inmates in the house, sixty are children."

Instead of a workhouse, some sparsely populated parishes placed homeless paupers into rented accommodation, and provided others with relief in their own homes. Those entering a workhouse might join anywhere from a handful to several hundred other inmates; for instance, between 1782 and 1794 Liverpool's workhouse accommodated 900–1200 indigent men, women and children. The larger workhouses such as the Gressenhall House of Industry (formerly Mitford and Launditch Incorporation House of Industry built in Hoe Common Norfolk) generally served a number of communities, in Gressenhall's case fifty parishes. Writing in 1854, Poor Law commissioner George Nicholls viewed many of them as little more than factories:

"These workhouses were established, and mainly conducted, with a view to deriving profit from the labour of the inmates, and not as being the safest means of affording relief by at the same time testing the reality of their destitution. The workhouse was in truth at that time a kind of manufactory, carried on at the risk and cost of the poor-rate, employing the worst description of the people, and helping to pauperise the best."

Houses of Correction



In some of the 'Houses of Correction' (also known as Bridewells after the first to be founded in a former Royal Palace in London), devices were used such as the 'Treadmill.' A treadmill in Gloucester prison in 1873, also known as a treadwheel or 'everlasting staircase.' It was introduced in 1818 by the British engineer Sir William Cubitt as a means of usefully employing prisoners. The device was a wide hollow cylinder, usually composed of wooden steps built around a cylindrical iron frame, and was designed in some cases to handle up to 40 convicts. As the device began to rotate, each prisoner was forced to continue stepping along the series of planks. The power generated by the treadwheel was used to grind corn and pump water,

although some served no purpose at all other than punishment. The use of treadwheels was abolished in Britain by the Prisons Act of 1898. The House of Correction also contained a hand-crank (an instrument of prison discipline like a paddle-wheel) for connecting and pumping water. Stone breaking was also a regular source of 'hard labour' amongst 'first-class' prisoners. For the 'second-class' males over sixteen, there was mat making, picking oakum, pumping, tailoring, and stone-making (for example, drinking-troughs for cattle and horses, which were made using a mallet and chisel). For females, hard labour entailed work in the laundry, picking oakum, cleaning and knitting. There was a 'Treadmill' in Chelmsford Prison as mentioned following.

A detailed picture can be built up of life at a House of Correction. On admission the prisoner was searched, and dangerous weapons, articles likely to facilitate escape and other prohibited articles taken from them, as well as

money, which could be eventually restored to the prisoner, once certain deductions had been made. Before trial, a prisoner could procure or receive food and 'malt liquor,' clothing, bedding and other necessities, and receive letters once read by the Governor. Once convicted, he or she would be provided and expected to wear 'prison dress,' and allowed to see friends or relations once in three months (but not on Sundays). They were required to keep themselves clean and 'decent.' The Matron superintended the work of the female prisoners, and where practical provide employment for prisoners awaiting trial for those who wished to work. Before trial, no prisoner could be compelled to work. Convicted prisoners would be expected to attend chapel on Sunday, but not compelled if they were members of another church or 'persuasion.' Before trial, prisoners could communicate with friends, and were entitled to see their legal advisors alone.

Male prisoners were shaved 'at least once a week' unless specially exempted by a Justice, and convicted prisoners had their hair cut once a month (before trial hair would only be cut when necessary for health and cleanliness). All prisoners were required to wash daily, and provided with clean linen and clean towels once a week. All prisoners before trial and of the First Division, were, if ordered by the Surgeon, to be placed in a bath at least once a month, and all other prisoners placed in a 'Tepid Bath' at least once a month unless exempted by the Surgeon. All prisoners were provided with a hair, flock or straw mattress, two blankets and a coverlet, all of which should be kept clean and straw changed regularly. When ordered by the Surgeon two sheets and a pillow could be supplied. Where the sentence exceeded a month, convicted prisoners were made to sleep on a plank bed without a mattress for the first month of their sentence.

Those convicted of felonies or sentenced to hard labour were unable to receive visits or letters from their friends for the first three months; thereafter they were allowed visits or letters once every three months. Other convicted prisoners could see their friends, in the presence of a prison employee, once a month 'at convenient hours between nine in the morning and four in the afternoon.' All prisoners were expected to observe a rule of silence.

There was a detailed diet regime for the prisoners.

Class 1 (prisoners sentenced to a term not exceeding 7 days) men and women had the same – a pint of oatmeal gruel, one pound of bread, and for supper another pint of oatmeal gruel.

Class 2 (between 7 – 21 days) could expect the same, but with 6oz of additional bread at breakfast and supper and only 12oz bread for dinner.

If they were employed at Hard Labour, they had an additional pint of soup per week, containing per pint, 3oz of cooked meat (off the bone), 1oz. of onions or leeks, 1oz. of barley, rice, or oatmeal, and 3oz. potatoes, with pepper and salt. Gruel was to contain 2oz. of oatmeal per pint, sweetened on alternate days with $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. sugar and seasoned with salt.

Class 3 prisoners (those employed at hard labour for between 21 days and six weeks, or convicted but not hard labour between 21 days and 4 months), had similar rations for breakfast, on Mondays and Fridays a pint of soup and 8oz. of bread (6oz. for women and boys under 14), on Tuesdays and Saturdays 3oz. cooked meat off the bone, and one pound of potatoes (half a pound of potatoes for women) plus 8oz. bread (6oz. for women). On Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday, dinner was bread and potatoes or a pint of gruel if potatoes could not be obtained.

Class 4 prisoners (sentenced to hard labour for between six weeks and four months, had 3oz. cooked meat plus potatoes and bread four days a week, and just soup and bread on the other three. After the first two months they might have 2oz. of bread extra for supper.

Class 5 prisoners (those sentenced to hard labour for terms exceeding four months) were allocated for breakfast (instead of gruel) one pint of cocoa (on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays). This was to be made of $\frac{3}{4}$ oz of flaked cocoa, sweetened with $\frac{3}{4}$ oz of sugar.

Organising all of this to the specific amount to each prisoner must have been a detailed labour intensive task, and one wonders to what extent these regulations were observed.

The 1840-44 Parliamentary Gazetteer also records the testimony of a man whose father was a 'turnkey' at the House of Correction. He remembered that 'The prisoners used to be served with a skilly in two mugs. One man wrote on the bottom of one of them with in a beautiful hand the following doggerel.

*'Jesus wept, and well He might
To see us poor devils! In such a plight
Eight ounce of bread, one pint of gruel
And that's all we get, without the fuel'*

Chelmsford County House of Correction.

Although the Chelmsford County House of Correction was located next to the Chelmsford Gaol (ID 16), they were considered separate institutions until 1823 when they officially merged. When Springfield Gaol was completed in 1825, the Chelmsford County House of Correction and Gaol was used to hold females and debtors only.

Chelmsford's 'County Gaol' was the home of hundreds of prisoners from across Essex. Built in the 1600s, the prison was unsanitary, filthy, and home to sick adults and children who were forced to live in cramp and dirty rooms. It was in operational use for around two hundred years, but once the city's current facility was built on Springfield Hill there was no longer a need for what became known as the 'Moulsham Gaol', and it was demolished in 1859.

The building may be gone, but its grim history lives on. We've taken a look back through the archives and found some astonishing secrets. Chelmsford's first 'gaol' was built on the south bank of the River Can, which runs through the city centre, during the 17th century - around 1658. It soon became known as the Moulsham Gaol, and after being demolished for the first time it was rebuilt in 1777. Chelmsford's iconic Stone Bridge, which still stands today on the northeast side of the site, was built ten years later.

The original 'House of Correction', which stood alongside the Gaol, had a large workroom and a kitchen, with a lodging room for men on the ground floor and rooms for women on the first floor. A new House of correction, a place where unwilling workers were set to work, was added in 1806 at a cost of £7,390, equivalent to around £460,000 today.

The buildings were striking from the outside and had an attractive appearance for the time. But looks can be deceiving as conditions were anything but attractive on the inside. Forced to live in cramp and unsanitary rooms, prisoners were frequently ill, suffering from 'gaol fever'. This was as a result of constantly being locked in their rooms due to poor security. The nearby sewers were also in a very bad state. Prisoners from across Essex were admitted to the House on a range of charges, as punishment for perceived "lewd, idle, vagrant or disorderly behaviours."

According to the Essex Record Office, Peter Lake was admitted in 1616 for vagrancy and "keeping the company with the wife of John Mayfield as if she were his own wife", while Susan Larkin was admitted in 1617 for "living lewdly and out of all order to the disquiet of her neighbours". Women accused of being pregnant out of wedlock were often admitted to the House for a whole year.

A damning report in 1803. Just after the turn of the 19th century, prison reformer James Neild visited the House of Correction after several previous trips.

He claimed that by 1803, the condition of the prison had deteriorated, and wrote this damning report:

"On my visit the 31 July 1803, I found the good old keeper dead; the whole prison [was] filthy and out of repair; in the two upper rooms five women and two children sick on the floor; the straw worn to dust; and in one of the rooms a cartload of rubbish heaped up in a corner.

"In one of the sick rooms below were four women; in the other room six women and two children, one of the women quite naked, another without a shift, the other four had neither shoe nor stocking.

"The whole prisoners were coniferous, and almost desperate for water. The prisoners complained of the want of medical attendance, and, if I may judge from the filthiness of the fores and bandages, not without reason."

Prisoner escapes were not a common occurrence, but on April 8, 1817, eleven prisoners managed from Moulsham Gaol through the sewers. They were soon recaptured, with some being caught from as far afield as Stock, Good Easter and Chadwell Heath. Alterations were made as a result to provide improved prisoner segregation and conditions.

A completely new prison was eventually built at the top of Springfield Hill between 1822 and 1828. The new jail, Chelmsford Prison, remains in use today. The total cost at the time escalated to £57,289 - more than £4.3 million in new money. The new premises was planned to maximise the useful employment of the prisoners. Previously, the only tasks in the Moulsham Gaol were picking oakum (fibre obtained by unravelling old tarry rope), white-washing buildings and exercising on the tread wheel. Some of the building work for the new prison was even carried out by inmates. For a while, both prisons were in use simultaneously with female prisoners held in custody in the Moulsham Gaol after 1846. In 1859, the Moulsham Gaol was demolished and the Armoury and Depot of the West Essex Militia Regiment was built on the same site. Much of the masonry from the Gaol was carted away to High Beech in Epping Forest to form a 'folly' - an imitation catacomb (underground cemetery) with a mixture of stonework, lintels and pillars.

1834 Act

By 1832 the amount spent on poor relief nationally had risen to £7 million a year, more than 10 shillings (£0.50) per head of population, up from £2 million in 1784. The large number of those seeking assistance was pushing the system to "the verge of collapse". The economic downturn following the end of the Napoleonic Wars as stated in the early 19th century resulted in increasing numbers of unemployed. Coupled with developments in agriculture

that meant less labour was needed on the land, along with three successive bad harvests beginning in 1828 and the Swing Riots of 1830, reform was inevitable.

Many suspected that the system of poor relief was being widely abused. In 1832 the government established a Royal Commission to investigate and recommend how relief could best be given to the poor. The result was the establishment of a centralised Poor Law Commission in England and Wales under the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, also known as the New Poor Law, which discouraged the allocation of outdoor relief to the able-bodied; "all cases were to be 'offered the house', and nothing else". Individual parishes were grouped into Poor Law Unions, (as mentioned), each of which was to have a union workhouse. More than five hundred of these were built during the next 50 years, two-thirds of them by 1840. In certain parts of the country there was a good deal of resistance to these new buildings, some of it violent, particularly in the industrial north. Many workers lost their jobs during the major economic depression of 1837, and there was a strong feeling that what the unemployed needed was not the workhouse but short-term relief to tide them over. By 1838, 573 Poor Law Unions had been formed in England and Wales, incorporating 13,427 parishes, but it was not until 1868 that unions were established across the entire country: the same year that the New Poor Law was applied to the Gilbert Unions.

Despite the intentions behind the 1834 Act, relief of the poor remained the responsibility of local taxpayers, and there was thus a powerful economic incentive to use loopholes such as sickness in the family to continue with outdoor relief; the weekly cost per person was about half that of providing workhouse accommodation.

Outdoor relief was further restricted by the terms of the 1844 Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order, which aimed to end it altogether for the able-bodied poor. In 1846, of 1.33 million paupers only 199,000 were maintained in workhouses, of whom 82,000 were considered to be able-bodied, leaving an estimated 375,000 of the able-bodied on outdoor relief. Excluding periods of extreme economic distress, it has been estimated that about 6.5% of the British population may have been accommodated in workhouses at any given time.

Early Victorian workhouses.

The New Poor Law Commissioners were very critical of existing workhouses, and generally insisted that they be replaced. They complained in particular that "in by far the greater number of cases, it is a large alms-house, in which the young are trained in idleness, ignorance, and vice; the able-bodied maintained in sluggish sensual indolence; the aged and more respectable exposed to all the misery that is incident to dwelling in such a society". After 1835 many workhouses were constructed with the central buildings surrounded by work and exercise yards enclosed behind brick walls, so-called "pauper bastilles". The commission proposed that all new workhouses should allow for the segregation of paupers into at least four distinct groups, each to be housed separately: the aged and impotent, children, able-bodied males, and able-bodied females. A common layout resembled Jeremy Bentham's (Philosopher and Social Theorist) prison panopticon, a radial design with four three-storey buildings at its centre set within a rectangular courtyard, the perimeter of which was defined by a three-storey entrance block and single-storey outbuildings, all enclosed by a wall. That basic layout, one of two designed by the architect Sampson Kempthorne (his other design was octagonal with a segmented interior, sometimes known as the Kempthorne star, allowed for four separate work and exercise yards, one for each class of inmate. Separating the inmates was intended to serve three purposes: to direct treatment to those who most needed it; to deter others from pauperism; and as a physical barrier against illness, physical and mental. The commissioners argued that buildings based on Kempthorne's plans would be symbolic of the recent changes to the provision of poor relief; one assistant commissioner expressed the view that they would be something "the pauper would feel it was utterly impossible to contend against", and "give confidence to the Poor Law Guardians". Another assistant commissioner claimed the new design was intended as a "terror to the able-bodied population", but the architect George Gilbert Scott was critical of what he called "a set of ready-made designs of the meanest possible character". Some critics of the new Poor Law noted the similarities between Kempthorne's plans and model prisons, and doubted that they were merely coincidental - Richard Oastler went as far as referring to the institutions as 'prisons for the poor'. Augustus Pugin compared Kempthorne's octagonal plan with the "antient poor hoys", in what Felix Driver calls a "romantic, conservative critique" of the "degeneration of English moral and aesthetic values".

By the 1840s some of the enthusiasm for Kempthorne's designs had waned. With limited space in built-up areas, and concerns over the ventilation of buildings, some unions moved away from panopticon designs. Between 1840 and 1870 about 150 workhouses with separate blocks designed for specific functions were built. Typically the entrance building contained offices, while the main workhouse building housed the various wards and workrooms, all linked by long corridors designed to improve ventilation and lighting. Where possible, each building was separated by an exercise yard, for the use of a specific category of pauper.

A timeline of change.

1349 The Black Death reached England. The Ordinance of Labourers prohibited the giving of relief to able-bodied beggars "that they may be compelled to Labour for their necessary living."

1388 The Statute of Cambridge.

Restricted the movements of all labourers and beggars.

Made county "Hundreds" responsible for their own "impotent poor."

1494 The Vagabonds and Beggars Act, threatened "vagabonds, idle and suspected persons" with three days in the stocks on a diet of bread and water. However, beggars too infirm to work could stay in their Hundred and be allowed to beg.

1536 The Dissolution of smaller monasteries by Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell. Followed by the dissolution of remaining monasteries in 1539.

1547 The Statute of Legal Settlement provided for the branding or enslavement of sturdy beggars. The impotent poor were to receive relief and have cottages erected for their use.

