

Deddington's Workhouse

Mary Robinson

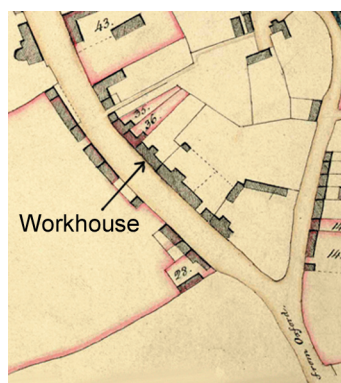
The Old Poor Laws

In the 17th century it was recognised that society as a whole had a responsibility for the destitute and the disabled, which led to the [1601 Acte for the Reliefe of the Poore](#). Adminstration of the Act was carried out by the 'Vestry', a group comprising the minister of the parish, churchwardens and certain respected householders. Overseers of the poor were appointed annually to ensure the sick, needy, poor and aged were assisted either in money or in kind, distribution of which often took place in the Vestry of the Parish Church (see also Buffy Heywood's [Looking after the Poor in Deddington](#)).

In 1723 [Knatchbull's Act](#) (the Workhouse Test Act) was passed allowing officers to purchase buildings to be used as workhouses. Parishes could deny out-relief (money, clothing, fuel or food given to those living in their own homes) and offering claimants only the workhouse instead. Rural workhouses were often small, rented buildings rather than specially built. And in Deddington such a house consisted of five cottages in New Street – one for the master and the other four for inmates.

Descriptions of the workhouse appear in: *The Story of Deddington* by Mary Vane Turner, 1933, pp 36–7; *A History of Deddington Oxfordshire* by H M Colvin (one of the Victoria County History authors), SPCK 1963, pp 73–4; *A History of the County of Oxford – Wootton Hundred – Deddington*, Vol. XI, 1983 (aka the VCH), ed. A Crossley (London: Institute of Historical Research).¹ What follows is drawn from the three sources.

The earliest mention is in the VCH: 'In 1737 the parish workhouse was estimated to have cost £50 in the year, excluding a small rent. Perhaps, as later, it stood on the east side of New Street; in 1808 it seems to have been a group of properties north of the Plough Inn, in various hands.'² (These probably refer to the same buildings.) In 1742 there were only three or four inmates, but 18 in 1796 and 26 in 1803. The 1777 parliamentary survey of parish workhouses lists Deddington as having a parish workhouse for 25 inmates.



From the 'Plan of Deddington Town', 1808³

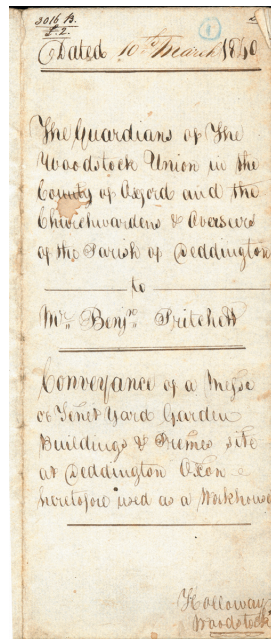
¹ Available at: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=101855#n606>.

² O.R.O., incl. award (possibly nos. 34–9 in schedule); cf. O.R.O., S. & F. colln. D 6, bdle. 9 (rental mentioning workho.).

³ Bodl. MS. Don. b. 36. f67v.

The original legal description in the 1840 indenture reads:

All that Freehold Messuage or Tenement Yard Garden Buildings and Premises to the same belonging situate and being in the New Street in Deddington aforesaid and heretofore used as a workhouse for the said Parish and now unoccupied.



1840 Conveyance between
the Woodstock Guardians and
Benjamin Pritchett

Mary Vane Turner describes the buildings:

Further in the Oxford direction a monotonous row of cottages marks the time when every parish had to support its own paupers before the passing of the Poor Law Act. The pauper inmates were lodged in the first part of this row, the cottages communicating, and the Master and Mistress were housed in the rather more commodious dwelling at the further (Oxford) end.⁴

This is the wrong way round: the 'more commodious dwelling' is at the Banbury end rather than the Oxford end.



The 'more commodious dwelling' of the workhouse master comprises, we believe, both the three-storey gable and the right-hand part of the building, drawn here in 1973

⁴ Vane Turner, p. 36.

