

## Old Poor Laws

Under the old Poor Laws 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, which was responsible for both ecclesiastical matters and the administration of local government.<sup>1</sup>

The administration of the 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, spinning) 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.<sup>2</sup>

Three advertisements seeking to contract out the management and employment of the poor in the Parish appeared in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* during the 1790s (1793, 1794 and 1797), and another in 1800. Samuel Churchill senior was named as Vestry Clerk in the 1793 and 1794 notices.

### **Extract from the Parochial Report on Deddington dated July 1795 from 'The State of the Poor' by Sir Frederick Eden, 1797, pp.589-591.**

The Poor are farmed, in the parifh work-houfe, for £1000. year. The parifh, however, defrays all expences arising from baftardy, fmall-pox, broken bones, diflocations, and law concerns. The number of perfons in the houfe, at prefent, is 18. Out-penfioners receive about £7. [sic] a week; befides which, the rounds-men, (or labourers who cannot get employment,) are often chargeable, and fupported by the parifh. In winter, their number is fometimes 40, or 50; the parifh employs them in the ftone-quarries in the neighbourhood. No regular bill of fare is obferved in the work-houfe. The Poor were not all farmed till the prefent year; but were chiefly fupported by weekly penfions. In general, however, about 20 perfons have been maintained in the work-houfe, under a contractor, who was allowed 2s. 6d. a head for their weekly maintenance.

<http://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/the-poor-in-deddington/the-state-of-the-poor-1797>

### **6 December 1800, page 3**

TO be LETT, at the public Veftry Room, in Deddington, in the County of Oxford, on Tuesday the 16th Day of December Infant, at Five o'Clock in the Afternoon, - The EMPLOY and MAINTENANCE of the POOR of the Parifh of DEDDINGTON, for one Year from the 19th Day of December Infant.

Particulars may be known on Application to the Overfeers of Deddington.

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<sup>1</sup> The old Poor Law system was replaced in 1834 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 was part of the Woodstock Union, which covered 29 parishes.

<sup>2</sup> See '[Deddington's Workhouse](#)' by Mary Robinson: