

Poor relief

Under the old Poor Laws in force up to the mid-1830s every parish had to support its own paupers. This was one of the responsibilities of the Vestry, a regular meeting of parish rate-payers, automatically chaired by the vicar or rector, which was responsible for both ecclesiastical matters and the administration of local government. Its secular responsibilities were transferred to parish councils in 1894, and its ecclesiastical duties to parochial church councils in 1921.

The administration of the old Poor Laws was commonly 'farmed-out' by the Vestry to a contractor, whose function was to find employment for the destitute (e.g. day work on local farms or in the stone pits for men, spinning for women) and to house the paupers in a parish workhouse. In Deddington the workhouse comprised 5 cottages, one for the master, in New Street, now Quinque House.¹

Under the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 the old Poor Law system was replaced by a Poor Law Commission with power to unite parishes into Poor Law Unions, with a central workhouse building, and administered by a local Board of Guardians. The parish of Deddington became part of the Woodstock Union, which covered 29 parishes, and the new Poor Laws became operational in the locality in June 1835. The workhouse in Woodstock was ten miles distant from Deddington, a cause of constant complaint.

The cost of poor relief was a heavy burden on parish ratepayers. One of the solutions was assisted emigration to Canada or America, the expense being borne by a special parish poor rate or by public subscription (principally local landowners).

Around 1828 some 175 persons from labouring families in Hook Norton successfully crossed the Atlantic to settle in Canada; only five decided to return.

In May 1832 a group of 72 men, women and children from Deddington travelled to Liverpool by boat (i.e. by canal) to join the ship *Brutus* for its long voyage of at least 50 days (potentially up to 75 days) to Quebec.² 10 were single men, and 38 children. The expenses of their passage, totalling £378 10s. 4d., were defrayed by a special parish poor rate.

11 days into the voyage an outbreak of cholera broke out. After 18 days about one-third of the 330 passengers were ill, dead or dying, and the captain turned the ship round and returned to Liverpool. 82 deaths were recorded. It appears that at least 17, and possibly 21, of the Deddington emigrants died on the voyage.

¹ See 'Deddington's Workhouse' by Mary Robinson:

http://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/3210/QHforDOL.pdf

² In 1831 the population of the Parish was 2,078 (Deddington 1,590, Clifton 268 and Hempton 220). 'Comparative account of the population of Great Britain in the years 1801, 1811, 1821, and 1831 : with the annual value of real property in the year 1815 : also, a statement of progress in the inquiry regarding the occupations of families and persons, and the duration of life, as required by the Population Act of 1830', page 209. Census Office, 1831.

The tragedy must have had a devastating effect on the survivors and the rest of the community. The episode has been comprehensively written-up on the Deddington History website by Jon Malins.³

Reports in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* in 1833 and 1834 suggest that the Overseers of the Poor in Deddington were not discharging their responsibilities properly prior to the introduction of the new Poor Laws.

In 1833, in evidence to a Parliamentary committee, Charles Osborn, a land agent passing through Deddington, said he saw about 20 labourers without work told to stand around in the market place the whole day by the Overseers.

In the First Parliamentary Report by D.O.P. Okeden in 1834, he reported that at Deddington:

"during the seven winter months, about 60 men apply every morning to the Overseer for work or pay. He ranges them under a shed in a yard. If a farmer, or any one else wants a man, he sends to the yard for one, and pays half a day's wages; the rest is paid by the parish. At the close of the day the unemployed are paid the wages of the day, minus two-pence."

In 1834, prompted by an attempt by the Vestry to reduce the amount of the Poor Law allowance, there was a riot involving about 150 persons from 7:00 p.m. until 2:00 or 3:00 the following morning, and stones were thrown at the house and windows of Thomas Fardon, the Parish Overseer (see below). This resulted in the appearance in court of nine Deddington paupers aged 19 to 36. Whilst found guilty, the judge criticised the improper manner in which the Parish Officers acted in paying the idle and industrious at the same rate.

