

## Deddington Benefit Societies

The Industrial Revolution led to the development across the country of locally-based mutual aid organisations, known as friendly societies, to help families during difficult times brought about by sickness or death. Members made a small payment each month so that they could receive benefit payments in times of need.

There were three established benefit societies in Deddington during the 1850s:

Deddington Union Beneficial Society (1816)

Plough Inn Friendly Society (1826)

Deddington General Friendly Institution (1841)

Each of the societies celebrated a Club Day (or Feast Day) during Whit week, the Deddington Union Beneficial Society and the Plough Inn Friendly Society on Whit Wednesday, and the Deddington General Friendly Institution on Whit Monday until 1856, and thereafter on Whit Wednesday like the other two societies.

During the 1850s press reports on the proceedings on Club Day in Deddington appeared only in 1852, 1856, 1857 and 1858. The reports also included extracts from the societies' financial statements, which were published at the same time.

In the first part of the decade the Deddington General Friendly Institution, which had 52 members in 1850, used to meet at the Town Hall on Whit Monday. At the **1856** meeting, attendance was not numerous, and W.J. Rose was appointed secretary.

At the celebration of Club Day by the Deddington Union Beneficial Society (110 members) on Whit Wednesday in 1856, the members went in procession, headed by the Bloxham Saxe-horn Band, to the parish church. Following the service, over 90 members sat down to the Club feast at the Unicorn Inn.

The Plough Inn Friendly Society likewise gathered on Whit Wednesday in 1856. Their procession to church was headed by the Deddington Brass Band. 54 members afterwards sat down to a "good spread" at The Plough, in New Street. In the afternoon, the members walked in procession around the town, headed by the band, much to the delight of the inhabitants.

The three benefit societies all celebrated Club Day on Whit Wednesday in **1857**. The Deddington General Friendly Institution (64 members) met at the Red Lion (instead of the Town Hall), engaging a German Band (for which an orchestra was specially erected in front of the Inn). The Deddington Union Beneficial Society (108 members), who engaged the Oxfordshire Militia Band, met at the Unicorn, and the Plough Inn Friendly Society (77 members) engaged the Deddington Band.

After transacting their formal business, the members of each society, headed by their respective bands, proceeded to the parish church for a special service and sermon by the Curate, the Rev. John Burgess. "The congregation was the largest we ever remember to have seen on a similar anniversary." In the afternoon, the members of the three societies, walked in procession around the town, again proceeded by their bands.

Club Day in **1858** followed the usual pattern. "In the latter part of the afternoon they again turned out and walked through the principal streets, headed by their bands playing favourite tunes, and accompanied by a goodly number of holiday folks, the fine weather and music proving very attractive. Altogether a very pleasant day was spent."

A committee meeting of the Deddington General Friendly Institution following the 1858 Club Day resolved to move the annual feast from the Red Lion Inn to the Exhibition Inn, New Street, kept by the new secretary, Mr. Henry Margetts. An aggrieved William Rose, the son of the landlady of the Red Lion and the previous secretary, wrote to the Editor of the *Oxford Journal* protesting against the decision and demanding an explanation.

Mr. Margetts responded to Mr. Rose's claims, making various assertions, which were dismissed in a lengthy letter from Mr. Rose, who found Mr. Margetts' remarks offensive. In reply, Mr. Margetts resorted to personal attacks on Mr. Rose, at which point the increasingly acrimonious correspondence was brought to a close by the Editor.

One of the bones of contention concerned the decision-making process for an earlier decision to move the Club Day meeting from the Town Hall to the Red Lion, prompting Mr. Rose to comment: "The former place was, and is now, in such a dilapidated state, that it was considered totally unfit for occupation."

At the end of the decade, in 1859, the membership figures were:

Deddington Union Beneficial Society	104
Plough Inn Friendly Society	81
Deddington General Friendly Institution	114