1576 An Act for Setting of the poor on work and for the avoiding of idleness stipulated:

Every town to set up stocks of materials for the poor to work on. Every County to set up a House of Correction for anyone refusing to work.

1597 An Act for the Relief of the Poor, required Churchwardens and four Overseers in each parish to:

Set children and poor to work.

Relieve the impotent.

Bind out pauper children as apprentices.

Tax every inhabitant and occupier of lands' in the parish for the above purposes.

1601 An Act for the Relief of the Poor, consolidated and replaced a variety of previous legislation and aim at: Establishment of Parochial responsibility, with Churchwardens or Overseers (from two or four in number, depending on the size of the parish) allocating relief.

Suppressing of begging.

Provision of work.

Use of county Houses of Correction for vagrants.

Setting to work and apprenticeship of Children.

1647 London Corporation of the Poor set up to:

Erect Workhouses and Houses of Correction.

Enforce Laws against vagabonds.

Set the poor to work.

1696 Bristol Incorporation, formed by a Local Act giving it powers to erect a workhouse etc.

1697 An Act for supplying some Defects in the Laws for the Relief of the Poor, stipulated:

Newcomers with certificates to be removed only when chargeable.

Those receiving relief to wear identifying badges.

Fines for those who refuse to take pauper apprentices.

1723 Knatchbull's Act (The Workhouse Test Act), Enabled Workhouses to be set up by parishes either singularly, or in combination with neighbouring parishes. In addition, relief was to be offered only to those willing to enter the workhouse.

1741 The Foundling Hospital was founded by Captain Thomas Coram.

1762 An Act "for the keeping regular, uniform and annual registers of all parish poor infants under a certain age. Withing the Bills of Mortality" required Metropolitan parishes to maintain proper records of children admitted into their workhouses.

1766 Hanway's Act, promoted by Foundling Hospital Governor Jonas Hanway, required that all pauper children under six from Metropolitan Parishes be sent to school in the countryside at least three miles from London or Westminster. The nursing and maintenance of each child was to cost at least two shillings and sixpence per week.

1780 Sunday School movement begins with opening of a school in Gloucester by Robert Raikes.

1782 Gilberts Act, Authorised parishes to unite and set up a common workhouse controlled by a Board of Guardians appointed by JP's. Able-bodied poor to be dealt with outside the workhouse e.g. by providing them with work and supplementing wages.

1800 Act of Union makes Ireland part of Great Britain.

1810 First British School set up by British and Foreign Schools Society.

1811 First National School set up by the National Society for the education of the poor in the Principles of the Established Church.

1818 First Ragged School opened by John Pounds.

1819 Sturges Bourne's Act allowed parishes to appoint:

Selected vestries to scrutinise relief-giving.

A salaried assistant overseer.

1831 Passing of the **Vestries Act (Houbhouses Act)**, which allowed parishes to adopt a procedure for the management of the parish, particularly in relation to poor relief, based on a vestry elected from the ratepayers.

1834 **Report of the Royal Commission** published in March.

Poor Law Amendment Act received Royal Assent on August 14th.

Poor Law Commissioners sworn in on 23rd August.

1835 **Abingdon** in Berkshire declared as first new Poor Law Union on January 1st – its new workhouse received its first inmates in November of the same year. The earliest known use of the term workhouse is from 1631, in an account by the mayor of Abingdon reporting that "we have erected within our borough a workhouse to set poorer people to work".

1836 Report of the **Royal Commission on Ireland** published. George Nicholls tours Ireland.

1838 An Act for the more effectual Relief of the Destitute Poor in Ireland passed on 31st July.

1840 The Vaccination Extension Act, provided for the Vaccination of infants to be made free to all. It was locally administered via Poor Law Unions and their Medical Officers.

1842 The Outdoor Labour Test Order, issued by the PLC in April, allowed relief (at least half of which was to be in food, clothing etc.) to be given to able-bodied male paupers satisfying a Labour Test.

1844 A further Poor Law Amendment Act, improved numerous details of the 1834 Act. One of its most significant changes was a revision of the Bastardy Laws whereby mothers were granted the civil right of claim against punitive fathers, regardless of whether she was in receipt of poor relief.

The Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order issued by the PLC in December, prohibited all outdoor relief to able-bodied men and women apart from exceptional circumstance.

1845 An Act for the amendment and better Administration of the Laws relating to the relief of the poor in Scotland, proposed keeping poor relief in Scotland primarily at the parish level. Parishes, particularly in urban areas, could unite and build poorhouses for the old and infirm.

Andover Workhouse Scandal – conditions were so bad that inmates were revealed to be fighting over scraps of rotten meat left on bones they were crushing.

1846 An Act granted settlement after five years' residence in a parish.

Start of annual government grant of £30,000 towards salaried of teachers in pauper schools.

1847 Poor Law Board replaced by Poor Law Commission.

1848-50 Irish Poor Law Unions reorganised with creation of thirty three new Unions.

1852 The Poor Law Board's Outdoor Relief Regulation Orders bin August and December, broadened the conditions under which outdoor relief could be provided.

1858 Workhouse Visiting Society founded by Louisa Twining.

1861 Another **Industrial Schools Act**, defined the classes of children who could be placed in an industrial School: Under Fourteens found begging; Under Fourteens wandering, and not having any home or visible means of subsistence, or frequenting the company of reputed thieves; Under twelves committing an offence punishable by imprisonment; Under fourteens whose parent claims he is unable to control him, and is prepared to pay for the child to be detained in an Industrial School.

1864 **The Houseless Poor Act**, made it obligatory for Metropolitan Boards of Guardians to provide Casual Wards for "destitute wayfarers, wanderers and foundlings."

1865 **The Union Chargeability Act**, based on each parish's contribution to the union's funds on it rateable value not how many paupers it had. The Union also became the area of settlement and the period of residency required for the irremovability, was reduced to one year. The Lancet exposed the terrible conditions that existed in many London workhouse infirmaries.

1866 A further **Industrial Schools Act**, required that children on remand for charges punishable by committal to an industrial school, be kept in workhouses rather than prisons.

1867 **The Metropolitan Poor Act**, set up a Common Poor Fund to finance the construction and operation of new fever hospitals and asylums for London's poor. It also gave the local Government Board powers to abolish the Local Act status of many of London's parishes and to reorganise and dissolve unions.

The **Metropolitan Asylums Board** was set up to take over the provision of care for paupers with infectious diseases such as smallpox or who were classes as "harmless imbeciles."

1869 Abolition of Gilbert's Unions still in existence.

1870 **The Education Act**, introduced compulsory elementary education administered by local School Boards. The Metropolitan Asylums Board North-Western Fever Hospital opened in Hampstead, becoming England's first State Hospital.

1871 **The Local Government Board** replaced the Poor Law Board.

- 1875 The Public Health Act**, set up nationwide system of rural and urban sanitary authorities. First woman Guardian elected - to the Kensington Union Board.
- 1876 The Divided Parishes and Poor Law Amendment Act**, gave the Local Government Board new powers to reorganise and dissolve unions.
- 1883** Once-a- week fish dinners allowed in workhouses.
- 1885** Prior to 1918, receipt of poor relief disqualified the recipient from voting. **The 1885 Medical Relief Disqualification Removal Act**, meant that anyone who was in receipt only of poor-rate-funded medical care, no longer lost their vote.
- 1891** The Public Health (London) Law Consolidation Bill, extended free access to the Metropolitan Asylum Board's fever hospitals to all Londoners (not just paupers), thus creating England's first free state hospitals.
- 1902 The Education Act**, replaced the School Boards by Local Education Authorities and raised School leaving age to fourteen years.
- 1904** The Registrar General requested that workhouse births be disguised by the use of euphemistic addresses.
- 1905** Royal Commission on the Poor Law and the Unemployed appointed.
- 1908 The Children's Act**, gave local authorities new powers to keep poor children out of the workhouse.
- 1909** Old Age Pension was introduced on 1st January.
- 1911** Unemployment Insurance and Health Insurance began in limited form.
- 1913** Workhouse now referred to as Poor Law Institution in official documents.
- 1919** The Ministry of Health replaced Local Government Board.
- 1921** Irish Free State created – former workhouses become County Homes, County Hospitals and District Hospitals.
- 1926** Board of Guardians (Default) Act, enabled the dismissal of a Board of Guardians and its replacement with government officials.
- 1929** Local Government Act, abolished all Poor Law Authorities and transferred their responsibilities for "public assistance" to local councils.
- 1944** The Education Act, introduced primary and secondary schools; merged boys and girls school at the primary level and raised school-leaving to Fifteen years of age.
- 1948** The National Health Service came into force on 5th July.

The Workhouses of Essex– Serving the Community for six hundred Years.

If you have read Oliver Twist, or just watched the musical, you will have a good idea of what workhouses were like. They provided basic accommodation and shelter for those who were homeless, destitute and poor. Essex had many workhouses spread across the county and many date back long before Victorian times.

Parish Workhouses in Essex.

The first workhouses, or poor houses, were set up during the 14th century. At this time it was mostly the church that took on this role of helping the poor. Workhouses fell under state control in 1723 when the government decided that local authorities within the parishes should take the responsibility.

There are four hundred parishes in Essex and it is thought that around 160 of these had workhouses. Generally the larger parishes would have a workhouse, many smaller ones did not need one as there was not a great demand by the under-privileged. We do not know what the poorer people in smaller parishes actually did. Generally wives would work in the kitchens and house while men would work the fields and perform the more labour intensive duties.

Essex Union Workhouses.

As the population of Essex increased, along with the rest of the country, it started to become harder for the parishes to provide work and shelter for the poorest people. In 1834 the government made a new law and this gave time the workhouses to the Union Workhouses. These workhouses covered larger areas, meaning that everyone had the chance to gain shelter and work, not just those in the largest parishes. However, these became more like prisons than charities. Families were often separated in Union Workhouses with men and boys living on one side and the women and girls on the other. Families could not live together in the same room, instead people shared bunks in large dormitories. The workhouses were built from red brick and often had white painted windows. They were rather imposing in the otherwise more countrified market towns such as Dunmow and Saffron Waldon. The Dunmow Workhouse was built in a mock-gothic style while the Saffron Waldon one was built in yellow. However, the exterior variations did not mean that the interior was any more comfortable for the poor residents.

New Essex Hospitals.

In 1930 the 17 Union Workhouses in Essex were given to Essex County Council and converted to hospitals. As with St. Andrews Billericay following on the next page. Chelmsford's St. Johns was still the working hospital until 2011, other hospitals include St. Peters in Maldon and St. Michaels in Braintree. Many were closed years ago to provide sheltered accommodation. Chelmsford's St. Johns is currently being developed into new residential properties, although there is likely to be many flats and houses the fall under the share ownership scheme to help people take their first steps on to the housing ladder.

Was the Victorian Workhouse Diet Healthy?

"Please sir, I want some more."

Possibly the most famous words from any Charles Dickens novel. The words of Oliver Twist, asking in the workhouse for more food. However, this raises an interesting question – what was life in the Victorian workhouses really like? Were the workers in need of more food or were they adequately fed?

Observations on the Victorian Diet.

Fortunately, this question is not too hard to answer today because historians and health researchers have worked together to determine what workhouse diets were really like. In fact, a book was published in 1843 entitled "A treatise on food and diet" by Jonathan Pereira MD which reported in great detail exactly what people living and working in Victorian workhouses were allocated on a daily basis. The book described the recommended diets of 9-year-old children in the workhouses.

Jonathan Reinartz, a lecturer in the History of Medicine at the University of Birmingham, was approached by Andrew Williams to use this text to produce a Dickensian workhouse diet plan. What they found was that contrary to the belief that the children in the workhouses were underfed, the diets set out by the Poor Law actually provided plenty of food and adequate nutrition for the children.

Children consumed substantial amounts of thick gruel made from oatmeal and vegetables along with protein from mutton, beef and in coastal areas, fish. This actually provided a reasonably healthy and balanced diet. Of course, inmates in the various institutions and workhouses may not have received the food as set out in the book. It is expected that many suppliers cut corners and bulked oatmeal out with sawdust to make more money. While the reality may not have been exactly what was set out in the dietary guidelines for workhouses, it was probably closer to the truth than the fictional world created by Charles Dickens.

Workhouses Provided plenty of Food.

So, Oliver Twist may not really have wanted or even required more food. Although there were reported cases of starvation and malnutrition, the average portions were substantial and easily enough to allow a 9-year-old child to work hard all day while maintaining a relatively healthy body.

They did not have the luxuries that Charles Dickens was accustomed too, but the wealthy middle classes in Victorian times were really not much healthier than the average person today – overeating and drinking too much alcohol were commonplace in Victorian Britain. Overall, Oliver Twist and his peers were well catered for.

As mentioned earlier, The 1834 Act transferred responsibility from local parishes to a Board of Guardians in each union. These groupings or unions were known as poor-law unions. Essex had the following poor law unions within its boundaries:

THE POOR LAW UNIONS:

Billericay Poor Law Union.

Constituent Parishes:

Billericay, North Benfleet, South Benfleet, Bowers Gifford, Brentwood, Great Burstead, Little Burstead, Childerditch, Downham, Dunton Wayletts, East Horndon, Hutton, West Horndon with Ingrave, Laindon, Mountnessing, Nevendon, Pitsea, Ramsden Bellhouse, Ramsden Crays, Shenfield, Thundersley, Vange, Little Warley, South Weald, Wickford, Later Additions: Basildon, Lee Chapel (from 1858). Lee Chapel was an extra parochial place.

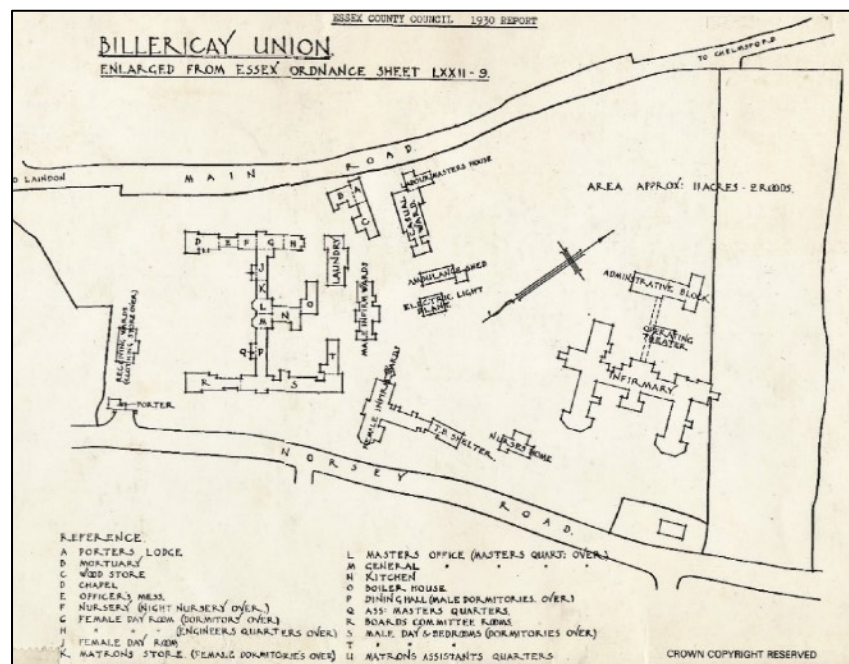
The Workhouse (St. Andrews Hospital Billericay)

Social reform in the nineteenth century produced the 1834 Poor Law Act requiring Unions to provide Workhouses to replace old parish poor houses.

The Workhouse was a place for the poor of the parish who became 'inmates of the house.' It was needed by the old and infirm, children and babies were part of the Workhouse community. The inmates were required to work in

the laundry, kitchens, workshops, gardens etc. It was considered humiliating to be sent to the workhouse as an inmate and it was thought that the infirm were sent there to die. There was also overnight accommodation for vagrants.

The Union bought a site of eleven and a half acres called Stock Hill Field, lying to the north of the Billericay railway line.

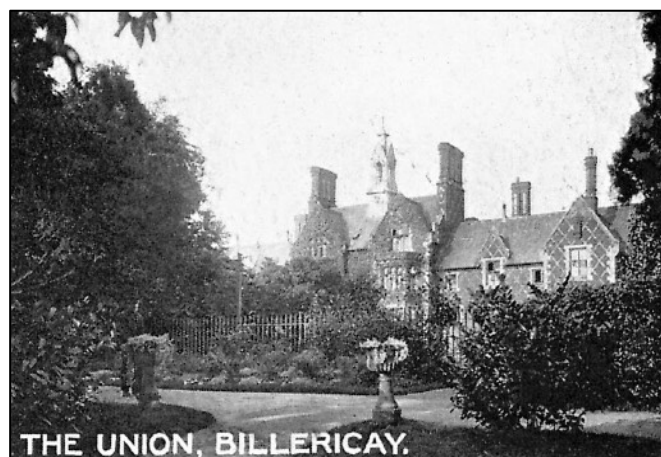


It engaged George Gilbert Scott as architect and he designed the H shaped building at the south of the present hospital which is dated 1840. The original main entrance and porter's lodge were sited in Norsey Road. The receiving Ward with a clothing store was adjacent to the entrance (Matrons House). The Labour Master's House, Social Club and the Casual Ward (Porter's Lodge) had their entrance in Stock Road. The Laundry and workshops were also in the area near the Stock Road entrance.

The Board Room was used by the Board of Guardians for their monthly meetings and this contain the original furniture until the nineteen sixties. The remaining parts of this H-shaped building have had different uses throughout the years.



Iron Age material and Roman pottery were found in the workhouse grounds in excavations between 1860 and 1866. Some of these finds are kept in Colchester Museum.



The term "Spike" for workhouse (a nickname used of the time as with Orsett) was formerly abolished in 1929 which accounts for the fact that the Ordnance Survey map of Essex issued in the 1920s shows buildings at Billericay, Dunton and Orsett indicated as "Workhouse" whilst the same map issued in the 1930s shows the same buildings at Orsett and Billericay indicated as "PA Institution" while the indication applied to the buildings at Dunton has become "Farm Colony".

The 1851 Census for the Billericay Workhouse at Great Burstead gives a total of 217 residents including Robert Duncan its Master, born in Aberdeen, a Matron, Schoolmaster, Nurse, Porter and Cook. The listed residents, all described as paupers, were from all surrounding parishes of south Essex and of generally agricultural skills. In the 1861 Census, the Master of the Billericay Union Workhouse is still Robert Duncan, aged thirty-seven and now married, of Scotland, with the same support staff structure but what is now apparent amongst the register is a greater range of inmates, from Chelsea Pensioner, those with mental illness and those with ownership and farm management skills or their widows and a wider catchment area. A total of 205 are registered here.

The 1871 Census has Robert Duncan and his family still as Master of the Workhouse, his children being born there. The same, management structure and a similar inmate register as that of 1861 including a German former

Clockmaker, and some travelling tramps. On the 1881 Census still has Robert Duncan as its Master with his family still residing there. The number of inmates register has increased to 256. What is noticeable is the length of time some families are still recorded as being inmates. Also, an increase of those with mental and vision illnesses. The 1891 Census has Robert Duncan, now aged 68 years, as its Master with some of his family in residence, but a reduced management body including a Schoolmistress, Nurse and Porter. A total of 215 on the register of which 206 are shown as paupers. Robert Duncan passed away on 27 July 1891.



The 1901 Census has a new Master and his family, namely Walter Needham, aged forty, he originally from Norwich in Norfolk although his family are from Billericay. The management structure has increased as has the range of service to include infants, separate boys and girls facilities etc. The register gives a total of 163 male and female paupers and nine varying physical and mental illness cases. The 1911 Census is perhaps the transition of the facility. Walter Needham, if still the Master of the Workhouse and his wife Elizabeth Ann Needham, the Matron. A total of 231 on the register.

BOWERS GIFFORD AND THE POOR LAW

During the Tudor period the trade in Essex cheeses was failing and these were now mainly being consumed by local people. Cattle were being considered by the marshland owners as the more profitable way of living. Indeed some London butchers were anxious to rent grazing pasture on the marshes to sustain the animals until they would fetch a good price in the London market. Roads by now were becoming more useable, though very rough, muddy and, in summer, dusty, and were mainly gravelled.

The people of Bowers Gifford had by now practically left the low marshes and were living up on the Old London Road. A severe flooding of the marsh may have been the final reason for the move.

The jurisdiction of the manors was coming to an end, and new measures had to be taken to deal with the poor.

In 1536 an Act of Parliament made it the duty of individual parishes to care for their poor. Each parish had to create a voluntary fund for the purpose of finding employment for all the able-bodied, and orphan and vagrant children must be placed in an apprenticeship or craft. All relief was controlled by the clergy and church wardens. An Act of 1547 imposed new penalties of great harshness on the poor. In fact it condemned all "foolish pity and mercy."

The Great Poor Law of 1601 made provision that in every parish overseers of the poor shall be nominated yearly in Easter week to serve with the church wardens. These overseers shall, with the consent of the justices, raise by taxation of every inhabitant, occupier or owner of houses land tithes in the parish of such sums as are necessary for the following:

Setting to work all children whose parents cannot maintain them

Setting to work all such people having no means to maintain themselves with no trade to get a living by.

To provide stocks of flax, wool and hemp for setting the poor to work.

For the necessary relief of the aged and others not able to work.

In Bowers Gifford money had to come from those in the village who owned or leased property and in some years a second rate was necessary to meet the needs of the poor. For some reason not stated an "Arms Tax" was levied on the Essex clergy in 1608, for it is recorded that the rector of Bowers Gifford, Mr Robert Rayment, together with the rector of Vange, Mr Camillius Rustiteus, furnished a light horse between them because of the levy demanded of them. The earliest amount shown in the Overseers Account Book was for the year 1740 when a rate was granted to the overseer Richard Meakins, of 9d in the pound. In 1746 the rate was 1s 6d in the pound. The vestry meetings of 1802, 1803 and 1804 levied a rate of 1s 8d, bringing in an amount of £139.13.4d. Matters in Bowers were certainly serious in 1819-1820 for a poor rate of 3s 6d in the pound was levied. This was a large amount for a small parish and certainly some depression had increased the number of claims made against the parish.

THE POOR LAW IN BOWERS GIFFORD

Often mentioned in the Overseers Accounts are items dealing with the poor house. It is difficult to say just where the poor house was situated. The church wardens accounts for Easter 1800-1801 states: "Five bundles of thatching for poor house". In 1803: "A bushel of coals and a sack of roots to the poor house 8s." In 1803: "Two and a half years rent for the poor house paid to Mr Curtis".

Repairs to the poor house were paid many times: "For fetching 100 bricks and a load of sand 12s." The bill for the bricklayer was eighteen and the glazier 11s. An entry for June 16th 1822: "Webb went to the poor house."

Bowers Gifford seems to have relieved many of its elderly and sick with outdoor relief. Often entries concern widows who had regular help. Dames Bunton, Burrell and Clarke had regular help throughout the early 1800's. When Sarah Bunton was ill, Mr. Eades was paid 2s a week for thirty-two weeks for looking after her.

A very early entry for October and November 1756:

"Ye old Welchman being sick 4s."

"Ye old Welchman when he went away 4s."

Many ways of helping the poor of Bowers are recorded. In the Overseers Accounts 1803-1805 a Mr Blatch on two occasions was paid 10s 6d when ill. Coals were supplied to him at a cost of 12s. Clothes for his family were paid for by the parish and, in April 1803 and again in 1805, a Dame Clark was paid 6s for nursing Mrs Blatch.

In 1803, a William Hay had to be got into hospital. For this a coach was hired at a cost of 18s. The hospital bill of 6d per day amounted to 7s. His wife received 5s while he was ill. Help continued for this family for, in 1807, clothes were supplied to his children – a shirt and two shifts 7s 9d. a Mrs Saunders was paid 8s for nursing Hay. Clothes were bought for his son at a cost of three guineas and paid to Mr Blakeby in 1810. It would appear that the son was 'farmed out' to Mr Blakeby.

Another item supplied to the poor was firing. In 1758 "A hundred faggots and fetching them to the poor, 18s."

Coals were given:

"Dame Clark ½ a caldron £1.3.0.

Dame Blatch ½ a caldron £1.3.0.

Dame Burrell ¼ a caldron 11s 6d."

Food was supplied to the poor:

In April 1756: A butchers bill of £1.2.0.

In 1801: ½ hundred of rice £1.10.0."

Special food was supplied to the old and sick:

A pint of wine for Dame Fletcher cost 1s.0d.

A quarter loaf costing 1s 1d in 1807.

This was probably a white loaf, she being unable to eat the cheaper, rougher bread of the time. Clothes were supplied, for Will Stevens had a frock and wool coat costing 8s.

Shoes were also a frequent item in the Overseers Accounts. In April 1754 "A pair of shoes for a child at Savalls 2s" and this same year 2d was paid for the repair of Luce's shoes. The price of shoes increased for in 1803 shoes for the Davis girl were 5s 6d. In 1809 shoes for Sarah Davey and Joe Clark were 16s 0d.

Many, many such items are to be found in the overseers accounts showing how the poor of Bowers were cared for. However, later on in the century, not all requests were granted for, in the accounts of 1832, a request by Mrs Smith for shoes for herself and daughter was not allowed. Later in the same year a Betty D was granted 1 gown, 5½ yds calico, 2 pairs hose, 2 aprons, a flannel smock and pair of trousers.

Medical help had to be paid for by the overseer. The doctors were paid a given fee annually. In 1819 Thomas Byass was appointed for a fee of £7.17.6d. This agreement did not include midwifery, vaccinations or inoculations. Another sum of £2.12.6d was paid to attend the extra poor of Bowers Gifford and Pitsea. Midwifery cases were paid for at half a guinea each. In 1822 David Dickson was appointed at £8.

This fee included midwifery and vaccinations, but not fractures which cost £1.11.6d. each. This agreement stipulated distance – this was three miles from the Gun Inn and three miles from Rayleigh. In 1833 a Robert King of Rayleigh agreed to attend the sick in Bowers Gifford in all circumstances. In 1834 Dr Dodd of Stanford-le-Hope was appointed.

His fee was eleven guineas, and an extra half a guinea every time he had to visit Canvey, and five shillings each time he went to a marsh farm. It would seem there was a hospital at Benfleet, for an entry in 1760 says "My journey to carry Abbey from the Gun to Benfleet to go to hospital 5s."

Burials for the poor and the stranger were also attended to by the parish.

In the death register of 1690:

"Ludovick and Mary, twins of a travelling woman (a gypsy) were baptised, buried ye 28th September in one coffin."

Some had taken their own lives or were strangers:

December 12th 1766 "A hanger from Bowers Gun was buried."

March 21st 1790 "A stranger from the poor house was buried."

The Gun Inn is mentioned quite often in the death registers. The shrouds and coffins were very often also the expense of the parish:

In April 1761 "Ye coffin and shroud 11s 6d."

In 1756 "Paid Savall towards burial of a man died in Blue House cow shed 14s 8d."

In 1809 "Paid Goods Bill for the man hanged himself in the barn £1.6s.6d."

"Paid Copping for the same £1.12s.0d."

The death rate of small children was high, but those who were left orphans were the responsibility of the parish.

Bowers boarded these older children out, at a fee, on to other members of the community. Thus in 1755 it was agreed "To let Thomas Spitty keep Mary Barsar till next Easter to find her in clothes for £2.5s.0d."

There are many entries showing where members of the community took these children. As late as 1832 a Mrs Golstone agreed to take the girl Tunstall till Lady Day at 1s 2d per week. The calls on the poor rate were many and varied and it does appear that the Bowers Gifford overseers did their duty very well. Travelling was very difficult and fatiguing for roads were poor, and many journeys were made in connection with the people.

Folk had to swear before JP's – some had to swear "their settlement" for people who had moved into a different parish could not claim on that parish in the event of bad times, unless they had "settlement papers." By law they were returned to the parish from whence they came. So, in January 1809 we find an account:

"Paid for horse and cart to take Martha Cable to Brentwood to have her sworn to her settlement cost 2s 6d. although they were unable to get her sworn at this time."

Many times these journeys had to be taken more than once before the papers could be signed. In March 1805:

"Another journey to Brentwood to take Thomas Hurrell to be sworn to his settlement 14s. 0d."

In 1808:

"Two journeys to Billericay to swear Savall to settlement 14s. 0d. Paid for the examination 2s 0d."

Should some person from one parish be taken ill in another parish and had no settlement papers, then the parish from whence they had come was responsible. In the overseer's book of June 23rd 1755 there is an item:

"My journey to Leigh to Nat Harde when sick 5s. and gave to him 5s. and left in Mr Oakleys hands for to relieve Nat Harde £1.3s.0d."

An overseer would also see an apprentice safely to the new master and home, these were the children who had been a liability to the parish. Thus there is an item recorded 20th May 1754:

"My journey to Benfleet to put James Chapman's girl Ann to Mr Matthews."

Every effort was made to trace the father of illegitimate children. These were baptised "base born" and this stigma followed them into death for in the death register they are called "base born."

Unless the father could be made to accept responsibility these children came on to the parish. It was therefore the duty of the overseer to claim against the father if at all possible.

In 1760 an overseer wrote in his accounts "Aug 20th A horses journey to Horndon to carry Dame Chapman to swear a great belly to John Adams cost 2s 6d." Getting hold of the said John Adams cost 17s. In some cases the men were persuaded to marry the woman. Sometimes the actual expense of the wedding was entered in the overseer's book. An interesting entry is found 1810-1811:

"My journey with horse and cart to take Mrs Williams	
Paid constable serving warrant	10s 0d
Paid for horse and turnpike	5s. 0d
	3s 9d
Paid Goods' bill for sitting up 2 nights and 2 days for 2 men in charge of Williams	£2. 5s 11d
Paid Hollowbread for 2 nights and 3 days with charge of Williams	£1 5s 0d
Paid Eades 2 nights and 1 day for same	15s 0d
Paid for licence to marry Williams	£3 10s 0d
Marriage fees	16s 6d
Paid for ring	7s 0d
	<hr/>
	£10 8s 2d

Finding the man and getting him to the church had been a costly business.

In 1762 each parish was called upon to supply men for the "militia". Many classes of men were exempt but the minimum height was lowered to 5' 2". Each parish was informed of its quota and fined £10 for failing to supply men. One cannot say how this affected the people of Bowers but in the accounts of 1760 the overseer made a

journey to Stifford "On account of the Militia" and another entry: "26th Nov 1803, paid for a letter from Cook for money for the militia." An entry in May 1806 reads: "Paid Mr Jennings serving in the militia £9 15s 6d."

On 6th Sept 1802: "Relieved 29 seamen with a pass 10s 6d."

The following year: "Relieved 60 soldiers and their wives with 3 passes 3s 0d."

16th Oct 1805: "A sick soldier and his wife 1s 0d."

It would appear that parishes assisted soldiers and sailors passing through.

Life in Bowers Gifford was hard for the poor, who seem to have had no privacy – their poverty was known to all the parish.

In 1834 Bowers Gifford joined with twenty-five other parishes in the "Union of Billericay". The union house was erected in 1840 on the site now occupied by St Andrews hospital. It was built for 240 paupers. The first master was Robert Duncan as previously noted, and the first mistress, Jane Young. The union clerk and registrar was Henry Collin and John Simpson and Edward Alexander were relieving officers.

Now there was no need for the poor house at Bowers. Those in need could be looked after by the relieving officers. Strangers and outsiders came into the parish and the fear of the "workhouse" began to haunt the poor.

Dunton Wayletts Farm

The history of the Dunton Farm Colony and its links to the Poplar Board of Guardians comes from the instruction given to purchase the Dunton Wayletts Farm on 27 April 1895 at a price of £10. 10s. per acre, inclusive of timber but subject to land tax and tithe, and to a rent of £7 14s. 2d per annum and £15 8s 4d. fine in respect of the copyhold portion with a compensation of £120 for possession and the un-gathered crops, which will become the property of the Board on completion of purchase. There was a total of twenty-two fields in the purchase, with the range of current purpose being as varied as grassland, woodland, corn, turnips, potatoes and other root vegetables and mixtures thereof.



The Poplar Labour Colony.

The opening of a Labour Colony for able-bodied men by the Guardians of the Poplar Union was a new departure, which will, no doubt, be watched with considerable interest by those concerned in Poor Law work, and as, already, numerous enquiries have been received by the Guardians for details of the scheme, it is proposed to give some particulars of the movement so far as it has advanced during the short period since it was started. The origins of this movement may be traced to a Conference of Metropolitan Boards of Guardians called by the Guardians of the Poplar Union in November 1894 to consider the question of providing work for the unemployed on the land.

During the winter of 1902-3 the accommodation in the Workhouse at Poplar was considered to be inadequate for the number of persons requiring indoor relief so that immediate steps became necessary in order to relieve the pressure. The use of a building in Hackney, which had been occupied as a temporary Workhouse by another Union, having been secured, one hundred and thirty able bodied men were transferred thereto from the Poplar Workhouse. It soon became evident that a means of dealing with the able-bodied class was a distinct failure owing to the absence of facilities for providing suitable employment for the inmates. Consequently, as soon as the approach of summer caused a number of inmates of the Poplar Workhouse to decrease sufficiently, the temporary Workhouse at Hackney was closed. However, the need of some better means of dealing with this class still remained and when in November 1903, the Guardians received an offer from the Governor of the Salvation Army Labour Colony at Hadleigh in Essex, to receive a limited number of able-bodied men from the Workhouse to be trained in agricultural pursuits, they deemed it advisable to accept the offer.

An agreement being entered into, certain men, numbering some fifty-six, were selected from the Workhouse and transferred to Hadleigh. The Guardians had recently acquired land near Shenfield in Essex, as a site for new schools, in connection with which some road making would have to be carried out, and it was found that a part of this work could be put in hand immediately, it was decided to offer employment thereon to as many of the out-or-work men as subscribed funds would permit. The men thus employed, were paid at a rate of 15s per week

A farm of 100 acres at Dunton, near Laindon, was next selected and eventually purchased for the sum of £2125.00

Including a house and farm buildings, and an agreement was subsequently entered into, under which the land and the buildings are let to the Guardians for a term of three years at a peppercorn rent with the option to the Guardians of purchasing at the price paid for the same at any time during the period of the tenancy.

Formal possession of the farm was obtained by the Guardians on 5th March 1904 and a Committee of Management was at once appointed by the Guardians upon which Mr. J. Fels, an American philanthropist and the owner of the land, and Mr. W. Coates were requested to serve. Accommodation for the colonists being necessary, the Guardians were fortunate in being able to secure two second-hand iron buildings suitable for re-erection as dormitories and dining-room. These buildings with the addition of laundry and lavatory blocks were erected. The next step was the selection of suitable officers for the colony. The Committee recommended Mr. John Clarke, who had filled the position of Foreman of the Relief Works at Shenfield and Master of the Branch Workhouse Hackney, should be appointed as Superintendent and his wife as Matron.

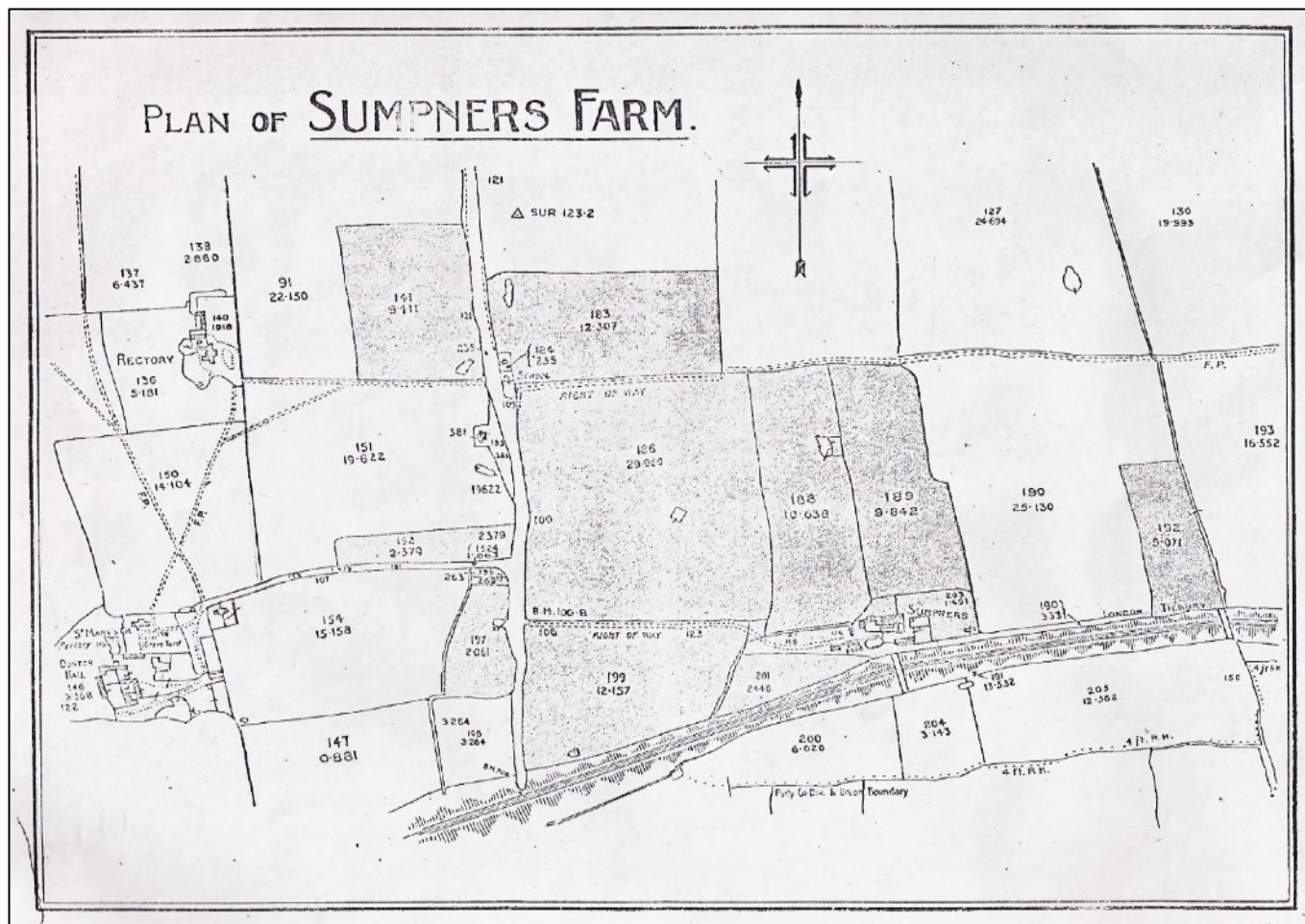
It was decided that the men should work for an average of eight hours per day and after work they should be at liberty to leave the premises or occupy their leisure as they thought fit, but books and various games are provided for their use and amusement at the farm. Full liberty is given the men on Sunday, enabling all who so desire to attend Church or Chapel in the district.

	Time of rising	Breakfast	Time for Work	Dinner	Time for Work	Supper	Bedtime
From March 25 to September 29.	Quarter before 6.00	From 8 to 8.30	6.30 to 8.00 8.30 to 12.00 except Saturday when the hours are 8.30 to 1pm.	12.00 to 1pm. Except Saturday which is from 1 to 2pm.	1 to 5pm except Saturday.	5.30pm	10pm.
From September 29 to March 25	Quarter before 7am.	From 7 to 7.30am.	7.30 to 12 except Saturday when the hours are 7.30 to 12.30	12.00 to 1pm except Saturday which is from 12.30 to 1.30pm	1 to 4.30pm except Saturday.	5pm.	8pm

The Funeral of Mr. John Clarke was reported in the East End News on 25 July 1933.

"The Superintendent of Former Poplar Farm Colony" took place last week. For the past 29 years he was Superintendent of Poplar Farm Colony at Dunton in Essex, now under the control of the London County Council. He was 63 years of age.

The Colony, the only one of its kind at that time, was founded as a means of outdoor unemployment relief in 1904 and Mr. Clarke was appointed its Master. He was a native of Dudley in Staffordshire and began his Poor Law service at Stoke-on-Trent in 1894 and removed to Poplar a few years later. In addition to his work, he was keenly interested in the village and for many years acted as Church-Warden and was also chairman of the School Managers. His passing will be lamented by all who knew his genial personality and kindly heart. He passed away on 12 July 1933. As a touching last tribute to their departed chief, the men lined either side of the church path for the service of internment at Hornchurch Cemetery.



Poplar Labour Colony at Dunton in 1922



As already well covered elsewhere, particularly its historical association with George Lansbury and his determination to do something more humane than what was happening to destitute and homeless men elsewhere. As it is made quite clear this facility, although situated in the Laindon district, was not intended to be available for use by the Laindon and district community and its presence at Dunton was resented by some because it was considered that the Colony's inhabitants lowered the tone of what they considered the district should otherwise be.

If the facilities of the Public Assistance Institution were required for residents of Laindon parish it would be at Billericay because, as has already been stated, Laindon was in the Billericay Union. Conversely, residents of Langdon Hills' parish would be dealt with at Orsett, Langdon Hills being in that Union. This fact alone can be seen as evidence that while, today, Langdon Hills and Laindon are invariably regarded as being very much one and the same place, they were, in the past, still regarded as being completely separate communities.

THE CRANHAM WORKHOUSE

Early in 1828, the parish decided that the simplest solution to its problems of housing the poor was to have its own workhouse. On July 12, 1828 Sir Thomas Apreece, Baronet and Lord of the Manor, was petitioned for a grant of land. The petition was signed by John Humphries and James Noak, churchwardens, Henry Hance and Jeremiah Reynolds, overseers, and numerous other parishioners. The land was granted, but Apreece charged them £20, about the going rate for a plot 174 feet frontage by 36 feet deep. The land was marked out on the south side of St. Mary's Lane, and held in trust by the petitioners for the use of the poor. The conveyance was completed on August 13, 1828. The Jobber's Rest public house now occupies the site.

There is no surviving plan or sketch of the workhouse. However, it was described as follows :

"A spacious, sightly, substantial and newly erected building with best stock bricks, and slated. 51 feet long by 20 feet wide, containing numerous airy & well-arranged rooms, which are approached by a centre entrance, most judiciously constructed for any alteration, a capital well of spring water, yard, garden, & premises".

The principal written record of the workhouse is a small white book. This was used to record the comings and goings of inmates, the rules which governed them, notes on the punishments inflicted upon them, and the grocery orders which fed them. The book contains a set of rules.

Food was not elaborate. Rule no.2 states:

"The food of the able-bodied men and women of the workhouse shall be of the simplest kind, such as bread and bacon only, or bread and cheese only, with oatmeal gruel, unless some of a better description shall be ordered by the medical attendant in the case of sickness".

Elsewhere, the menu is described as:

- Sunday: hot meat
- Monday: eight pints of soup + 1 pint of split peas
- Tuesday: cold meat
- Wednesday: potatoes
- Thursday: cheese
- Friday: hot meat
- Saturday: 8 pints of broth + ½ lb scotch barley

It is surprising that fish was not on the menu for Friday, but for an inland parish this might have required extra expense. The basis for these precisely measured rations is unknown. Compared to a modern diet, there is much less protein, and after cooking there was probably very little vitamin C. Eggs are noticeably absent from the diet.

Discipline of the paupers is described in rule nos. 6 and 10 of the workhouse:

"Rule no.6. Paupers inhabiting the workhouse and wilfully violating any of the rules and regulations, or otherwise misbehaving themselves shall be punished by means of subtracting a portion of their food, bread and water excepted, unless the offence shall be of such a nature as to require an application to a magistrate in order that legal punishment may be inflicted.

"Rule no.10. They [the master and mistress] shall not allow any articles of provision to be brought into the workhouse by friends of the paupers".

Thus, food was dependent upon good behaviour, and it was forbidden for the pauper to get food by any other means, even by gift. The concept was that the pauper was guaranteed subsistence in the workhouse, but was allowed no possessions, or that their possessions belonged to the parish. For example, the entry for May 9, 1831 reads:

"We have been informed that in direct opposition to the approved orders of vestry, Mrs. Crowe has secretly recovered the clothes of her late husband and given them to one of her sons. On consulting with the two overseers upon the matter, we have agreed to stop Mrs. Crowe's allowance of tea and butter."

Only as late as March 29, 1833 was it decided at a public vestry that the rules should be clearly displayed in the workhouse. Whether this was an improvement on arbitrary punishment is doubtful: surely the inmates were illiterate ? The lifestyle of the pauper in the workhouse was probably very monotonous.

Rule no.3 says rather wordily that the paupers could be given work to do for which the parish would collect the wages. Rule no.4 specified that every pauper in the workhouse should attend church twice every Sunday unless sick. Rule no.11 forbade smoking. This was certainly a fire hazard amongst the straw bedding, but it is difficult to understand how tobacco was to be purchased by the destitute.

The population of the workhouse varied with the year, but not with the season. This would suggest that the inmates were largely the elderly and infirm, because the able-bodied could always support themselves in spring and autumn on the land. Table 9 summarises the census. It was never very great. The order book records how various inmates came and left the workhouse; the paupers are documented by name, origin, destination, and

reason for moving in or out. There were seven deaths in the workhouse, three girls sent into service, one case of a man sent to Springfield prison for fourteen days hard labour, and one birth in the house on 7th January 1835. (Sarah Rutter this day delivered of a bastard."). For the most part, though, people entered the workhouse when no longer able to pay rent on their cottages or buy food, and they left when there was a prospect of a job that could pay these costs.

In May 1834, Cranham joined the Romford Union, which was an agreement between several parishes to jointly run the Romford workhouse. This was an arrangement encouraged by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. Parts of Oldchurch Hospital incorporate the Romford Union Workhouse; it is quite typical for workhouses to evolve into hospitals in England (another example would be the Brighton General Hospital).

The last entry in the order book is dated 21st June 1835, being a grocery order for just 1 lb rice, 2 oz. sugar, and 1 lb soap. Presumably this was just before the warden and his wife left, with the paupers sent to Romford, or back to their own homes (Browne) has quoted examples where this was found economical in other Essex parishes in the 1830s). On July 20, 1835 the parish officers requested the Romford Union to give permission to sell the Cranham Workhouse on St. Mary's Lane. In accordance with the regulations, the Union met in the Workhouse on October 14, 1835, and did so agree. This became Cranham's financial contribution to the new Union workhouse. On December 15, 1836 George Rowe bought the Cranham Workhouse, and used it as his home. The bill of sale survives and shows that £205-0-0d was paid at auction; Rowe deposited £40 immediately, and the conveyance was completed on February 25, 1837, after Rowe took out a mortgage. Cranham had had its own workhouse for just eight years. Rowe died in 1861, and left the building in his will to his son Alfred, on condition that he gave £10 per year to his mother for the rest of her life. Rowe had also bought the Upminster workhouse, when that institution was also incorporated into the Romford Union, and Rowe's second son received the Ingrebourne Cottages. In early 1861, the Cranham Workhouse had been converted into four tenements, but by the end of that year, this had been reduced to three.

On April 15, 1862, Alfred Rowe sold the old workhouse for £305 to Samuel Gurney, the Lord of the Manor. Rowe used the proceeds to pay off his mortgage, but was still liable for the £ 10 per year to his mother. There was another sale on June 19, 1867, but the identity of the next owners are unknown. The present Jobber's Rest public house is now on the site, and probably the old workhouse survived as a row of cottages until just after the First World War. No photographs have yet been found.