The establishment of the Woodstock Poor Law Union also led to a dispute between the Clifton Overseers and the Deddington Overseers in 1835-1837 as to the correct recipient of the Clifton Poor Rate as there was no longer a workhouse in Deddington. The building seems to have been disposed of privately, as there is no notice of its sale or letting in the local newspapers.

The new Poor Laws also prompted several new initiatives to help to alleviate the condition of the poor.

A Banbury District Labourers' Friend Society was formed in 1833, with the purpose of raising funds to provide allotments for labouring men in neighbouring villages.

One of the Society's founders was the Rev. Richard Greaves, vicar of Deddington, who told the inaugural meeting, at which many ladies were present, about the successful results achieved in Deddington with the support of the local Charity Feoffees.

In the first place, three acres of land, under his own care, had been let out to the poor for four years, and with the most beneficial consequences. - The success which had

³ <https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/emigrationandtransportation2/emigration>
<https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/emigrationandtransportation2/emigration/emigrationfromdeddington>

attended this first experiment in his own parish, had led the poor themselves to apply for eight acres of land, which had been bequeathed for charitable purposes, and they now wished to farm it. It had formerly been let to a farmer, and the annual rent had been laid out in the purchase of coals. The feoffees had been induced to grant the request of the applicants, taking care, indeed, that every one who had a share of the land should pay an annual rent for the same, which rent being higher than that formerly paid by the farmer, a double advantage had been [raised] by the transfer, since a larger quantity of coals could be purchased.

The expectation which had been formed from this measure, had also been answered with success. The land was let out to thirty-five families, and those who had the management of the concern had not failed to receive every halfpenny of rent from those to whom it was now entrusted. The parish feoffees had been induced, last year, to procure more land for the use of the poor; a piece of eight acres, which might be seen from the Banbury road, near the top of Deddington hill, and which was divided into ninety allotments.

Charles Faulkner, then living at Adderbury, was one of the two Honorary Secretaries.

Faulkner was also the founder chairman of the Deddington and Steeple Aston Self-Supporting Dispensary, established in 1835 to help defray the cost of medicines for working people. One of the Joint Secretaries was Samuel Field, solicitor, Deddington.

Following similar initiatives in Banbury and elsewhere, a 'Deddington Mendicity Society, for the Relief of Distressed Travellers and the Detection of Impostors', was formed at a meeting at the King's Arms in December 1835, with the aim of obviating the nuisance of begging at people's doors, especially "the pest of trading beggars, comprising characters of the lowest and worst description".

When a beggar knocked on the door of a householder, members would issue a ticket which the beggar would present to the superintendent in exchange for one day's food and one night's lodging, being expected to leave the Parish the following day. Any beggar obtaining more than one ticket, or continuing to beg after receiving relief, was likely to be sent to the tread-mill.

A receiving house was established in New Street, near the junction with Hudson Street, where travellers could stay cheaply.⁴ The Honorary Secretaries of the Society were Samuel Field and William Wing, a Steeple Aston land agent.

The lowest Annual Subscription being one shilling only, it is hoped that even the poorest class of persons (who are the most frequently imposed on by beggars), will be enabled to become Members of this Society.

During the Society's first year in 1836, 222 applications for relief were received, and only eight were refused.⁵

⁴ This later became the Flying Horse public house.

⁵ See Coggins Scrapbooks, Scrapbook no. 3 (1836-1914), Section B, ff. 58b and 69a.

<https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/publishedhistories/coggins,george1846-1920-scrapbooks>

In the meantime the new Woodstock Poor Law Union was pressing ahead with establishing its new infrastructure. The Union was divided into three Divisions - Woodstock, Deddington and Kidlington.

Positions were elective. John Churchill, solicitor, Deddington, succeeded in being elected as both Auditor of the Union and Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. John Irons, of Deddington, was elected Relieving Officer for Deddington Division.

The papers relating to the bankruptcy in 1827 of Samuel Churchill, solicitor, mention two friendly societies in Deddington:

- Deddington Friendly Benefit Society, a creditor for £218 4s. 7d.
- Three Horse Shoes Friendly Society, a creditor for £200 plus interest. A proof of debt was not sworn until 1844, when the Stewards were Thomas Heritage, clog maker, and James Whitelock.

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12 May 1832, page 3

Oxford News.

EMIGRATION. - Last week 72 persons, inhabitants of Deddington, in this county, embarked in boats for Liverpool, on their passage to Quebec and Montreal. The expences of their passage, &c. were defrayed by subscription, to which many of the land-owners contributed very handsomely.

12 May 1832, page 3

Important to Emigrants

From OXFORD and its Neighbourhood.

B. CLARKE

RESPECTFULLY intimates to his friends and the public that FIRST-CLASS VESSELS continue to sail regularly in succession to the following Ports from LIVERPOOL, viz.: -

NEW YORK, Weekly.

PHILADELPHIA, Twice a Month.

BALTIMORE, Once a Month.

BOSTON, Ditto.

QUEBEC and } Twice a Month, from the 1st March to the
MONTREAL, } 1st August.

The Vessels belonging to the different lines aforesaid are well-known fast-sailing American ships, coppered and copper fastened, and average per register about 400 tons.

Their accommodations for passengers are spacious and comfortable, as they are all very roomy and lofty vessels, being from 7 to 9 feet between decks.

Persons emigrating can be accommodated with passages on the very lowest terms, and without the delay that so often occurs to passengers at Liverpool.

As the fitting-out of the vessels, and the regulating of berths, &c. will be superintended by one of the proprietors, passengers may rely on having all attention paid to every thing conducive to their comfort for the voyage.

Persons residing in the Country, or at a distance from Oxford, can have every information by application (if by letter, post paid) to

B. CLARKE, Agent,

Clarendon Arms Tavern, Oxford.

► Parties of any number, or Families, contracted with for Passage, Provisions, and all necessaries for the voyage, on the lowest terms. - Fuel and an abundance of good water are provided by the ship.

Gore's General Advertiser, Liverpool, 14 June 1832, page 3

SHIP BRUTUS.—AWFUL MORTALITY.

With feelings of the deepest sorrow, we have to convey to our readers intelligence of the most distressing nature, which will carry dismay to many, and regret to all, and further arrest the public mind to the consideration of a disease which is so fearful and desolating in its progress. After devastating the land, it has invaded the deep; and the sum of human suffering which we this day announce, shows how fell and destructive has been its short career on the waters.

The ship BRUTUS, Captain Neilson, left the Mersey on the 18th May for Quebec, with three hundred and thirty passengers, principally composed of persons from the agricultural districts, anxious to find in the Canadas profitable returns for their labour and capital. The crew was efficient, the captain able and attentive. The services of a surgeon and clergyman were also engaged, and every thing promised a favourable and pleasant voyage. The weather was calm and beautiful; and the first six days were spent without regret of the past, but in pleasing anticipation of the future. On Friday the 25th May, there was illness on board, but it created no alarm. On Sunday, the 27th, the crew and passengers were summoned to prayers, and the Reverend gentleman preached from 1 Cor.—"Now abideth faith, hope, and charity." He was listened to with the most marked attention,

and the day closed in serenity and peace. The sun on the following morning rose unclouded, -it shone on health, -it set on dismay and death! A man, in the vigour and prime of life, was suddenly seized with illness; and, soon the principal symptoms of malignant *Cholera* manifested themselves. The surgeon, aware of the necessity of prompt and vigorous exertion, at once applied the necessary remedies, and his patient recovered. His next case was not so fortunate; and soon the news of a woman's death thrilled through the ship with awful solemnity. A child of a few days old soon followed; and the next day, Tuesday, death made a fearful advance. Alarm then arrived at its height, and each passenger began to view his fellow with looks of fearful apprehension. Sympathy became absorbed in the fear of general danger, and many sought protection by keeping aloof from those parts of the ship in which the sufferers lay. This was found of no avail; and when, on the following Sunday, the awful splash told of thirteen bodies being committed to the deep! then, indeed,

"Shrunk the timid, and stood still the brave!"