Life in the Workhouse

In 1742–3 the Deddington overseers seem to have provided work for the poor outside the workhouse by buying hemp, paying for spinning, and selling the cloth, but there is no reference to this later.

In the nineteenth century the administration of the Poor Law was the main responsibility of the Vestry. The running of the workhouse was carried out by a contractor, a workhouse master, who was allowed a fixed sum for each pauper in his care. This was known as 'farming' the poor. The master received an agreed weekly capitation fee for each inmate, so boosting his own income. In the early nineteenth century the capitation fee varied: from 1s.3d. in 1822 to 2s.9d. in 1828, an unusually costly year. In 1825 the parish:

Agreed with John Brotherton for the maintenance of the Poor in the Workhouse for one year ... at the rate of two shillings and five pence per head per week – each poor person to have a pint of beer a day, meat three times a week and a good fire, and a candle to go to bed by.⁵

Workhouse were not always a place of punishment, or even deprivation. Indeed, the conditions described here don't sound too desperate. By a resolution passed in December 1823 each inmate was to be provided with a coat or gown for attendance at church, 'such Clothing to be used on Sundays only, and to be under the care of the keeper of the Workhouse but to be considered the Property of the Parish Officers'; and the children were to be sent to school.⁶ Medical attention for the poor was also arranged by contract, and in 1830 those who were willing were vaccinated at the expense of the parish. Victims of smallpox were nursed in a building known as the Pesthouse, on the northern outskirts of the village, set aside for the purpose.

To read more about workhouses in general and the conditions for the inmates, see Peter Higginbottom's excellent site at <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/>.

When the Poor Law Unions were established by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, it was hoped that Deddington would be a centre. But as a sufficient number of parishes could not be found without going into Northamptonshire, and as there was opposition notably from Mr Cartwright of Aynho, the idea was abandoned, and Deddington was obliged to join the Woodstock Union. According to the VCH, the Workhouse was sold by the Guardians of the Woodstock Union in 1836;⁷ however, the Conveyance from the Guardians of the Woodstock Union Guardians to Benjamin Pritchett is dated 10 March 1840 (see below). Is the VCH entry an error? Is 1836 the date when the workhouse was sold to the Woodstock Union?

Applicants for relief were forced to walk ten miles each way in order to appear before the Guardians at Woodstock, an event indignantly described by William Wing, in his 1879 *Supplement to Marshall's Deddington* as 'if this is not *cruelty*, I cannot define the word' (emphasis in the original). A further attempt to constitute a Deddington Union was made in 1858, but the Poor Law Commissioners were unsympathetic, and there was little support from other parishes which, having already contributed to the erection of their own workhouse were, not unnaturally, unwilling to pay for another.

⁵ Vestry Minutes, 2 November 1825.

⁶ Bodl. MS. d.d. Par. Dedd. b 22, ff. 40v. and passim.

⁷ Bodl. MS. d.d. Par. Dedd. b 22, ff. 107, 110.

Since Closure as a Workhouse

Owners

Since 1840 the five cottages have been sold as one lot, rather than individually.

Owners and related transactions since first sale (according to deeds in the present owners' hands) including date of purchase, name of purchaser(s) and price paid:

10 March 1840: Conveyance from the Guardians of the Woodstock Union in the County of Oxford and the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Parish of Deddington to Benjamin Pritchett farmer of Deddington for £220

30 July 1845: Mortgage for £130 Benjamin Pritchett to Thomas Gulliver

23 October 1849: Release of indenture of conveyance Benjamin Pritchett of Ardley, farmer, and John Calcutt of Deddington, postmaster and William Chater, baker

October 1854: Codicil indicating executors of Thomas Gulliver received £142.10s. from John Calcutt

23 February 1860: Indenture for £300 paid by William Gardner to John Calcutt of Deddington, postmaster

20 June 1872: Conveyance from William Gardner of Burland House, Tysoe Warcs, gentleman to William Townsend of Deddington, grocer

25 May 1893: Indenture for £300 between William Townsend of Deddington, grocer and farmer, and William Garner Goffe of Westcote Barton

30 July 1896: as above

10 June 1897: Indenture for £300 between William Garner Goffe formerly of Westcote Barton now of Steeple Barton and Kate Walker (later wife of William St George Drennan) who 1 May 1903 reconveyed back to William Townsend

2 May 1903: William Townsend of Deddington, general shopkeeper and grocer, raised a mortgage of £650 from George Wright Hutchison of Chipping Norton and Thomas Henry Burbidge



Detail showing the former workhouse c1900–10: Packer collection, Centre for Oxfordshire Studies.