MIGRATION TO LONDON

It is now a commonplace that many agricultural labourers from poor parishes left the land during the last half of the nineteenth centuries, to work in the factories of the East End. The tenements of the East End are usually viewed dimly. Whether the slums of East London were, in fact, any worse than hovels in places like Cranham is hard to say. The first example of an individual from Cranham following this trend has recently been found in the 1881 census returns for Stratford. Thomas Bayley, a labourer of 27 years of age, went to London, and married a girl two years his junior. Their four year old daughter, and three month old son were both born in Stratford, so Bayley must have left Cranham in or before about 1876, aged 22 or younger. As the East London census transcriptions proceed, they should become a fertile source for research into the migratory patterns of people from the south Essex parishes.

DISEASE AND MEDICINE

Illness is frequently mentioned in the parish documents, and must have been a constant pre-occupation of the residents of Cranham in previous centuries. As we have seen above, one's livelihood often depended upon one's health. Whilst there are many examples, often of great interest, no attempt at epidemiology can be made for Cranham: because there is simply insufficient information.

The earliest medical reference is the acrostic to Susannah Potts on the memorial in All Saints' church, which includes the lines:

- *"Noble Saintes Martirs Angels shall with thee have place*
- *No spottes no tears no wrincles shall the deface."*

This may be simply a piece of poetic allegory. On the other hand it may serve as a description of the baby's final illness. If taken literally then it may describe a painful illness involving spots and scars (or wrincles). Small pox and chicken pox, both prevalent in 1651, would fit the description well.

In 1748, at Beredens, the ownership of the farm was wrested from its owner, when it was noted:

"Found Stephen Jermyne to be a lunatic, not enjoying lucid intervals and incapable of governing himself, his manors, messuages, lands, tenements, goods and chattels. By what manner the said Stephen Jermyne became of unsound mind the jurors were altogether ignorant unless by the visitation of God."

This illness came to Jermyne later in his life. Many organic diseases can present as psychiatric disturbance, and in 1748 precious little was understood about the human body. One cannot hazard a guess at the diagnosis from this description. The Victoria County History states that until 1783 the parish paid medical bills for the poor on a casual basis. After this, the Cranham vestry made contracts. For example, a contract might pay a doctor to provide all necessary services for a fixed period of time. Nonetheless, when specialists were needed, additional bills arose. During 1803 both a surgeon and an apothecary were needed, in addition to the regular doctor.

On February 8, 1803, Messrs. Penrose and Hawkins charged two guineas for "setting a leg"; on August 30th of the same year they charged the same amount for "setting fractured thigh and knee and plaisterer's journey to Laisell's son"; this is a remarkable, early reference to the treatment of a fracture with immobilisation in a plaster cast. The visit of a doctor, without any treatment, cost a minimum of half a crown in 1805, which was about a week's wage for a labourer at that time. In 1803, the year's supply of medicines for the parish cost eight guineas. Few of the potions could have been effective, apart from the foxglove, poppy, and imports such as nightshade, cinchona and preparations of willow bark. Distilled spirits (such as cognac from France, and whisky from Scotland) had medicinal uses. Purgatives were well-understood and effective, but of little use in treating disease. There were no effective treatments for any type of infectious illness, including venereal disease.

Inoculations were viewed as a good investment by the parish. In 1803 it cost one guinea for three persons. In 1821 the Rector, as an act of charity, paid a guinea and a half to inoculate all five of Forster's children and the son of runaway Sargett. These were all cow pox inoculations, which were an effective precaution against small pox, using Jenner's technique. The burial registers sometimes noted the mode of death, and these often are confirmed by the bills from the medical men. Burns were a major hazard. Labourers' cottages were highly inflammable with their thatched roofs and straw beds, and open fires were kept day and night inside them for heating and cooking; it was also believed that a constantly burning fire was needed to maintain the building in good condition. The victims usually succumbed sometime after the accident itself, suggesting that it was the infectious and metabolic complications of the burn that killed them, rather than trauma, asphyxia and dehydration of the burn itself. Two examples:

"[Owed] To L.E. Butler, surgeon, 1824. Attendance upon the late Mrs. MacMillan for an extensive burn upon the face, neck, and shoulders from 29th March to June 11th. £ 8-0-0d". "Sarah Carson buried 27th June under order of the coroner, she having been accidentally burnt on the 5th of June. She died on the 24th".

The extraordinary event of 1817 is brought to our attention only by its medical documentation. It began with James Kendall, a servant at Cranham Hall, bringing some sort of legal case against Mr. Gould, the occupier. The magistrate, Rev. Woolaston, dismissed the case as spurious. Either frustrated or vengeful, Kendall then took a shotgun to Gould. Some hours later, Sir William Blizzard, a famous surgeon, came to Cranham and extracted some lead shot from Gould's chest. Remarkably, Gould lived to tell the tale. Blizzard was a famous man, having set up the first medical college on modern lines in England, at The London Hospital. The faculty suite in the college is still called the Blizzard Club in his honour. Kendall was sent to Springfield Prison immediately, and is not heard of again. He was probably hanged. Sometimes the surgeons understood the pathology of the case very well:

"1st Feby. 1830. Jay has suffered severely from stricture of the urethra and was daily attended by Mr. Quennell".

Jay was a workhouse inmate, and Quennell, in spite of his Manx surname, was a surgeon at Brentwood. This condition causes retention of urine, and was a common complication of venereal disease. The diagnosis shows considerable sophistication because prostatic disease and renal failure, quite different conditions, can also present with inability to pass urine. The daily attendance probably involved catheterisation, by passing a metal tube into the bladder. This was the only treatment available, although the trauma of doing this repeatedly could only have made the stricture worse. In an era before anaesthesia, this would certainly justify the description "suffered and severely".

The parish often recorded, with some despair, the ineffectiveness of the treatments given:

"23rd December 1821. Benj. Hazlewood out of work; has the itch; agreed to pay one pound to anyone who will undertake to cure him under the superintendence of Mr. Butler. This sum to pay for the care of his person, board and lodging, during a fortnight, and at the end of a fortnight the overseers to procure for him new clothes and bed linen."

"The itch" was clearly a serious illness, which also infested the Upminster Workhouse. The association with clothing suggests lice or scabies; the latter is more itchy. Butler was the surgeon at Brentwood mentioned above, and had overall charge of the medical care of the Cranham workhouse. Clearly "the itch" would not today be regarded as a surgical disorder. Food was used as a medical treatment. The workhouse rules specifically mention this, and illness was an exception to the rule of punishment by withholding of rations. There are detailed examples contained in the grocery bills:

"20th December 1832. Give William McMillan ¼ lb butter- this change for William is on account of his being on a course of medicine for his eyes."

"20th December 1834. 1 lb of rice has been added on account of Sarah Rutter who will shortly be confined." [she delivered January 7th, 1835].

Travel to London for medical treatment occasionally took place. In 1848, Joseph Flaunch was supported by the Cranham vestry, whilst a patient in St. Bartholomew's. He was probably in London with a Cranham settlement paper when he became ill. The rarity of the surname Quennell in Essex probably indicates that the Brentwood surgeon of the same name in the 1890s was the grandson of the Quennell who attended in the Cranham Workhouse. The later Quennell treated the Rector's wife in 1892; Rev. Cooke wrote to the then Lord of the Manor, Richard Benyon :

"I have had a long and protracted anxiety about Mrs. Cooke. She was thrown out violently from our parry carriage three weeks before Christmas and has never recovered and is still in a nursing home in London u n d e r our same Brentwood Doctor Quennell."

There are also examples, as late as the 1890s, where pathology was surprisingly poorly understood. The obituary of Edward Ind mentions that he was thought to have died of gout, about 7 to 10 days after seeing Dr. Quennell in March of 1894. This could not have been his mode of death because gout is a slow progressive disease. Again, in 1898 a post mortem was carried out on Alfred Willey of the Mason's Arms. The Cranham burial register (entry no.433) notes that he died after breaking a blood vessel of the heart, and that burial was ordered by the coroner. This is an extremely rare condition, unless the entry actually refers to the rupture of a ventricular or aortic aneurysm.

In 1898 the parish hired a nurse, to be shared with Upminster. However, she was sacked in mid-1899, halfway through her contract, for allegedly failing in her duties. Public health measures were few and far between. Most water was from the ground.

Presumably, hard experience taught the residents how to separate the drainage of their privies from the places where they drew water from wells. The school (Boyd Hall) was closed in 1905, when it was estimated that a third of the dwellings in the parish had scarlet fever, diphtheria or both. At Christmas 1905 it was noted that scarlet fever was still prevalent in the parish after 15 months. The schools were closed again for this reason in November 1906.

There are now several general practitioners in the parish. Some are shared with Upminster. Patients are typically cared for at hospitals in Romford, Harold Wood or Rush Green. There is considerable disquiet with the National Health Service, and with plans for its alteration in the near future. These changes will be far reaching, including not only changes to the ways that hospitals are administered, but also to the role of the general practitioner in the supply of medical services to the people of Cranham.

LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE IN MODERN TIMES

The first council houses were built in Moor Lane in 1931; they were not extended to include indoor bathrooms until about 1976. These buildings mark the beginning of the influence of the welfare state in Cranham. The nationally devised plans, implemented by The London Borough of Havering, no longer depends upon vestry and church. A discourse on "the welfare state" is beyond the scope of this book.

The great challenge in the parish, or to whomever next inherits its responsibility to the poor, unemployed and infirm, is the age distribution of the population. A national problem, there is serious doubt as to whether a smaller, able-bodied population will be able to support proportionately larger numbers of elderly than ever before. The national policy has not necessarily cared for the life-time of involuntary contributions that these Cranham residents have made to various pension plans, supposedly to ensure their financial security in old age.

Inflation could make this entirely worthless, and money has devalued by half every seven years, on the average, during the second half of this century. It could be that the closing years of the twentieth century, and the opening years of the twenty-first will see a resurgence of parish-based, self-sufficient efforts to support the people of Cranham, due to lack of support from anywhere else. It may be shortly useful to remember the former role of the vestry, good and bad.

HADLEIGH WORKHOUSE

Hadleigh had a workhouse located on what is now Chapel Road Hadleigh, known until at least 1875 as Workhouse Lane. It was owned and run by the Hadleigh Parish Vestry. By the time of a map said to be dated 1895, the road had become known as Chapel Lane.

The "Mudge Map" of 1801 does not show any building on the site of the workhouse, but not all the then existing buildings may have been shown. It remains uncertain when the building was first constructed or whether it had



another use before being taken over by the parish as the workhouse. The building was demolished in the 1950's.

Hadleigh Workhouse in Chapel Lane from the Bob Delderfield Collection. The article courtesy of Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive.

The Parish Vestry minutes written on parchment for 1835 tell the story of the poor relief issued to those both inside and outside the poor house. A total of nine men applied for work (John Gillman, Ben Stowers, Tom Smith, Murrells, Len Heard, Hockley, Stowers, Ben Stowers (again!) and William Oliver), all before the end of April, They were mostly taken on by local farmers such as Higham, Woodard, Tyrell and Wood (all officers of the

Parish). One, Murrells, was apparently put to work "in the road", maybe topping up the potholes in the Causeway across the common (now the London Road from Victoria House Corner to the Old Fire Station). Gillman was found work with Higham rather than grant him a pair of shoes requested for his boys. There were eight applications for pairs of shoes, for two children and six adults, but only six were allowed. Four pairs were granted and two only given as a loan until they were able to be repaid through instalments once they had found work. (One loan to Heard was of 6/- and the other repayable by Mrs Stowers at 1/- per week).

James Murrells applied for a pair of shoes and a pair of trousers, but only the trousers were granted. (By 1841, James was employed as a shoemaker!). Some of the family names crop up a number of times as the year passed by. On 23rd April William Oliver applied for work and, on 29th October, Mrs Oliver was granted a pair of shoes. In February, Mrs Hawkins applied for calico for girls and 3 days later, Hawkins was granted a pair of shoes. On 1st January, Passfield applied for a piece of calico for two shirts for boy and 6 yds was allowed. On 25th March, Passfield was allowed clothes for boy. Len Heard, who had been loaned money for shoes on 15th January was taken on for work on 29th by Jonathan Wood, but by March 12th 1835, Mrs Heard applied for relief, her husband being not able to work for 3 weeks and this was "allowed to amount of 5/-". Sadly, things did not appear to get much better and on 15th March, Heard applied to go into the "house" till he was able to go to work, so presumably all the family went into the poor house.

Whatever the reason, the Gyants made the most applications. On 1st January, Mrs Gyant was allowed one shirt and pair of stockings for boy and Joseph Gyant was allowed some clothes for Eliza Phillips and Mrs Lungley who he had apparently agreed to keep until Michaelmas 1835. However, Mrs Gyant was not granted an allowance for her daughter Jane. On 15th March 1835, Joseph Gyant was allowed clothes for girl Phillips. On 1st October 1835, it appears that Mrs Gyant was granted a few clothes for her boy.

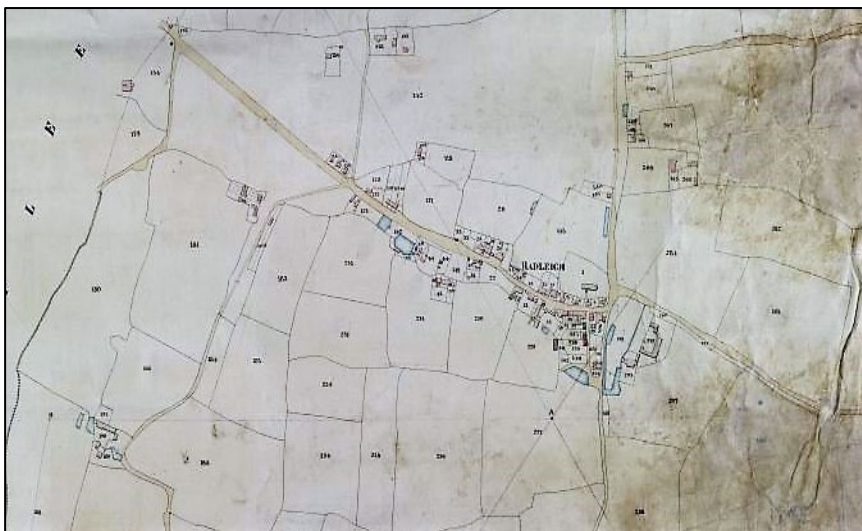
Robert Cook was granted relief on 12th Feb, on 15th March, he was refused relief while he rented a house and on 23rd April, he was allowed 4/- weekly allowance. On 1st January, Mrs Stowers applied for a pair of shoes for her husband and offered to pay for them by instalments and was allowed to pay 1/- per week. Ben Stowers applied for work on 29th January and Stowers and Ben Stowers applied for work on March 12th. On 1st October, it was agreed that Mrs Stowers should have notice to quit the poor house at a months' notice, presumably to allow the sale of the property then described as "lately the poor house" as Hadleigh was just about to be taken into the Rochford Union with its poor then to be taken into the Rochford workhouse when built. However, John Stowers was still in occupation at 3rd January 1836 when it was agreed it was to be advertised for sale.

The workhouse closed after Hadleigh was taken into the Rochford Union on 30th October 1835 and future Hadleigh poor were sent to the new Rochford Union Workhouse built in 1837 in West Street, Rochford. In September 1836, the vestry agreed to let the pound house and workhouse to the highest bidder for one year from Michaelmas 1836 and it was let to Mr Woodfield at £10-5-0. A year later, there were no bids to let either and the sale into private ownership followed in 1839.

It was agreed to be sold eventually on 13th February 1839 (for £72 including the large adjoining garden) to Mr Osborne of Leigh. A second property, the "pound house," possibly on the adjoining plot, was sold by the Parish at the same time to Mr H (presumably Henry) Wood of Hadleigh for £50.

In the 1841 census, there is no mention of any continuing use of any Hadleigh property as a workhouse or poorhouse, but the handwriting and quality of the record is poor. By 1851, the Rochford census listed four Hadleigh born inmates: Frances Edwards, 76, a male agricultural labourer, Eliza Sealey, 29, an unmarried woman with no occupation, Sarah Kirby, 70, an unmarried woman with no occupation and Betsy Webb, aged 9 years.