The *Brave!* few, few, in truth they were! despair seemed to sit on every visage, the stillness of the grave was around, and the doctor's melancholy movements were viewed with almost the listless gaze of inanition. On Monday the deaths swelled in their amount, and the captain finding himself deprived of the services of his second mate, carpenter, and steward, thought it in accordance with his duty to bear up for Cork, but finding that impossible, he altered his course for Liverpool, and arrived yesterday morning, and was immediately reported. The deaths amounted to seventy nine, and two having died after coming into port, leaves the amount of mortality **EIGHTY-ONE INDIVIDUALS** since the disease broke out.

The Board of Health had all the particulars laid before them, and the Newcastle lazaretto ship in the Slyne was ordered for the accommodation of the remaining passengers, and the necessary supply of provisions sent on board. The number of cases were in all 117, and the recoveries 20, a proof that the medical gentleman, (one) efficiently discharged his duty. We have obtained the names and former residences of the deceased, which we deem it our duty to publish.

[List of 80 fatalities in two columns]

Two others yesterday make 82 in the whole.

London Courier and Evening Gazette, 4 September 1833, page 3

AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE.

Sir JAMES GRAHAM in the Chair.

Mr. Charles Osborn [farmer, surveyor and agent, of Hayling Island], called in and examined.

There is not so much waste of labour, they are not so much put to work of no use to any body ? - No; I was passing lately through the town of Deddington, in Oxfordshire, and I saw a number of men, about twenty, standing in the market-place; I asked the reason of that; they said they had nothing to do, and they made them stand there the whole day, to show the overseers they were not employed.

26 April 1834, page 4

First Report of D.O.P. Okeden, Esq.

ON THE
WESTERN PART OF OXFORDSHIRE,

Copied from the Appendix to the Reports on the Poor Laws just laid before Parliament.

At Deddington, during the seven winter months, about 60 men apply every morning to the Overseer for work or pay. He ranges them under a shed in a yard. If a farmer, or any one else wants a man, he sends to the yard for one, and pays half a day's wages; the rest is paid by the parish. At the close of the day the unemployed are paid the wages of the day, minus two-pence. I could multiply instances of this application of the scale to the superfluous labourers, but to do so would only waste your time.

Emigration has taken place from a few parishes. The largest number went about six years ago from the parish of Hook-Norton; it consisted of about 175 persons, reckoning the men, women, and children: it answered well. About five returned; the rest remain, and write word that they are quite contented.

Deddington sent to North America about 50 last year, but their fate was melancholy, and damped the spirit of emigration in the district. They formed a part of the crew of the *Brutus*, of Liverpool, the major part of whom died of cholera. A few have been sent as emigrants from different parishes at the expense of individuals who possess the parish; and upon the whole, there appears no disinclination to the emigration system.

19 July 1834, page 3

CROWN COURT.

George French, 23, Henry Cowley, 19, William Gibbs, 24, James Wilkins, 36, Samuel Wilkins, 30, Frederick Pain, 35, Samuel Bennett, 22, Jas. Jarrett, 22, and Wm. Callow, 23, were charged with having, together with several other persons, riotously and unlawfully assembled, and broken and injured the windows and other property of Mr. Thomas Fardon, overseer of Deddington, with intent to obtain money by intimidation, and assaulting and beating several peaceable inhabitants. - The prisoners are paupers of Deddington; the Vestry there had determined to take 1s. per week off their allowance, and when the paupers went for their money they first heard of the reduction, and refused to take the money. An uproar was made in the Town Hall, and it was with great difficulty the Overseers escaped from the Hall to their own houses; a large mob were collected, consisting of about 150 persons, much noise was made, and numerous stones were thrown at the Overseer's house and windows, and one of the Overseers was struck on the head with a stone. It appeared that the men had been encouraged in this riotous conduct by a person of the name of Griffith, who acts as an attorney at Deddington. The riot lasted from 7 o'clock in the evening until between 2 and 3 on the following morning. There was a difference in the prisoners, some of them having encouraged the others by words and violent conduct. - The Jury returned a verdict of "Guilty" against all the prisoners. The Learned Judge, in sentencing them, said that a great deal of the confusion arose from the improper manner in which the Parish Officers acted in paying the idle and industrious at the same rate. - Gibbs, Pain, and Jarrett to be imprisoned six months, and kept to hard labour; the others three months.