© Oxfordshire County Council Photographic Archive (see the history index for a link to the COS website)

21 January 1907: William Townsend, general shopkeeper, died intestate and probate was granted to Mary Jane Townsend, widow of William Townsend

25 March 1907: From Mary Jane Townsend widow of William Townsend of Deddington, a 'Release of dower and Conveyance of freehold ...' for £20 to Sarah Jane Smith (wife of Thomas) née Townsend, Deborah Townsend of Deddington, Elizabeth Townsend of 13 Long Street Devizes who then raised a mortgage – a loan of £650



c1920

13 June 1907: Reconveyance from George Wright Hutchison of Chipping Norton, Doctor of Medicine and Thomas Henry Burbidge of Chipping Norton, Bank Manager, and Deborah Townsend of Deddington, spinster, Elizabeth Townsend of Devizes, spinster, and Sarah Jane Smith, wife of Thomas Smith of Deddington, solicitor's clerk

13 July 1907: Deborah and Elizabeth Townsend and Sarah Jane Smith to Loyal Good Intent Lodge (order of Longfellows)

12 November 1913: Deborah and Elizabeth Townsend and Sarah Jane Smith paid off Loyal Good Intent Lodge

18 July 1913: Thomas Smith husband and Trustee of Sarah Jane Smith deceased (one third); she left her third of QH to her three children by probate

14 November 1913: Conveyance from SJS deceased to Miss D Townsend and Mrs E Trump

15 November 1913: Deborah Townsend of Deddington and her sister Elizabeth Trump (née Townsend and wife of Wm. Trump of 1 Woodbridge Road, Knowle, Bristol) who then raised a mortgage – a loan of £600 with interest from Anna Helena Millicent Dremel of 13 Thurloe Place London – to buy back SJS's third from her family – also plots of land in Mortar Pits Furlong and Bugbrook Slade (connections with Nathaniel Stilgoe and Rev. William Cotton Risley) and a property in Philcote Street

25 September 1924: Townsend and her sister Trump paid off the mortgage

4 February 1947: Townsend died and left her share to her sister Trump 5 Surrey Road, St Andrew's Park, Bristol

27 January 1948: Elizabeth Trump to Richard Stanley Hall, Kings Arms Hotel Deddington £530, later of Kidmore, Berry Hill Road, Adderbury, Oxon

16 March 1961: A closing order was imposed on the buildings: 'prohibited the use of the said house for any purpose other than a purpose approved by the Council [Banbury Rural District Council], we believe on the grounds of their being 'unfit for human habitation'

31 January 1966: Richard Stanley Hall to Duncan Stewart Kilgour, Manor Farm, Warpsgrove, Chalgrove, Oxon £900

19 July 1967: Kilgour to Anthony Paton and Leslie Josephine Hawksley of Dragon House, Deddington £3000

29 March 1968: Planning permission granted for conversion to one house

16 November 1972: declared 'fit for human habitation' by amalgamation with the adjoining properties

17 April 1973: Hawksleys to current owners (2009)

Tenants

The 20 June 1872 Conveyance records:

William Gardner doth hereby grant the lease and convey unto the said William Townsend and his heirs and assigns all those five messuages or tenements with the yards, gardens and appurtenances thereto belonging situate and being in the New Street in Deddington aforesaid and sometime since converted out of premises used as a workhouse and heretofore described as 'all that freehold messuage or tenement, yard, garden buildings and premises to the same belonging situate and being in the New Street in Deddington aforesaid and heretofore used as a workhouse for the said parish and then unoccupied All which said messuages or tenements were late in the several occupations of George Cleaver, William Bonham, Robert Coulow, (space unfilled) Hiorns and James Lewis and now of Samuel Callow, Thomas Finch, William Woods, John Ford and (space unfilled)

The 1871 Census for Deddington District Six, pp 11–12 includes the families of Callow, Finch and Ford living next door to each other, maybe house numbers 55–57.