The vestry would have had to continue making decisions on the local poor after the Hadleigh workhouse closed, albeit to direct them to the Rochford workhouse, but only one example is included within the minutes. On 15th September 1843, Hawkin's wife and four children had been "removed from Thundersley", presumably either to Hadleigh or to Rochford with a charge to be levied on Hadleigh, but the vestry decided to appeal the case. No result of the appeal is recorded, so the final outcome is unknown. By the time of the 1847 tithe apportionment, the building was no longer owned by the Hadleigh Parish Vestry. (The building covered plots 132 and 133, and the land was owned by Joseph Osborne and occupied by William Dalby and George Towers).



Agricultural Labourers

Over 50% of the working men in the village were employed as agricultural labourers in the local farms ~ Hall Farm, Park Farm, Blossoms Farm, Solbys Farm, Castle Farm, Common Hall Farm and Sayers Farm. There were seventy-four agricultural labourers in 1851 and 3 pauper labourers. In the summer the labourers were employed to do the harvesting, with their wives raking the cut corn into rows ready to be tied into sheaves. In 1851 this had to be done by hand using the sieves made by James Ridgwell. They sowed and tended to the various crops on the farm and cared for the farm animals ~ they milked cows, fed pigs, herded and sheared sheep and looked after the poultry. Their work also included trimming and layering hedges and maintaining farm buildings, fences, gates, tracks, ditches and ponds. Their children were also employed as gleaners in the fields after the harvest and as potato pickers.

The Curate

In 1851 Hadleigh was still without a rector as the Reverend John Mavor, appointed in 1825, was imprisoned for debt in Oxford County Gaol. As a result, the church was desperately in need of repair. Henry Whittington had been Hadleigh's curate in 1841, but in 1851 he was the curate at Little Maplestead in Essex. By 1851 the Reverend William Harvey had been the curate of St. James the Less church for about four years. As the rectory was dilapidated, he rented a house in the main street.

William Harvey and his wife Jane were both born in Kent in 1824. Born at Walmer, William was the son of Vice Admiral Sir Thomas Harvey, who had been British Naval Commander of the West Indies until his death. William and Jane, who were married on 11th July 1848, named their first son Thomas after his grandfather. Sadly, he died on 6th January 1850, aged 8 months, after suffering convulsions. (A memorial to Thomas Harvey may be seen in St. James the Less church.) However, the 1851 Census records that William and Jane had another baby in 1850, William, who was then aged five months.

THUNDERSLEY WORKHOUSE

The following passage is taken from the book, "Essex Workhouses" by John Drury and talks about the Benfleet and Thundersley approach to the problem.

Unlike Brentwood, Thundersley parish was much more organised for its in respect of the records it kept for its workhouse. In the parish vestry minute book are some copies of entries that the governor(master) of the workhouse had entered into his journal. It seems that this journal did not commence until 1932 which was only a year before recommendations were made to the Brentwood vestry for something similar.

Thundersley though recorded the state of health of the inmates which was not specifically mentioned for Brentwood although the Brentwood doctor was asked to sign the journal.

The Thundersley workhouse was not included in the national survey of 1777 which indicates it was not open at this time. The inventory of the workhouse showed that it had the following rooms : kitchen, bakehouse, keeping room (day room), pantry, bedrooms (probably two). The inventory and the list of inmates indicate that the workhouse was jointly run by Thundersley and South Benfleet parishes. The journal gives a comprehensive record of the comings and goings of individual inmates but there is only one entry that actually indicates how many were in the

workhouse at any one time. This was in March 1835 when there were five inmates, two from South Benfleet and three from Thundersley. Four were aged over sixty four with the fifth being Lucy Maylen aged seven. Lucy entered the workhouse when she was five years old with her mother who was described as a widow aged forty five. Lucy Maylen senior also brought into the workhouse a son, Jonathon, aged nine months. The entry records that both children were bastards, Lucy by a Mr. Reeves and Jonathan by James Johnson. The mother and Jonathan are not recorded as inmates later in the year and one can only presume that she died or left the workhouse with Jonathan and left Lucy there.

Many of those taken into the workhouse only stayed a short time presumably until someone could look after them or they got their financial affairs in order or they could find alternative accommodation. A typical example was that of John Dodd, aged fifty, his wife and three children aged 13, 9 and 2 who came into the workhouse on 20th January 1832 but they all left on the 24th of that month. The governor and the parish would have assured themselves that the family had accommodation to go to and there would be future family income. The Thundersley parish workhouse closed in November 1836 with the inmates being transferred to the parish workhouse in Billericay.

The workhouse provided, as the name suggests, both shelter and work for those who had fallen on hard times. It was often hard work such as stone breaking, crushing bones for fertiliser or picking oakum (loose jute or hemp fibre obtained by untwisting old rope, used especially in caulking wooden ships) using a spike.

On the plus side, inmates received free medical care and free education. By the nineteenth century the system was under strain because of mass unemployment following the end of the Napoleonic wars, technology replacing agricultural labourers and a series of bad harvests, the consequence of which was the 1834 New Poor Law, which sought to provide a more consistent approach and one which would deter the able-bodied poor. The work element grew less as increasingly the inmates were elderly or sick. The workhouse was formally abolished in 1930, but it was not until the 1948 National Assistance Act that the last vestiges of the poor law disappeared.

The Thundersley tithe records of 1838, indicate that there were two "poor houses" in Thundersley, one on the south side of Common Lane and the other in Hart Road. Each was owned by the parish and presumably given by wealthy local benefactors to be made available for temporary occupation by the local poor. The first may have only been a garden for growing produce to be used by the paupers living in the second which, from parish records, appears to have jointly housed the poor of Benfleet and Thundersley. One cottage remained for many years of the three probably originally forming the "poorhouse" next to Swans Green on the south side of Hart Road. It was eventually demolished in about 1960.



From Benfleet Archive information, taken from a 1956 journal by W.

T. Phillips, the workhouse was set up in 1797 with six spinning wheels, so the poor could be taught both to knit and to spin, giving them a useful way of eking out a living. In the Benfleet article, an inventory has been shown to indicate a kitchen, bakehouse, "keeping room" (day room), pantry and probably two bedrooms.

The St Peter's parish records and the 1832 workhouse governor's journal provide further details, including that it was built using bricks from "Hadleigh Kiln", presumably in Kiln Rd, and used wheat straw for thatching. A master (Peter Parmenter in 1835) was appointed to look after 20 people to provide three hot meals per week and teach them spinning and knitting. Boys wore white kersey jackets and breeches, blue stockings and thick yarn cap; girls blue stuff gowns, stockings and skirts and matching bonnets. There is no obvious mention of any "poorhouse" by the time of the 1841 census and the workhouse had closed in November 1836, apparently with the remaining residents transferring first to the new Billericay Union workhouse from 1840 and later to the Rochford Union Workhouse in 1848.

ROCHFORD UNION WORKHOUSE

Rochford Union Workhouse was built in 1837 at a cost of £5000. It was intended to house three hundred people. Less than fifty years later social conditions were slowly improving and the 1881 Census shows that there were only 172 inmates in addition to the Head of the workhouse, his wife and baby son, four officers and three visitors. Even the 82 year old 'late porter' of the workhouse ended up as an inmate. The census makes very sad reading.

There is not much left of the original Rochford workhouse, but what is still to be seen has an interesting past. Some of the former workhouse buildings including the chapel, dining room and some other areas are listed as buildings of historical and architectural importance so cannot be altered any further. They were listed when the

old Rochford Hospital was threatened with closure in an attempt to prevent the redevelopment of the entire site.

Dining Hall, built 1912

A hundred years before the Welfare State was created there were still many people in society who needed help to survive. The elderly, orphans, the disabled, not to mention the unemployed had no state benefits to support them. Sole responsibility for providing essential support fell on the ratepayers of each parish where these people were born or ended up in destitution. In fact, by the first quarter of the 19th century the entire population was growing rapidly. The rural population was increasing at the same time as rural employment was decreasing due to changes in agriculture and industry. More people needing help and less people to provide the rates to pay for it created major social problems. Similar social problems were found all over the country. The new industrial towns were even worse affected than rural areas as often they grew up in places with no parish church around which support could be organised. Often the parish ratepayers, in spite of the definition of 'deserving' or 'undeserving' which was attached to the poor, just could not afford to support increasing numbers of destitute people in their own homes.



The solution seemed to be to combine, or unite, the resources of several local parishes and create a Union Workhouse to provide for all the needy in one place. The able bodied were to be put to work and the sick or disabled were cared for in what would be seen now as very rudimentary conditions. Workhouse life was meant to be tough and humiliating as a deterrent to malingerers. Going into the workhouse became the shameful last resort of the desperate.

By the time of the 1881 census there were eighty-five men, forty-one women and forty-six children housed in the Rochford Union Workhouse. The oldest inmate was a widow of ninety-four and the youngest a child of one year. There are shown to have been nine 'imbeciles' and one 'deaf and dumb' woman. Contrary to popular belief, families are not shown as particularly numerous but several of the children appear to be orphans. In one family of four the oldest is a girl of sixteen and the others are aged eight, six and three. Another family's ages are 16, 14, 10 and five. In yet another, two Hawkwell brothers were without parents at the ages of eleven and five years. Nearly all the inmates were born in the parishes which are now in the Rochford District but some came from the Southend or Benfleet areas and other parts of Essex. In 1881 very few were from further afield.

Families were separated on going into the workhouse: men in one part; women and children in another. Caring for the poor and needy was still a major expense for ratepayers so it was done as cheaply as possible. Those who could were made to work at the most menial and unpleasant jobs to earn their keep. Workhouse inmates were made to feel outside decent society; they wore a distinctive uniform and were all paraded in a 'crocodile' to church on Sundays where they sat in separate pews so everyone in the rest of the congregation could see their situation. Similarly, the children were picked out at school for humiliation as workhouse inmates.



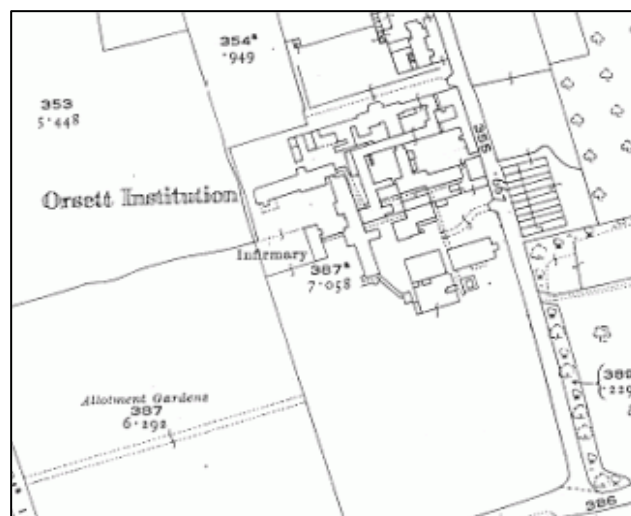
Workhouse Chapel

Some adults were put to work in the workhouse buildings as charwomen or maids but 'picking oakum' was the most usual occupation as it was useful to society but extremely hard and unpleasant. Oakum was old, rotten, salty and tarry pieces of broken, worn out hemp rope which had been used, among other things, for the rigging of ships.

The oakum was separated by hand into fibres which could then be remade into new ropes. Hundreds of miles of rope were needed each year for all sorts of uses, not just seafaring and this was seen as an excellent use of free labour which, due to the crime of destitution, did not deserve anything better. Children were apprenticed or otherwise put to work in homes, shops and farms as soon as they reached the end of compulsory education. There is evidence of some very young Essex orphans being taken to Lancashire to work in the cotton mills. In the early years of the Rochford Union Workhouse schooling ended at the age of 11 years but by the time of the 1881 Census the school leaving age was fourteen. Workhouse children would have lived in at their employer's expense and were often treated little better than slaves. (*As Charles Dickens so clearly demonstrates, particularly in Oliver Twist.*)

The Rochford Workhouse was extended and altered over the years eventually becoming part of Rochford Hospital. Not so long ago some of the buildings were still used as geriatric wards. This must have been particularly upsetting for elderly people who remembered the humiliation and disgrace attached to those who were classed as workhouse inmates well within their lifetimes. Many people today will hardly notice the narrow road at the bottom of West Street when they cross to the supermarket or station. If they do notice, the name Union Lane is a reminder of the harshness of the lives of the poor before the coming of the Welfare State.

ORSETT UNION WORKHOUSE was built in 1837 at a cost of £3,115. It was designed by Sampson Kempthorne and was based on his 200-pauper layout. This comprised an administrative block at the front with a cruciform layout to the rear but without the central supervisory hub which featured in larger designs.



Constituent Parishes.

Aveley, Bulphan, Chadwell St Mary, Corringham, East Tilbury, Fobbing, Grays Thurrock, Horndon on the Hill, Langdon Hills, Little Thurrock, Mucking, North Ockendon, Orsett, South Ockendon, Stanford-le-Hope, Stifford, West Thurrock, West Tilbury. Later Addition: Canvey Island (1837-80).

In 1917 the Orsett Union workhouse, built in 1837, became the Orsett Lodge Hospital after the Essex Vagrancy Committee ordered that only sick paupers be admitted. The Hospital had an administrative block with a cruciform layout to the rear. In 1930, following the abolition of the Board of Guardians, it was taken over by Essex County Council as a public assistance institution for the elderly chronically sick. It had two hundred beds. In 1936 it was proposed to extend the Hospital to 250 beds.

In 1953, although it was mainly a collection of old buildings dating back to the workhouse era, it was chosen to be the main general hospital for the Thurrock area to serve a population of about 70,000 people. However, the facilities were woefully inadequate.

The operating theatre - "a grim and dismal place" - was described as "less cheerful than a primitive morgue". It was also inconveniently situated; to reach it, patients would often have to be carried through the grounds in the open air, regardless of the weather.

The Orsett Union operated a pair of children's cottages at 61-63 Whitehall Road Little Thurrock in 1924. Each home could accommodate ten children.

In 1861, The Poor Law Board published a return of adult paupers who had been workhouse inmates for a continuous period of five years or more and giving the reason. Some twenty-one inmates are listed with up to sixteen years residence and a range of personal problems including blindness, infirmity, orphans and those with mental illness. None of the inmates appeared to have had any formal schooling.

There was also said to have been a workhouse established at Fobbing although no clue is given as to the nature and the extent of its building has been published. The fact that, in many cases, evidence has emerged that workhouses once existed in locations which, to our modern eyes, appear remarkably unlikely is, on the one hand

an indication of the extent of population loss that that occurred in a parish and on the other what might be described as the attitude that many of the parishes past population took to some if their fellow parishioners in their midst.

BRAINTREE POOR LAW UNION.

Constituent Parishes:

Black Notley, Bocking, Bradwell by Coggeshall, Braintree, Cornish Hall End, Cressing, Finchingfield, Great Saling, Panfield, Pattiswick, Rayne, Shalford, Stisted, Wethersfield, White Notley.

A report made for Parliament in 1777 records parish workhouses in Braintree with accommodation for up to sixty inmates, Bradwell (13), Black Notley (16), Bocking (140), Finchingfield (25), Stisted (20) and Wethersfield (25).

Braintree's workhouse dated from 1636, making it an early example of such institutions. It was located in the Hyde which later became Market Street. The site was originally intended for use as alms-houses including a "hospital house."

St. Michaels Hospital (formerly known as the Braintree Union Workhouse and as the Braintree Public Assistance Institution.



The new Braintree Workhouse for around three hundred inmates was built in 1837/38 at a site to the west of Braintree. The Board of Guardians took possession of the facility in 1838. The workhouse later became St. Michaels Hospital eventually closing in 2008.

Bocking had a parish workhouse in Church Lane. The building appears to date from 1500 but used as a workhouse from the 1720's. Its capacity was reported as 140 which, if correct, would make it one of the largest in Essex.



