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THE OLD POOR LAW IN EAST YORKSHIRE

by

N. MITCHELSON

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THE OLD POOR LAW IN EAST YORKSHIRE

Two Acts of Parliament passed near the end of the reign of Elizabeth formed the basis of English poor law administration for almost two and a half centuries, until the passing of the Poor Law Reform Act of 1834. The first was the Act of 1597-8 which ordered the appointment of overseers of the poor and laid down their duties. The second was the Act of 1601. This law, first passed as a temporary measure, but continued, and, in 1640, made permanent, ordered the churchwardens and four, three or two substantial householders to be nominated each year as overseers of the poor, with the duty of maintaining and setting them to work. Funds for this purpose were to be provided from the taxation of "every inhabitant, parson, vicar, and other and every occupier of lands, houses" etc. The unit of poor law administration was the parish.

One of the duties of the overseers (who were unpaid officers) was the keeping of annual accounts, which have been preserved in part in about fifty East Yorkshire parishes. Some sets of accounts cover periods of over a century, others only a few years. In no case has a complete set of accounts survived. In about twenty five parishes miscellaneous papers dealing with various aspects of poor relief are also to be found. These include Settlement Certificates, Bastardy Bonds, Removal Orders and the Minutes of Vestry Meetings concerned with poor relief.

The study of these documents makes it possible to reconstruct a clear picture of poor law administration in East Yorkshire before the nineteenth century reform, and the aim of this short essay is to indicate the type of information the local historian may hope to extract from the documents that may be preserved in the care of the incumbent of his parish, or by the clerk of his parish council. These accounts and other papers have frequently been used by writers of parish histories, but not always, unfortunately, to the best advantage, for too many writers of such histories content themselves with picking out amusing snippets instead of attempting an analysis of the accounts, which would be of great value. It may be suggested that the student who is able to examine parish accounts should approach them with certain questions in mind. After 1801, for example, when population figures become available, one might ask how much per head of the population did poor relief cost? An analysis of the accounts to show how much relief was given in kind, and how much in cash, might be attempted. Of relief in kind what proportion was spent in paying rent, providing food, clothing, medical attention, repairs to cottages? Is it possible from these figures to calculate increases in prices during the period under review? What can be found out about the apprenticing of

paupér children? or about removals from the parish? or about the expenses of the village poor house? Other questions will no doubt suggest themselves to the individual enquirer, and anyone who can supply answers to them will be doing valuable historical research.

The student who examines overseers' accounts cannot fail to be struck by the enormous increase in the amount of money it was necessary to spend on poor relief during the second half of the eighteenth century, especially after about 1780. At Owthorne with Rimswell, for instance, poor relief cost £6 16s. 0d. in 1706. During the next sixty years there was no appreciable increase; in fact during the 1730's the amount spent on relief fell, and in 1738 only £3 0s. 0d. was required. In 1769 poor relief cost £7 7s. 3d., and then there was a steady rise to £26 16s. 0½d. in 1775, and £27 18s. 3d. in 1783. There is then a gap in the surviving records until 1819 when we find that £215 19s. 8d. was spent. This was the peak year for expenditure and thenceforward the annual amount disbursed on poor relief fell to £149 8s. 6d. in 1824, and £96 18s. 6½d. in 1833. As the population of Owthorne in 1819 was about 260 the amount spent on relief in that year was almost seventeen shillings per head of the inhabitants. At Thearne there was a similar state of affairs. The Thearne accounts do not exist for the years earlier than 1799-1800, but there are records of the assessments for poor rates, and these show that in 1757 only £1 17s. 9d. was needed for poor relief. In 1800 £22 11s. 0d. was spent. In 1810 the amount required was £49 9s. 5d., and in 1819 (again the peak year) £112 6s. 9d. In this case the cost per head of the population for poor relief was higher than Owthorne's, for Thearne had only about ninety inhabitants. On the northern fringe of the Riding, Hunmanby's poor cost £69 5s. 9d. in 1784. This had increased to £113 9s. 3½d. in 1800, £275 6s. 0½d. in 1810, £504 19s. 3d. in 1819, and in 1825, when expenditure on the poor reached its maximum, £680 12s. 3¼d. was spent. The cost of poor relief in Hunmanby was slightly lower per head of the population than in the two other cases quoted. The cost of poor relief in Hull, the only large town in the East Riding, shows a similar great increase. For the decade 1699-1710 the annual cost was £300, in 1780 £1,456 was spent, and in 1800 £4,160. The amount required for relief had increased to an average annual amount of £15,600 in the years 1814-17, and in the following year to the enormous figure of £31,200 which was the highest amount recorded.