The abstract of the title dated 15 November 1913 records:

All which sd [sic] Messes or Tenements were late in the occupation of Geo Cleaver Wm Bonham Rbt Coulon (unfilled space) Hiorns and James Lewis afterwards of Samuel Callow Thos Finch Wm Woods John F'ord and then of Chas Deeley James Stockford Albert Wilkinson Mrs Martha Gibbs and James Berry

In 1948 the occupiers are given as:

William Harper, Fred Berry, William James Harper, George Lowther and Henry Thomas Harper

Prior to the closure 16 March 1961 the occupiers were said to be:

J. Smith, W. Harper, A. Hopkins and G. Dewdney (four names given not five) or? Frederick Berry, J. Smith A. Hopkins, G. Dewdney and Mrs D. Harper

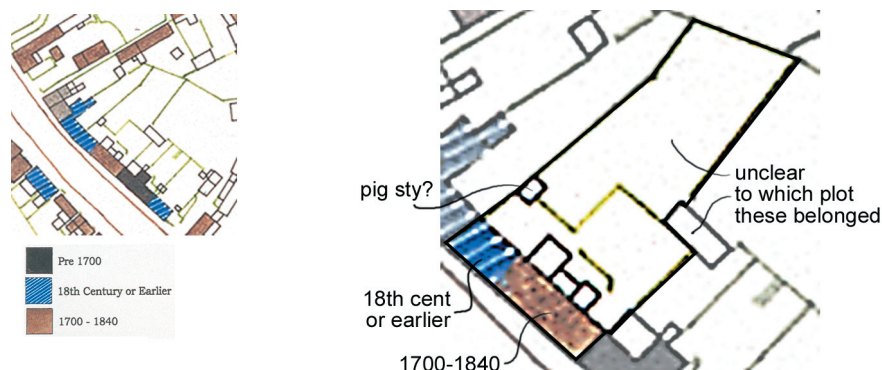
In the deed dated 31 January 1966 is recorded that the messuages etc

were sometimes in the occupations of Charles Deely, James Stockford, Albert Wilkinson, Mrs Martha Gibbs and James Berry and the same are now or late in the respective occupations of William Harper, Frederick Berry, William James Harper, George Lowther and Henry Thomas Harper

Kilgour's Statutory Declaration of 13 July 1967 refers to:

such five messuages or tenements are now vacant and to the best of my knowledge and belief were last occupied by Frederick Berry J. Smith A. Hopkins G. Dewdney and Mrs. D. Harper The said land and premises had been formerly used as a Workhouse for the said Parish of Deddington

Many of these family names are still current in the parish.



Kirsty Rodwell's 1975 map showing the ages of building prior to the First World War ⁸

⁸Rodwell, K. (ed.) *Historic Towns of Oxfordshire. A survey of the new county* (Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, Survey, 3), Oxford, 1975.

Quinque House

Description at the time of the last sale at 17 April 1973, by then named Quinque House:

IN consideration of the sum of twenty one thousand five hundred pounds (£21,500) paid by the Purchasers to the Vendors (the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged) the Vendors as Beneficial Owners hereby convey unto the Purchasers ALL THAT messuage or dwellinghouse situate and known as 'Quinque' New Street Deddington in the County of Oxford ALL WHICH said property was formerly described as ALL THOSE five messuages or tenements with the yards gardens out-buildings and appurtenances thereto belonging situate and being in New Street Deddington in the County of Oxford and for formerly used as a workhouse for the said Parish of Deddington such messuages or tenements being bounded on the North West side thereof by a messuage or tenement known as 'Lime Cottage' New Street aforesaid

Quinque House had been created by the previous owners Jo and Tony Hawksley who knocked together the five cottages into one house (Quinque is Latin for five, geddit?). The plans were drawn up by local architect, Betty Hill ARIBA of Leadenporch House. According to the Conservation Grade II listing 1991, the building could date from the early eighteenth century (the door knocker of the southernmost cottage is dated 1759).



Early 21st century – the traction engine is on its way to the Bloxham Steam Fair



New Street, again early 21st century: Quinque House is between Lime Cottage (second building from the left) and the Steps and Plough House