The Finchingfield Vestry agreed to erect a new parish workhouse in 1763 but probably resorted to using an existing building next to the village pond.

An eighteenth century inventory shows a governor's room, dining room, dwelling room, ward, buttery, brewhouse, coalhouse, governor's chamber, first and hall chamber, first and second garret. Inmates were employed in cultivating hops in a field known as the Hop Ground.

Wethersfield's parish workhouse was in operation from 1727, or even before. In 1729 it had eleven inmates with Robert Carter as its Master at a salary of 7s.6d. weekly to maintain seven paupers in "meat, drink, washing and lodging." An inventory of 1792 records eating utensils for up to twenty inmates. The contents included a spinning wheel in the Great Bed Room and another in the Wool Room. A house on the green is thought to have served as the workhouse.

CHELMSFORD POOR LAW UNION.

Parish workhouses described in a parliamentary report of 1777 were:

Great Baddow, (with accommodation for up to 20, Buttsbury (10), Chelmsford, (100), Danbury_(18), Fryerning (20), South Hanningfield (9), Roxwell (20), Springfield (35), Stock Harvard (10), Great Waltham (100), Little Waltham (20), Writtle (100).



The former Chelmsford Union Workhouse.

Constituent Parishes:

Boreham, Broomfield, Buttsbury, Chelmsford, Chignall Smealy, Chignall St James, Danbury, East Hanningfield, Fryerning, Good Easter, Great Baddow, Great Leighs, Great Waltham, High Easter, Highwood, Ingatestone, Little Baddow, Little Leighs, Little Waltham, Margaretting, Mashbury, Moulsham, Pleshey, Rettendon, Roxwell, Runwell, Sandon, South Hanningfield, Springfield, Springfield Holy Trinity, Stock Harvard, West Hanningfield, Widford, Woodham

Ferrers, Writtle.

A parish workhouse existed on New Street Chelmsford from around 1716, described as a three storey building with fourteen rooms. It was built on the ground where the old Alms-houses stood.

Parish workhouses also existed at Baddow and Springfield. Good Easter had a workhouse from around 1716 and Great Waltham from around 1718. The joint parishes of Stock and Buttsbury had a workhouse at Stock in Common Lane, formerly Workhouse Lane.



Danbury workhouse (The Chantry House)

A new workhouse was built in Great Baddow in 1790 on Vicarage lane, formerly Workhouse Lane. The parish also encouraged people to stay out of the workhouse and in 1800 they purchased twenty-seven spinning wheels and loaned to the poor families in order they could generate an income for themselves.

COLCHESTER POOR LAW UNION.

Except between 1698 and 1745, the parish's main responsibility from the Tudor period was poor relief, supervised by the borough justices. In 1678 the justices ordered parish officials to badge the poor, and the poor were being badged in St. Mary's parish in 1690. In 1783 the ratepayers of St. Peter's parish agreed to badge the poor, except the blind or lame or those over 70 years of age. Overseers gave relief in regular or casual cash doles, or sometimes loans, supplemented by grants of clothing, shoes, bedlinen, cloth, fuel, soap, and, occasionally, tools for work. Rents, rates, or fees for burial or nursing care might be paid. Widows, children, the sick, and the aged were always amongst recipients of poor relief, but, especially in times of high unemployment, able-bodied men were also relieved. An incomplete survey of St. Botolph's parish poor in 1794 included many weavers; only a few of the families receiving relief had more than four children

Medical care was provided on a casual basis in the 18th century, but by the early 19th century many parishes had a salaried medical officer. Smallpox inoculation at parish expense was provided occasionally in the late 18th century in one or more inoculating houses: in 1776 a man was nursed at an inoculating house at the expense of St. Leonard's parish; in 1779 St. Nicholas's parish paid for the treatment of a parishioner in the inoculating house. There were no local facilities for the treatment of mental handicap and illness until the 1850s. Occasionally parishes sent lunatics to the Bethlehem hospital (London) and paid for their maintenance there. St. Botolph's had a standing arrangement in the early 19th century to send insane paupers to Holly House lunatic asylum, Hoxton (Middlesex). The pantry in St. James's workhouse was altered in 1826 to provide a lock-up for a deranged and very dangerous woman. In 1830-2 St. Runwald's boarded out two harmless idiots at a house in Maidenburgh Street, but presumably such paupers often remained with their own families. Besides the overseers' difficulties in distinguishing between the workshy and those eager to support themselves, there were the perennial problems of unemployment and low wages. The parishes' intention was to provide work within workhouses, but lack of workhouse accommodation often forced them to find work outside. All Saints' bought a bay loom in 1690 and bay work was given to the poor.

In the 1740s St. Runwald's provided spinning wheels for some female paupers; in 1779 St. Nicholas's lent a man some weaving equipment from the workhouse; and in 1801-2 St. Leonard's lent parish spinning wheels to poor people. Unemployed men were sometimes given paid labouring work: in 1826-7, in a decade when jobs were particularly scarce, St. Botolph's parish employed men on the roads and at the parish gravel pit. Overseers of several parishes successfully offered the improvement commissioners tenders for sweeping streets, to occupy occasionally unemployed men.

Children were expected to work as soon as they were old enough. In 1771 children of applicants in St. Leonard's were to spin all day, with just a half hour break for breakfast and an hour for dinner, otherwise relief would be withheld. Similarly in 1827 St. Botolph's denied relief to parents refusing to send their children to work in the town's silk mills, the millowners having requested children, presumably as cheap labour. In St. Mary's-at-the-Walls, however, many parents were encouraged by the town gentry not to allow their children to work at the local silk factory for fear of corrupting their morals. Younger children were sometimes boarded out by a parish, and older ones apprenticed. Before 1800 boys were apprenticed mainly to fishermen, oyster dredgers, and mariners, near Colchester or further away at Southwark, Deptford, South Shields, or Sunderland, and to weavers, mainly in Colchester. After 1800 no children were placed with weavers, but a few boys still followed nautical trades and nearly a third were apprenticed to cordwainers.

Sometimes lodgings were found for paupers, or houses rented for their use. The large number of unendowed alms-houses in the various parishes were presumably used to house paupers. Ten of the twelve town parishes had their own small workhouses in the 18th century and the early 19th. Some parishes converted existing alms-houses into workhouses, but many of those may have been used as pauper housing rather than as places where paupers were set to work. The former St. Catherine's hospital in Crouch Street, which had been used as a borough workhouse in the later 16th century, was used as a parish workhouse for St. Mary's-at-the-Walls in the later 18th century. Alms-houses on the north side of Bucklersbury Lane became St. Nicholas's workhouse by 1748. In 1834 St. Mary's workhouse held eight inmates on average. A workhouse in St. Martin's from 1770 to 1788 was probably in Hospital Yard, Angel Lane, where a pest house was said to have stood.



Some or all of the other parish workhouses were also converted buildings. Three houses near East bridge in East Street became St. James's workhouse in 1755; there were fourteen inmates in 1834. All Saints' equipped a six-roomed house as a workhouse c. 1753; the outbuildings were being let by 1774 and the house was being used for pauper housing by 1799; in 1801 the vestry planned to create another workhouse and by 1822 one was in use. St. Botolph's had a workhouse in 1782 which may have been the one in Moor Lane (Priory Street) mentioned in 1825. Between 1829 and 1831 there were 17-27 inmates. St. Giles's had a workhouse in 1775 which admitted paupers from St. Leonard's also, and which may have been the large workhouse in Stanwell Street recorded in 1833. St. Leonard's had its own workhouse by 1768, which may have been the one recorded in 1834 on the south side of Hythe Street opposite Knaves Acre. Holy Trinity had a workhouse by 1749 and a poorhouse, perhaps the same house, on the north side of Eld Lane in 1818. St. Peter's had a workhouse in 1779, probably the one in North Street mentioned in the 1830s; in 1820 there were thirty-one inmates. St. Mary Magdalen's parish had four houses on the north side and two on the south side of Magdalen Street, all sold in 1837, described as a workhouse but which probably functioned rather as pauper housing. St. Runwald's had no workhouse of its own, but apparently used those in neighbouring parishes.

The workhouse masters usually received an annual salary and a weekly allowance per inmate, which in St. Botolph's was reduced from 3s. 9d. in 1829 to 3s. in 1832. St. James's reduced the workhouse master's allowance from 3s. 6d. in 1821 to 3s. 3d. in 1832. Sometimes masters were also allowed proceeds from work done by inmates, or free coal or other extras; by the early 19th century their terms of service were sometimes set out in writing. Spinning, weaving, and carding were the main forms of work until the beginning of the 19th century. Thereafter, apart from the training of girls for household service, inmates seemed to do little more than make, repair, and launder their own clothes and help with the running of their own workhouse and garden. In 1821 the inmates of St. James's poorhouse were allowed a diet of wholesome food with 'a comfortable and hot dinner' of meat and vegetables three times a week. The parishes were well aware of the expense and inefficiency of running so many small workhouses separately, and in 1818 discussed combining their resources to convert part of the garrison hospital to a shared house of industry, but it was not until after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 that a union of parishes was again effected.

In spite of significant differences between parishes in size of population and proportion of poor inhabitants, trends in poor relief expenditure were similar. In general, the cost of parish poor relief rose gradually in the 17th century, possibly in line with the gradual rise in population. In 1602 the total amount raised by poor rates ranged from £3 in St. Mary Magdalen's, a very small and poor parish to £40 in St. Giles's. In 1665-6 Colchester suffered so badly from plague that parish poor rates had to be supplemented. In St. Leonard's, where the cost of poor relief had ranged from £50 to £100 a year between 1653 and 1664, almost £158, c. £100 of it given by the borough, was spent during the first quarter alone of 1666. In 1629 All Saints' parish subsidized the poor of St. Botolph's, and in the 17th century St. Mary Magdalen's received poor relief contributions from Berechurch.

In 1776 net expenditure ranged from £41 in St. Mary Magdalen's to £423 in St. Peter's, and over the period 1783-5 averaged from £76 in St. Mary Magdalen's to £552 in St. Peter's. The rate of increase in expenditure accelerated in the last decade and high costs continued in the opening years of the 19th century, as the Napoleonic Wars destroyed the remnants of the local cloth industry. Between 1800 and 1805 the All Saints' overseers complained of the great distress caused by the high price of food; relief to dependants of militia men was a further wartime expense. Average expenditure per head in the town and outlying parishes rose from 12s. 5d. in 1803 to 16s. 10d. in 1813, and in 1814-15 annual expenditure amounted to £8,560, ranging from £75 in St. Mary Magdalen's to £1,019 in St. Botolph's.

After the end of the wars in 1815 average expenditure per head declined slightly to 16s. 3d. in 1821, and it fell further to 13s. 9d. a head in 1831. In the decade before the 1834 Act some parishes were making efforts to reduce spending, believed by many ratepayers excessive, partly because of the inefficiency and inequity involved in providing relief separately in the twelve parishes of the town.

Some parishes, as St. Botolph's in 1826-8, paid higher allowances than others to the mentally handicapped and aged. At the same period St. James's officers were apparently hardening their attitude towards paupers: from 1824 relief was withheld from paupers who kept dogs, in 1829 there was a plan to provide bread and flour instead of money, and from 1831 rents were no longer paid. By 1829 applications for relief in St. James's had dwindled to none. In St. Runwald's on the other hand between 1829 and 1834 twenty persons on average received regular payments. The use of indoor as opposed to outdoor relief before 1834 probably depended on relative costs and on the availability of workhouse accommodation within a parish. All twelve town parishes and the four outlying parishes became part of Colchester poor law union in 1835. In a parliamentary report of 1776, Colchester was listed as having a workhouse with accommodation for fifty inmates. Colchester Poor Law Union formally came into being on 19th October 1836.

The new Colchester Union workhouse was built in 1836-37 to designs by John Brown. Brown was responsible for a number of workhouses in Norfolk including Blofield Poor Law Union, Docking, Norfolk and Henstead Poor Law Union. Later additions included a laundry (1896), casual wards (1898) and a porter's lodge. The workhouse later became Colchester Public Assistance Institution, then St Mary's Hospital which closed down in 1993. After a period of standing derelict, the site has now been redeveloped for residential use.

Constituent Parishes:

Berechurch, Colchester All Saints, Colchester Holy Trinity, Colchester St Botolph, Colchester St Giles, Colchester St James, Colchester St Leonard, Colchester St Martin, Colchester St Mary Magdalen, Colchester St Mary at the Walls, Colchester St Nicholas, Colchester St Peter, Colchester St Runwald, Greenstead-juxta-Colchester, Lexden, Myland St Michael.

DUNMOW POOR LAW UNION.

Constituent Parishes

Aythorpe Roding, Barnston, Broxted, Chickney, Felsted, Great Bardfield, Great Canfield, Great Dunmow, Great Easton, Hatfield Broad Oak, High Easter, High Roding, Leaden Roding, Lindsell, Little Bardfield, Little Canfield, Little Dunmow, Little Easton, Little Saling, Margaret Roding, Stebbing, Takeley, Thaxted, Tilty, White Roding.

EPPING POOR LAW UNION.

Workhouses are recorded at Epping, Harlow, Theydon Garnon, (from 1704), Chigwell, (from 1728).

From about 1789, an Epping parish workhouse was located in the village on what is now Station Road, opposite what later became the National Westminster bank. It was a three-storey brick building with a few small cottages and a garden to the rear. Epping Poor Law Union was formed on 16th January 1836.

Epping workhouse was erected at a site on The Plain in 1837-8. The Poor Law Commissioners authorised an expenditure of £6,000 on construction of the building which was intended to accommodate up to 220 inmates. It was designed by Lewis Vulliamy who was also the architect of the Brentford and Sturminster Union workhouses. A separate two-storey infirmary was added in 1846 which was later used as a laundry. Another infirmary was added in 1876 at the south of the main building. In the 1880s, a major building programme included the remodelling of the entrance block at the north, and the replacement of the southern wing with a new infirmary and dining-hall/chapel, together with new buildings to the west.

In 1911-12, a new infirmary, at the east of the workhouse, and a master's house were erected at a cost of about £10,000. The infirmary was taken over by the army in 1917-19.

The former workhouse later became Epping Poor Law Institution and then St Margaret's Hospital. Most of the surviving workhouse building was demolished in 2001. From the early 1900s, Epping Union operated a small

cottage homes site for forty children at Coopersale Common. The children attended school at Theydon Garnon. The homes no longer exist.

Constituent Parishes

Buckhurst Hill, from 1894 added to the Union, Chigwell, Chingford, Epping, Essex (Epping Upland added from 1896), Great Parndon, Harlow, Latton, Little Parndon, Loughton, Magdalen Laver, Matching, Nazeing, Netteswell, North Weald, Roydon, Sheering, Theydon Bois, Theydon Garnon.

HALSTEAD POOR LAW UNION.

Constituent parishes

Castle Hedingham, Colne Engaine, Cornish Hall End, Earls Colne, Gosfield, Great Maplestead, Great Yeldham, Greenstead Green St James, Halstead, Halstead Holy Trinity, Little Maplestead, Little Yeldham, Pebmarsh, Ridgewell, Sible Hedingham, Stambourne, Tilbury juxta Clare, Toppesfield, White Colne.

WEST HAM POOR LAW UNION.

Constituent Parishes

East Ham, Leyton, Leytonstone, Little Ilford, Plaistow St Mary, Stratford St John, Walthamstow St Mary, Walthamstow St James, Walthamstow St John, Walthamstow St Peter, Wanstead, West Ham, Woodford, Woodford Bridge.

LEXDEN AND WINSTREE POOR LAW UNION.