Lack of space makes it impossible to do more than mention the main causes of this striking increase in poverty. But it may be pointed out that increase in rural poverty coincides with the period of rapid enclosure when the peasants lost their common rights and often their holdings of land, losses which were socially and economically very serious. Secondly the period 1793-1815 was one of continuous war which resulted in greatly increased prices, increases which far outstripped rises in wages. A cost of living index has been calculated for the period 1780-1850. Taking 1790 as the base year (100), the figure rose to 170 in 1800, and reached its peak of 187 in 1813. In 1818 it was 159, after which (with some fluctuations) there was a decline. It will be noticed that the peak year in this index does not coincide with the highest figures reached in the overseers' accounts quoted. This is partly because unemployment, and therefore poverty, was very high after the end of the Napoleonic wars, but prices had reached their peak during the wars. Another reason is the fact that local price variations were greater than they are now, and a national price index for any year might show appreciable differences from an East Yorkshire index for the same year.

The relief provided by the overseers consisted of cash payments, or relief in kind. At the beginning of the eighteenth century relief in kind (food and clothes chiefly) was usually provided, but as the century advanced cash payments to the poor became more common, and in some cases completely replaced relief in kind. This was so at Rillington. The overseers' accounts for this village have survived for the ten years between 1814 and 1823, during which period the parish spent about £2,500 in relief, almost all of which was paid in cash, for of this amount only £33 1s. 8d. was spent in providing clothing, coal and medical attention. Other parishes, such as West Heslerton only four miles from Rillington, continued relief in kind, but the proportion of relief paid in cash increased considerably. The custom of the Rillington overseers' relieving their poor by giving cash grants mainly may be largely a local system. Payments were made weekly and usually varied from 1s. or 1s. 6d. to about 6d. Various factors were taken into account in deciding the amount to be paid; some of these factors were age and health, ability to earn additional money, and size of family. At Thearne in 1819 Thomas Edderington, an old man, was paid £20 13s. 6d. and this was his total income. At Rillington in 1823 Margaret Goodall, a single woman, received £5 4s. 0d. but was able to earn more money; in the same year a family with children was given £17 14s. 6d.

More interesting than lists of people who received cash payments are the details of relief given in kind. James Hesp of West Heslerton, an old sick man, was maintained by the parish for some

years. He was given cash relief, which for one period was ten shillings a week. In addition his rent of £4 0s. 0d. a year was paid, and in 1833 a doctor's bill of £1 17s. 6d. The following year he cost the parish £15 6s. 0d. in cash relief, £10 10s. 0d. for the doctor, 10s. for meat, a journey to Leeds Infirmary and poultices £1 11s. 0d., rent £4 0s. 0d., four gallons of ale 6s. 9d., and fire and candles, 5s. In 1835 the parish provided him with ale at a cost of £1 8s. 3d., and the year after that repairs to his cottage cost 16s. 11d.

Paupers were often supplied with clothing. In 1729, at Owthorne, 10s. was paid "For a sute of new close for Thomas Pashby," whilst Elizabeth Westerdale of the same place was provided with "tow Blankets 6s. 8d.; two shifts 5s. 5d.; a handkerchif 1s. ; an apron 1s. 1d. ; for a coat 4s. 6½d.", and 6s. 8d. was "paid for Margret Daylove Bedgown" in 1819. In the same year £2 17s. 0d. was the cost "for Cloathing Towns Boys," that is, pauper boys.

Sometimes clothes were repaired. "August ye 6th for two pairs of stockings footing for John Pinder 1s.", and 1s. 6d. was paid for repairing John Brown's boots. A great deal of very valuable information concerning the price of clothing is to be found in most overseers' accounts; they are therefore of great interest to the social historian.

The parish officers often appointed a doctor to attend to the sick poor by contract, and the money the doctor earned in this way must have been a useful addition to his income. At any rate at Norton in 1832 a rival doctor, named Colby, attempted to get a share of the parish work. The overseers were ordered "to acquaint Mr. Colby that they do not think of changing their Surgeon at present, but will bare Mr. Colby's application in mind."

All the local evidence goes to show that if medical attention were needed by poor people it was given, although if the overseers suspected that the applicant for help could afford to pay the doctor the application might be refused. In 1826 the overseers at Norton tried subterfuge. "Mr. Collier (an overseer) said Newby wife had applied to him to have a Doctor sent at her accouchement. Resolved that the Overseers tell Dr. Shepherd to attend Newby wife when call'd upon. But not to tell Newby that the Vestry had sent him, and Dr. Shepherd to be desired to get pay of Newby if possible." The result of this action is not recorded, although one may hazard a guess that the doctor was paid by the parish.

I have found only one case in which the overseers refused to provide medical attention. At Norton in 1835, a woman "being ill in the venereal disease at Jacobs" it was "a Greed that the Surgeon be Sent and Relief granted to her." But six months later, when the same woman applied for further help the minutes record that "this

girl having again plunged herself into the venereal disease—resolved that her application be resisted, the meeting being desirous that the Magistrates decide about this case.”

The overseers' accounts contain numerous notes of accounts paid to doctors. At Owthorne in 1709 the overseers “paide ye bone setter and to Ursla young in her lamence 01.12.04.” Dr. Hardwick of Hunmanby was paid £2 12s. 6d. “for curing Ruth Robinson” in 1784, and in 1793 Mrs. Hardwick for “Blooding and Purging Ann Robotham 2s.” The Hunmanby overseers' accounts record a number of payments to Mrs. Hardwick; surely she must be one of the first women doctors in East Yorkshire. Some of the payments entered in the accounts on behalf of sick people seem to belie the overseers' reputation for harshness. James Hesp's ale has already been mentioned. The Hunmanby overseers paid for a “Pint of wine for Ann Storry when sick 3s. 6d.”, and Owthorne overseers paid 6d. “for geneve (gin) to Ann Dearlove when she was badly”. Brandy, drugs, crutches etc., were also supplied in some cases.

Most accounts, too, record the funeral costs of various paupers, often (as the accounts show) after the dead person had been for some time the responsibility of the parish. There was clearly in many cases an attempt to observe what were regarded as the requirements of decency. So at Owthorne in 1752 “For a Cofen for Abigail moles 7s.: at her work (wake) and Expenses when we met 04.06.” And at Hunmanby in 1784:—

“ Paid for Exp's at Wm. Yatts Funeral	..	3	0
Paid for Flannel Crape and Candles	..	3	2
Paid to Robt. Pool for Coffin	8	6
Paid for Burial fees	3	0”

By 1836 the cost of a funeral had greatly increased, for we find at West Heselton—“John Outhard Coffin and Funeral expences £1 18s. 2½d.”

Many parishes owned cottages which were let to the poor. In some cases they had been bought by the parish, in others they were given. The Norton overseers were in debt in 1827 “on account of having some very heavy payments, namely buying Ramsdale's house etc.” and they were authorised to borrow £50 from the bank. A few years later in 1833, the lord of the manor, Major Bower, provided stone and timber to build four new cottages “at the top of the town”, and it was proposed that the overseers and parish officers put into them “such labourers as have large families, particularly men who will not apply for parish relief”. Thus, in the case of Norton at any rate, the cottages belonging to the parish were not always used to house paupers, but as in this case were let as a reward to those deserving poor who did not pester the overseers for help.

Expenditure on the repair of cottages often figures in overseers' accounts. The accounts of the overseers of Owthorne with Rimswell contain a particularly large number of items for repairs of cottages. This is probably because Owthorne is in that part of Holderness of which Sir Frederick Eden said that many cottages were "miserable hovels of straw and mud," which would need frequent attention. In areas where stone was used for building, repair would be less frequently necessary.

In 1763 repairs to the parish cottage at Owthorne included:—

For 13 Sheafs of thatch at toon house	..	1	1d.
for thatching	2	6d.
to Moses Brown for 3 Sparrs toon house	..	3	6d.
to Wm. Boynton for old wood	7	0d.
to two bunches of Laths	1	8d.
to Thomas Bird for a Deall	1	3d.
for 3 hundred of fourpenny nails	1	0d.
a new door and wright wages	14	0d.
to Robert Harmond for 210 of thatch	..	16	8d.
to Wm. Boynton for thatching and Daubing		14	0d.
to John Craven for Daubing	10	6d.
to Blacksmith his bill	4	7d.
to Hanna Dails for a window and fraim and glasser work a new light	7	6d.

These repairs, which must have amounted to almost, a rebuilding of the house, accounted for nearly half the overseers expenditure in the year, for the total cost of relief in 1763 was only £8 16s. 11d.

One of the worst evils of the old poor law was the power it gave parish officers to remove people who had no legal settlement in the parish. The Settlement Acts of 1662 and a group of modifying Acts passed in the following years became the hub of poor law administration, and these laws may be regarded as the inevitable outcome of the Poor Law of 1601. The Elizabethan law had made the parish responsible for its poor, and it was certain that sooner or later the question would be asked, "Who are the poor of this parish?" and that one of the questions facing the overseers would be, not how to provide for the poor, but, "who shall provide for them?" It raised, said one eighteenth century writer "such a spirit of shifting instead of honest industry in the kingdom, that it has cost many a parish as much to remove one poor person as it would have done to maintain ten."

The Act provided that "upon complaint made by the churchwarden and overseers of the poor . . . to any Justice of the Peace within forty days after any such person or persons coming so to settle in any tenement under the yearly value of ten pounds, for any two Justices of the Peace, whereof one to be of the Quorum . . . by their warrant to remove and convey such person or persons to such parish where he or they were last legally settled . . .". Thus, on the verdict of two justices, almost any labourer might be removed on the mere expectation of becoming a charge on the parish. The effect of the Act was probably not to make labour as immobile as has sometimes been claimed, but it is undoubtedly true that it was the origin of many of the evils of the old poor law, and it often led to permanent pauperisation and vagrancy.

During the eighteenth century the system remained virtually unchanged except that there were two important ameliorations of its harshness. One was the system of certification. Under this plan a certificate was granted by a parish admitting its liability to maintain a person, and promising to receive him if he became a charge on the poor laws. Such certificates survive in half a dozen East Yorkshire parishes. The second improvement was the provision of the Act of 1795 which prohibited removal (except in the case of pregnant single women) until the person concerned was actually chargeable to the poor rates.

The main evidence for the working of the settlement laws in East Yorkshire is in the Order Books of the Quarter Sessions where the full working of the process of removal may be studied. Overseers' accounts usually contain some details of the costs of a removal, and more information can be obtained from the Removal Orders and Settlement Certificates which survive in some parishes.

Study of surviving records hardly bears out two claims that have often been made with regard to the removal of paupers. The first is the exaggerated statement that the main roads of England were full of carts conveying unfortunate families long distances to their place of settlement. Of course such cases did occur, but our evidence clearly shows that the East Yorkshire peasant rarely moved far from his birthplace, and few removals were made to places more than a short distance away. Of over sixty cases of removals of which I have notes only five are to places outside the County. One is to Louth (Lincs.), one to Gloucester, one to Newcastle, and two into Lancashire (Manchester and Rochdale). The average distance of the journey involved in the other cases is less than ten miles. The cost of removals has also been exaggerated. Unless a removal order was contested the cost of removing a family

was usually only a few shillings. The Owthorne overseer for instance records the following in 1727 :—

And pd. to Mr. Lidster and Mr. Storr for a order to remove Skelton	2s.
And with him and his father spent and gave Skelton at sefol times	2s.
And when we cared him awae bi the order we spent on meat and drink and for or horeses and or selfs	3s.

It was when the parish, ordered to receive a family that was to be removed, decided to contest the order at Quarter Sessions, that costs became so high, and enormous sums of public money passed into the hands of lawyers. The annual cost of litigation on removal orders rose from £35,000 in 1776 to £287,000 in 1815. In 1724 Owthorne "paid to a Loyar and Atorney for a trial about John Pashby £2 10s. 6d. paid for all the most of ye Charges about that triall £2 12s. 2d." This was relatively inexpensive law, and the lawyers' bill of £9 9s. 4d. paid by Hunmanby in 1794 was reasonable as such things go. When however we find the Rillington overseers in 1814 paying £47 4s. 5d. "for a Trial on a Paupers Settlement" we realize that money which could have been profitably spent in other ways was being wasted. An instance which, whilst not involving very large sums of money, shows clearly the waste involved in removals, is that of Howsham. In 1813 £46 was spent on poor relief in this parish, but this was almost doubled by the unnecessary spending of another £44 on removals.

Poor law officials were constantly on the watch to prevent newcomers to the parish gaining a settlement. One way of gaining a settlement was by serving an apprenticeship. The Elloughton overseers attempted to prevent this happening in 1786 by making Thomas Shaw sign a bond making him liable to pay £100 to the churchwardens and overseers if he allowed any of his apprentices to gain a settlement. Shaw would no doubt make use of the complicated rules governing the settlement of apprentices. These were briefly that an apprentice should be settled in the place where he slept on the last night of his apprenticeship, provided that he had slept there for forty nights during his term of service. On the other hand he might gain a settlement anywhere else by sleeping in the other place for forty nights. It is easy to see what confusion might arise from these provisions.

Another way of gaining a settlement was to rent land or a house worth £10 a year, and in some cases newcomers were not even allowed to do this. Thus at Lythe, near Whitby, the vestry "Resolved that Rt. Taylorson belonging to Roxby, and Wilson

Farndale belonging to Kilton, shall not be allowed to Rent Land or Tenements to the amount of £10 per annum, without first bringing a Certificate or Indemnity from their respective Parishes." Most parishes were on the look-out for people who might cause the trouble of removal. At Norton in 1825 the Committee was informed that a notorious woman had "been seen about Norton for a Week or Ten days and being afraid she might be taking some small place or room to reside in, and cause some expence and trouble to the parish with respect to finding her legal settlement. The Committee . . . ordered Mr. Charles Ellis the Constable, to be apprised of the above circumstances and to insist upon her leaving the Town immediately, otherwise to take her up as a Vagrant and send her to Beverley House of Correction." Hunmanby more briefly records in April 1833 "Michael Dorsdales Daughter likely to become chargeable to the parish to be sworn to her settlement."

Towards the end of the eighteenth century and early in the nineteenth we find that the number of removals of paupers decreased. The parish officers began to adopt a more sensible procedure than they had done previously with regard to paupers whose settlement was in another place. This was that the paupers should not be removed, but that the overseers of his or her parish of settlement should make themselves responsible for their maintenance by remitting money through the overseers of the parish where the pauper was living. Most early nineteenth century accounts show details of money sent to other towns. In 1820 Hunmanby maintained four paupers in Hull ; in 1834 paupers from West Heslerton were in Norton and Scarborough.

In 1826 there was an interesting case at Norton. An order was obtained to remove Widow Wood to South Cowton near Northallerton. This was carried out, but soon the Cowton overseers asked for her to be allowed to return to Norton where all her friends lived; at Cowton she knew nobody and was unhappy. No objection was raised at Norton, and Widow Wood returned there, her maintenance being provided by the Cowton overseers.

It may be that the system of payments made by a parish for the support of paupers living in another parish had its origin in the relief given to the dependants of the militia during the Napoleonic Wars. The families of many of the men required for the armed forces at this time had to apply for assistance as soon as the father's earnings ceased to be brought home. The overseers of the poor of the place of settlement of the family were responsible for providing this relief, but removal of the family to this place was not carried out. Instead relief was paid by the overseers of the parish where the family was living, on behalf of the parish of settlement if it was not the same, and the account adjusted between the two parishes.

An interesting enquiry for the parish historian would be to ask what was the effect of the Napoleonic Wars on the amount of relief paid in his village.

No student of parish documents can fail to be struck by the great increase in the number of illegitimate births during the later part of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century the birth of an illegitimate child was rather rare; between 1700 and 1750 there was a slight increase, and then came a remarkable rise. Most parish registers contain a note as to the condition of a child at its baptism, so it is often possible to calculate the proportion of illegitimate births in a given parish at any time. The following figures showing the increase in illegitimacy are calculated from the registers of ten parishes in East Yorkshire:—

1721-30	1 illegitimate in	53.3 births	
1751-60	1	„	47.2 „
1791-1800	1	„	16.4 „

The highest illegitimacy rate I have so far found is for Winestead, where in the decade 1761-70 it was 1 in 3.4. This great increase in illegitimacy placed a heavy burden on the poor rates. One way of dealing with it was to try to force the alleged father to marry the woman before the child was born. If marriage took place more than a month before the birth, the child would be legitimate, but this plan had the disadvantage that the whole family might “come on the parish”. Another way was to try to force the father to maintain the child under an order from the justices or Quarter Sessions. It would seem that the second plan was usually followed in East Yorkshire, although with varying success. When this was done an annual payment was supposed to be made by the father towards the child’s support. These payments often lapsed, as overseers’ accounts show. The father sometimes made an offer of a single payment for a child. At Norton, for example, on 19th March, 1829, the father of an illegitimate child offered £10 to the parish “to clear him” of his responsibility. The offer was accepted. At Hunmanby the overseers decided to apply to a magistrate to compel the alleged father of an illegitimate child, to attend the Quarter Sessions, so that the child could be “affiliated on him.”

Generally the child became the responsibility of the poor law officers until it could be apprenticed. A Norton woman “applied for a weekly payment for her daughter who had got her Bed. Agreed to give her Three shillings per week, until she Father’d

the said Child." The result was that this child, like thousands of others, was maintained out of the poor rates.