Oxford University and City Herald, 6 June 1835, page 3

City and County Intelligence.

NEW POOR LAW. - The Woodstock Union will comprehend the whole of Wootton Hundred except the parishes included in the Witney District. It will be very extensive, reaching to 13 miles north of Woodstock, and including the populous town of Deddington. Mr. Holloway, solicitor, of Woodstock, is a candidate for the Clerkship; and Mr. Sanderson, of Yarnton, and Mr. John Churchill, of Deddington, are candidates for the office of Auditor.

12 December 1835, page 3

Banbury News.

A meeting for the purpose of forming a Mendicity Society for Deddington and its vicinity, was held at the King's Arms Inn, Deddington, on Saturday last, W.H. Cartwright, Esq. M.P.

in the Chair. The meeting was most respectably attended. The several officers were appointed, and the meeting was adjourned to a future day. It has long been desirable that a Mendicity Society should be formed at this place, which now unites the whole line of distance from Oxford to Woodstock, Deddington, Banbury, Brackley, Daventry, and Northampton, and some other towns at convenient distances, as Chipping-Norton, &c. Wherever a Society has been formed on the principle of giving food and lodging sufficient for the necessity of the needy traveller on his sojourn, the travelling trading mendicants have been much diminished, to the greater comfort and security of the inhabitants: and we heartily recommend, from experience, that Societies similar to those already established at the above mentioned places, should be formed, for the advantage and Christian charity of all extensive neighbourhoods.

19 December 1835, page 3

Banbury News.

An adjourned meeting of the Mendicity Society for Deddington and the surrounding villages was held on Saturday last at the King's Arms Inn, Deddington; W.R. Cartwright, Esq. M.P. in the Chair. The meeting, which was most respectably attended, expressed themselves much indebted to Mr. S. Beesley, of Banbury, for the excellent Rules he had prepared for the government of the Society, which were unanimously and cordially adopted; and for other valuable information which he had furnished them respecting the government of the Banbury Mendicity Society. The following subscriptions and donations, amongst many others, were entered into:- The worthy Chairman, 20s. donation, and 20s. annual subscription; J.W. Golby, Esq. donation, 20s.; Rev. A. Isham, donation, 20s.; Mr. S. Field, donation, 10s. subscription, 5s.; Mr. J.G. Rusher, donation, 10s.; Mr. H. Churchill, donation, 10s. subscription, 5s.; Mr. W. Wing, donation, 10s. subscription, 5s. &c. &c. The mode by which the operations of this Society are designed to become effectual towards removing the present evils of Mendicity, is by inducing a general determination on the part of the inhabitants of Deddington and the neighbouring villages never to give money to persons applying at their doors for charity, but to give them tickets on this Society; where every case will be scrutinized, and relief granted or refused, according to the circumstances of the case, by a person to be appointed for that purpose, and acting under the directions of the different members of the Committee. If this plan should meet with extensive support from the public, the truly distressed will never fail of receiving necessary assistance, while the

trading beggar will find that the utmost he can do by a whole day's begging will be to obtain a number of tickets, which will only secure him the same relief that he would get from a single one: he will also be subjected to the chance of being sent to the tread-mill; and indeed to the certainty of it, if found possessed of more than one ticket, or begging after relief has been extended to him. The begging imposter thus obtaining one day's food and one night's lodging, and no more, will be obliged to quit Deddington and the neighbourhood, and probably without a wish ever to return to it: while at the same time his report will serve to deter others of his class from coming into so unprofitable a vicinity. It is hoped the district will thus in a great measure be relieved from the pest of trading beggars, comprising characters of the lowest and worst description; while charitable persons will be satisfied in seeing succour given to all those whom religion, humanity, or policy, would alike enjoin them to assist. It is also earnestly recommended that those travellers who offer matches and other trifling articles for sale should not be encouraged; the real object of such persons in carrying them, being the excuse they thereby obtain for wandering and begging.