Constituent Parishes

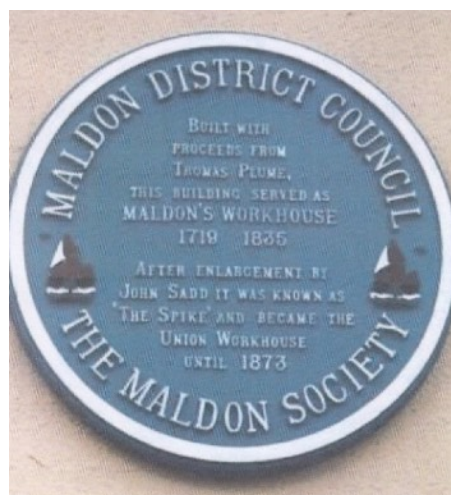
Abberton, Aldham, All Saints in Stanway and Lexden, Birch, Boxted, Brightlingsea, Chappel, Copford, Dedham, East Donyland, East Mersea, Easthorpe, Fingringhoe, Fordham, Great Horkesley, Great Tey, Great Wigborough, Inworth, Langenhoe, Langham, Layer Breton, Layer Marney, Layer de la Haye, Little Horkesley, Little Tey, Little Wigborough, Marks Tey, Mount Bures, Peldon, Salcott-cum- Virley, Stanway, Wakes Colne, West Bergholt, West Mersea, Wivenhoe, Wormingford.



Lexden and Winstree Workhouse

MALDON POOR LAW UNION.

A workhouse was built in Maldon in around 1715 under the terms of the will of Thomas Plumb (1630-1704) Archdeacon of Rochester for "erecting a workhouse for the poor of Maldon ...". Situated on Market Hill, it served the parishes of Maldon All Saints with St Peter, and Maldon St Mary, and was later extended.



Maldon workhouse plaque 2003

A



workhouse is also recorded at Southminster.

The 1777 Parliamentary report includes workhouses operating at:

Burnham (for up to 24), Goldhanger (18), Maldon St Mary (40), Purleigh (20), Southminster (30), Steeple (6), Stow Maries (10), Tillingham (6), Tollesbury (2), Tolleshunt Darcy (10), Tolleshunt Major (10), Great Totham (20), Little Totham (16), Woodham Ferrers (30).

Additional subsequent workhouses can be documented at Woodham Walter and Wickham Bishops.

Maldon Poor Law Union was formed on 14th December 1835.

Initially, the new union took over the existing Maldon workhouse. The buildings were enlarged with a new top floor, porch and high wall being added. It could then hold 350 men, women and children supervised by Master and Matron and school teachers. Following the erection of the new workhouse in the 1870s, the old building was refronted, with new doors and bay windows added. It was sold at auction at Kings Head Maldon on 31 August 1875 in 2 lots: the main block and, separately, the outbuildings and school.

The building was redeveloped into houses and flats during the 1980s and now bears a commemorative plaque provided by Maldon District Council and the Maldon Society.

In 1872-3 on a five-acre site on Spital Road in Maldon, a new Maldon Union workhouse was built to accommodate 450. After 1930, the workhouse was redesignated as a Public Assistance Institution.

After 1948, it joined the National Health Service as St Peter's Hospital. In recent times, the lodge has been used as mental illness day unit, and the converted chapel as a staff social club.

Constituent Parishes

Althorne, Asheldham, Bradwell on Sea, Burnham on Crouch, Cold Norton, Creeksea, Dengie, Goldhanger, Great Totham, Hazeleigh, Heybridge, Langford, Latchingdon with Snoreham, Maldon All Saints with St Peter, Maldon St Mary, Mayland, Mundon, North Fambridge, Purleigh, Southminster, St Lawrence Newland, Steeple, Stow Maries, Tillingham, Tollesbury, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Tolleshunt Knights, Tolleshunt Major, Woodham Mortimer, Woodham Walter. Later Additions (all from 1883 closure of Witham Poor Law Union, Essex):

Great Braxted, Little Braxted, Ulting, Wickham Bishops. Southminster Workhouse was located in Landwyck Farm.

ONGAR POOR LAW UNION.

A parliamentary report of 1777 recorded parish workhouses in operation at Lamborne (for up to 40), see Lambourne with Abridge, Navestock (25) see Navestock, Essex and Willingale Spain (12), see Willingale Spain.

Constituent Parishes

Abbess Roding, Beauchamp Roding, Berners Roding, Blackmore, Bobbingworth, Chipping Ongar, Doddinghurst, Fyfield, Greenstead, High Laver, High Ongar, Kelvedon Hatch, Lambourne with Abridge, Little Laver, Moreton, Navestock, Norton Mandeville, Shelley, Shellow Bowells, Stanford Rivers, Stapleford Abbots, Stapleford Tawney, Stondon Massey, Theydon Mount, Willingale Doe, Willingale Spain.

ORSETT POOR LAW UNION.,

Constituent Parishes

Aveley, Bulphan, Chadwell St Mary, Corringham, East Tilbury, Fobbing, Grays Thurrock, Horndon on the Hill, Langdon Hills, Little Thurrock, Mucking, North Ockendon, Orsett, South Ockendon, Stanford-le-Hope, Stifford, West Thurrock, West Tilbury. Later Addition: Canvey Island (1837-80) Canvey Island.

ROCHFORD POOR LAW UNION.

Constituent parishes

Ashingdon, Barling Magna, Canewdon, Canvey Island, Eastwood, Foulness, Great Stambridge, Great Wakering, Hadleigh, Havengore, Hawkwell, Hockley, Leigh-on-Sea, Little Stambridge, Little Wakering, North Shoebury, Paglesham, Prittlewell, Rawreth, Rayleigh, Rochford, Shopland, South Benfleet, South Fambridge, South Shoebury, Southchurch, Southend St John the Baptist, Sutton, Thundersley.

ROMFORD POOR LAW UNION.

Romford (or "Rumford") is mentioned in a report from 1724 of a parish workhouse. Other workhouses mentioned include Barking (Bury-king) and Hornchurch.

Constituent parishes

Barking, Barkingside Trinity, Cranham, Dagenham, Great Ilford, Great Warley, Havering-atte-Bower, Hornchurch, Rainham, Romford, Upminster, Wennington.

SAFFRON WALDEN POOR LAW UNION.

Saffron Walden, had a parish workhouse in the High Street and a further adjacent cottage was purchased in 1798 to form a bridewell or gaol. The building was damaged by fire in 1835.

Ashdon, former guildhall became a parish workhouse in 1775. A Parliamentary report of 1777 recorded that the Ashdon workhouse could accommodate up to 30 and that inmates were employed in spinning yarn.

Clavering, also converted it's old guildhall into a parish workhouse in 1760 In 1782 records indicate that Clavering was paying for Thaxted to house paupers.

Newport, had an early workhouse in 1709, possibly at the south side of the junction of the High Street and Wicken Road. The inmates were employed in spinning, with any income generated going towards the inmates' maintenance. A new workhouse was erected in 1799 at Bury Water Green (now 1-2 Bury Water Lane). The

building, was financed by local Lord of the Manor, the Honourable Percy Charles Wyndham to provide a "common working room for the poor of Newport".

Debden, had a parish workhouse on the east side of Thaxted Road.

Saffron Walden Poor Law Union was formed on 6th April 1835. The Saffron Walden Board of Guardians met for the first time on the 13th of April, 1835, at the Rose and Crown public house. They resolved that a new workhouse building was needed and set about finding a suitable location. They originally planned to buy a three-acre site in White Street Field. However, this proved to be unsuitable for the workhouse, and the Guardians' Chairman Lord Braybrooke purchased some land on the north side of Seward's End Road (later Radwinter Road) which he then leased to the Union.

The new workhouse, to accommodate 340 inmates, was built in 1835-6 to a design by James Clephan of Silso who was also the architect of the workhouses at Ampthill and Wellingborough. The construction was carried out by Messrs Bennett and Barber of Cambridge. total cost of the land and building works was £7,333. A further £1200 was required in 1841-2 for additional expenses incurred in completing the building.

In 1846, the Guardians decided to build an infirmary, washhouse and laundry in the north-east yard. Four fever wards were erected in October 1848. By this time the workhouse could accommodate a total of four hundred. The workhouse later became St James' Hospital, and later Saffron Walden Community Hospital. A new hospital has now been built on an adjacent site and the workhouse converted to private housing.

Constituent Parishes

Arkesden, Ashdon, Chrishall, Clavering, Debden, Elmdon, Great Chesterford, Great Sampford, Hempstead, Langley, Little Chesterford, Little Sampford, Littlebury, Newport, Quendon, Radwinter, Rickling, Saffron Walden, Strethall, Wendens Ambo, Wendon Lofts, Wicken Bonhunt, Widdington, Wimbish.

TENDRING POOR LAW UNION.

Early parish workhouses were recorded in 1777 at Ardleigh for up to forty, Beaumont with Mose (14), Little Bentley (26), Bradfield (12), Great Bromley (30), Great Clacton (30), Harwich & Dover Court (8), Harwich St Nicholas (60),

Kirby (24), Lawford (22), Great Oakley (20), Ramsey (14), Tendring (20), Thorpe (50), and Wix (25).

Constituent parishes

Alresford, Ardleigh, Beaumont with Moze, Bradfield, Brightlingsea, Dovercourt, Elmstead 1838-1925, Frating, Frinton, Great Bentley, Great Bromley, Great Clacton, Great Holland, Great Oakley, Harwich St Nicholas, 1838-1925, Kirby le Soken, Lawford, Little Bentley, Little Bromley, Little Clacton, Little Oakley, Manningtree, Mistley,

Ramsey, St Osyth, Tendring, Thorington, Thorpe le Soken, Walton le Soken, Weeley, Wix, Wrabness.

Later Additions: Brightlingsea, Essex (1838-1880), Dovercourt (1838-1925), Harwich (1925-1930), Harwich St Nicholas (1838-1925).

WICKFORD POOR LAW FIELD.

The Wickford Poor House was probably one of the farm buildings in the named "Poor House field" which had Overseer's appointed and was active before 1730 when they actually produced Accounts.

Some of the items included in the accounts are:

1731	For Wood purchased	10s.0d.
	Mary Salmon Board	£2.6s.0d.
1732	Paid for a hundred and half fags (faggots)	18s.0d.
	For board of the children	7s.6d.
1735	To Mr. Tabor for 3 weeks allowance for Mrs. Ingram	9s.0d.
1737	To Midwife.	9s.0d.
1740	Widow Ladbrook half year rent	15s.0d.
1741	Paid for Bleeding Good Turner	1s.0d.
1742	Mr. Sargent for Burying a poor man.	2s.6d.
	Two stacks of wood and a hundred faggots	£1.14s.6d.
1743	2 Aprons and shift and 2 Caps for Goody Lansbrook	6d.
	For making the above.	1s.6d.
1744	For nursen Goody.	6s.0d.
1745	For pair of breeches.	2s.0d.
	For pair of stakens.	1s.6d.
1751	Four yards of shifting for the poor	3s.0d.

1754 Robert Roges, a day's work for setting up colrakes, for carting chaldron of cole from Battlesbridge and Bricks and Lime for the colrakes (in this context Colrakes may be for the Bakers ovens).

10s.6d.

1758 Paid four wilders. 8s.0d.

1760 Paid for tea and sugar (shoguer) for two widows. 6d.

1764 For a Wasket for Joseph French. (waistcoat) 7s.0d.

It is not until 1746 that any direct mention is made of the Poor House and on this occasion two stacks of wood and two hundred-weight of faggots was bought "for the use of the poor" and Mr. Sampson was paid half a year's rent for the Poor House at £1.15s.0d.

In 1751 Mr. Bram paid for glazing the window of ye poor house 7s.0d.

In 1753 A hundred faggots for the Poor House. 12s.0d.

An item appears in the accounts "Glasurs bill for mending windows at ye Buer house 5s.8d.

In August 1759, John Glascock agreed to provide a tenement for three years for the poor of Wickford at a yearly rate of 30s0d.

In 1767, the following local people contributed to the Poor Rate as follows:

John Crouch	£3.18s.0d.	William Sharbfund	18s.0d.	William Waylett	3s.0d.
John Heard	£3.14s.3d.	John Beech	13s.6d.	John Matthias	3s.0d.
Abraham Bell	£3.13s.3d.	Thomas Emmason	11s.3d.	William Swan	1s.6d.
Thomas Heard	£2.14s.0d.	William Emmason	10s.6d.	William Draper	2s.3d.
Robert Turner	£2.11s.9d.	John Flow	7s.6d.	Thomas Punt	2s.3d.
William Purks	£1.12s.3d.	Henry Cousens	5s.3d.	John Thurnell	1s.6d.
Mary Wright	£1.7s.9d.	Thomas Glascocke	3s.0d.	James Salmon	1s.6d.
Mark Cooke	£1.2s.6d.	Edward Crow	3s.9d.	William Sanders	9s.0d.

Other benefactors described as "outbounders" contributed to the income for re-distribution to the poor of Wickford as follows:

Mrs. Backhouse Carr	17s.3d.	William Bavin	16s.6d. and 15s.0d.
James Harrott	15s.0d.	Rebekah Davis	9s.9d.
Joseph Benson	6s.0d.	Robert Turner	4s.6d.
Henry Alexander	3s.9d.	Richard Berman	17s.3d.
Samuel Wright	16s.6d.	George Ramsey	9s.9d.
Richard Sexton	6s.0d.		

Another source of income for the relief of poverty was from bequests. People who lived in Wickford often remembered the poor of the parish in their Wills. Jeremy Wytham, Yeoman, whose Will was dated 1617, left 25s.8d. to the poor of Wickford, to be paid one month after his death. John Pond whose Will as dated 1566 left 3s.4d. to the 'Poor Box' at Wickford. William Clement whose Will was dated 1576 left 3s.4d. to the poor of the village. John Meadows, Husbandman, whose will was dated 1579 left 10s.0d. to the poor.

Consideration seems to have been given to the poor of Wickford, particularly children, widows, the sick, the burying of the dead and providing some form of heating and adequate clothing for those in need. Offset against this, we have items such as in June 1757 "expenses at the Castle Inn for 18s.3d. no doubt for the Overseers when the met to discuss business.

Care for the young of the parish is seen in the following agreements which appear from the 1740's in the Accounts.

John Crouch agreed to take Mary Salmon at 21s.6d. a week, but when Mary arrived at the age of twelve, he would receive 1s.0d. for four years following, then to be discharged of the child.

Gabriel Cox took Mary Hills upon the same terms.

Thomas Hewlett took Sarah Crouch and Thomas Wright took Ruth Bowers, also on the same terms.

Abraham Shuttleworth took Mary Gowers at 1s.0d. per week until she was sixteen.

John Pegrum took Elizabeth Gowers along the same terms.

There were many other examples of villagers taking in children and conditions along similar lines.

The parish had to double clothe each child upon its going to place; each person to double clothe each child when discharged at the age of sixteen.

WITHAM POOR LAW UNION.

Constituent Parishes:

Coggeshall, including Great and Little Coggeshall, Fairstead, Faulkbourne, Feering, Great Braxted, Hatfield Peverel, Inworth, Kelvedon, Little Braxted, Markshall, Messing, Rivenhall, Terling, Ulting, Wickham Bishops, Witham.

A parish workhouse was set up in Witham in 1714 close to the parish church. It was built by means of a loan from Miss Alice Bird of Great Coggeshall. In its early years, the building was used as a 'House of Correction' (an early form of Prison) for vagrants, vagabonds and disorderly people.

The cost of running the workhouse soon after its opening was about £230 annually. Its aim of reducing the parish's poor rate was unsuccessful and by 1785, the annual cost had risen to £2899. An inventory of the premises in 1757 listed the rooms as including a cellar, hall, master's room, kitchen, pantry, brewhouse, workhouse and five bedchambers.

A parliamentary report of 1777 recorded parish workhouses in operation at Witham (with accommodation for up to sixty inmates), Great Coggeshall (50), Faulkourn (25), Great Braxted (16), Hatfield Peverel (30), Kelvedon (30), Little Coggeshall (15), Messing (100), Rivenhall (25) and Terling (20). The Kelvedon parish Workhouse is a building that dated back to the sixteenth century.



The new Witham Workhouse, for three hundred inmates, was built in 1837-39 at a site to the west of Witham on the Hatfield Road.

Norman Bambridge
Basildon Borough Heritage Society
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