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Oxford University and City Herald, 14 September 1833, page 1

PUBLIC MEETING AT BANBURY.

In Aid of the Labourers' Friend Society.

It was stated in our last that a Meeting was to be held on Friday, the 6th inst. in aid of the above Institution. The Meeting was held in the Girls' National School-room, and the chair was taken, on the motion of Mr. Golby, by the Rev. J.R. Rushton, curate. The company was numerous, and highly respectable. Many ladies were present, also several clergymen and others from the surrounding district, and most of the opulent and benevolent inhabitants of the town itself.

The Rev. R. Greaves, Vicar of Deddington, moved the first resolution:- "That this Meeting cordially approves of the objects of the Labourers' Friend Society, established in London, for the purpose of advocating the letting of portions of land to labourers, and printing and disseminating facts and illustrations, shewing the benefits arising therefrom." He observed, that when called upon to assist in the object of the present Meeting, he had no hesitation; for he was happy to say the subject was not new to him; and he was prepared, from what had fallen under his own view, to speak as to its beneficial

tendency. Three attempts had been made under his own eye, and they had all succeeded.

In the first place, three acres of land, under his own care, had been let out to the poor for four years, and with the most beneficial consequences. - The success which had attended this first experiment in his own parish, had led the poor themselves to apply for eight acres of land, which had been bequeathed for charitable purposes, and they now wished to farm it. It had formerly been let to a farmer, and the annual rent had been laid out in the purchase of coals. The feoffees had been induced to grant the request of the applicants, taking care, indeed, that every one who had a share of the land should pay an annual rent for the same, which rent being higher than that formerly paid by the farmer, a double advantage had been [raised] by the transfer, since a larger quantity of coals could be purchased.

The expectation which had been formed from this measure, had also been answered with success. The land was let out to thirty-five families, and those who had the management of the concern had not failed to receive every halfpenny of rent from those to whom it was now entrusted. The parish feoffees had been induced, last year, to procure more land for the use of the poor; a piece of eight acres, which might be seen from the Banbury road, near the top of Deddington hill, and which was divided into ninety allotments.

So far as this most recent experiment had been tried, the result had entirely corresponded with their wishes. He should say little more, after this statement of facts, with reference to the principles under which the operation had been conducted. It was our duty to do good to all men, and we were most of all bound to do good to those who laboured in our fields, and by whose exertions we were enabled to eat the bread of this life. - If the facts adduced were such as, in their result, must be warmly approved, he felt also that the object of the Society would be warmly supported.

3 October 1835, page 2

Deddington and Steeple Aston Self-supporting Dispensary.

A Public Meeting will be held on Wednesday the 14th of October inst. at Eleven o'clock, at the Town Hall, Deddington, for the purpose of establishing and bringing into immediate operation a SELF-SUPPORTING DISPENSARY for the benefit of the poor inhabitants of Deddington, Steeple Aston, and the adjacent villages. It is hoped that all who feel desirous of promoting

so desirable an object will attend the meeting and support the Institution.

27 February 1836, page 1

Deddington and Steeple Aston Self-supporting

DISPENSARY.

A Meeting will be held on Saturday next the 5th of March, at the King's Arms Inn, Deddington, at Eleven o'clock, for the purpose of making such alterations in the rules of the Institution as may extend its usefulness. It is earnestly requested that all residents in those places and the surrounding villages, who feel desirous of assisting their poor neighbours to obtain medical attendance and medicine, will attend on this occasion.

SAMUEL FIELD, }

WILLIAM WING, Jun. } Secretaries.

The Oxford City and County Chronicle, 30 December 1837, page 3

DEDDINGTON, DEC. 28.

At this season of the year, when all hearts should be open to charity, it is highly gratifying to observe our worthy Vicar administering not only spiritual comfort, but meat and other necessaries to many poor families in this place. We wish this spirit were more generally diffused through the neighbourhood. It would gladden the hearts of many who are at the present time quite destitute of work, and whose only prospect is the workhouse.