All general social histories mention the Speenhamland system when discussing the old poor law. This system was adopted at a celebrated meeting of the Berkshire Justices at the Pelican Inn at Speenhamland, in 1795, when a scale of poor relief based on the size of the family and the price of bread was drawn up. This system of relief (although its authors did not intend this) amounted to nothing more than a subsidy to the employers in aid of wages, and soon over almost all the country it was at work pauperising the rural workers and corrupting their employers. East Yorkshire, however, was one of the few districts where the system was not found in operation.

However, there is evidence of the older, and equally iniquitous Roundsman system in East Yorkshire, whereby paupers were sent round the parish to work at odd jobs to earn a little money, which was added to by the overseers, so that the pauper received altogether an amount on which he and his family could live. An example of this system comes from Lythe, "It was agreed that Roger Green should have 10d. a day to go round the Parish from house to house by turns."

The provision of workhouses for the poor had been advocated by many seventeenth century writers. In rural districts two Acts of Parliament allowed parishes to unite in order to provide workhouses. These were the General Workhouse Act of 1723, and Gilbert's Act of 1782. Gilbert's Act provided that only the aged, the sick and children were to be kept in the poorhouse whilst the able bodied were to be found work. At Driffield, Pocklington, Paull, Rillington and other East Riding villages workhouses were opened under one or other of these Acts. The workhouse at Hunmanby was opened in 1785 and was the centre of a union of ten parishes in 1830; the Paull union had six members, whilst the Rillington poorhouse was the centre of a union which in 1821 included over fifty parishes reaching from Skirpenbeck near York to Gristhorpe near Filey.

On joining a union the parish officers signed an agreement governing the relations of their parish with the union. Substantially these agreements are very much alike in different places. That signed by the Norton overseers when they joined the Rillington union says:—

"These are to certify that the Overseers of the parish of Norton in the East Riding of the County of York, entered the Poorhouse at Rillington, the 27th day of June 1827, paid Entrance

10s. 6d. and agreed to pay the Annual Rent of £1 11s. 6d. so long as the said Township continues in the said Poorhouse.

Thos. Lamb. Churchwarden.
Robt. Piercy. Overseer of the Poor.

CONDITIONS.

Weekly pay for each pauper sent to the Poorhouse ..	2 6d.
Entrance for each pauper to the Governor of the said Poorhouse	2 6d.
Coals Annually if one or more Paupers are sent ..	7 0d.
Clothes, such as Stockings and Shirts Mending pr. Annum for each pauper sent to the said Poorhouse	5 0d.
Shaving for each Man pauper if he does not shave himself	5 0d.
Also Beds, Bedding and Bedsteads with every necessary of wearing apparel at the expence of the said Township of Norton. Also one Supping Tin, one spoon, one Knife and Fork, one Trencher, one Chair or Stool and one Chamber Pot for each Pauper sent to the said Poorhouse."	

The rural workhouses were small. At Driffield and Market Weighton in 1795 there were only 3 inmates, for it was cheaper to give the paupers out relief. Pocklington had 20. In 1821 Paul Workhouse had 33 inmates whose maintenance cost about 2s. 6d. a week each. At Hunmanby in 1786 the average number was 15.

To equip and open even a small workhouse was an expensive undertaking. The house at Hunmanby had accommodation for only 16 paupers, but it cost almost £200 to make it ready for use. £87 5s. 0d. was collected from the poor rates, £26 4s. 0d. was borrowed from Squire Osbaldeston, and £60 town stock was given to the house. Small equipment included Sheets £4 15s. 6½d., "a Furnice for Wash House £3 3s. 0d.", coal £8 8s. 0d., "Two Fireshelves 1s. 6d., 5 Baking dishes 1s. 4½d.". The available evidence suggests that the poor in the workhouses had a sufficient quantity of food, but that meals lacked variety and vitamin content. The inmates must all have been suffering from some degree of malnutrition, although this may have been no worse than that suffered by rural labourers as a whole. The amounts spent on food at Paul in 1826 are interesting. £215 3s. 8d. was spent. Of this meat, flour, potatoes and skim milk accounted for £136 4s. 10d. Smaller items included tea £6 8s. 6d., molasses £3 5s. 3½d. and oatmeal £3 3s. 0d. Butter cost 5s. 6d., and there is no mention of any green vegetables. Butter seldom appears more than once a week on surviving workhouse diet sheets, and green vegetables never, from which the inference may be drawn that they were not used, for these diets are usually very detailed.

Pocklington poor house, which in 1796, had twenty inmates, provides a typical diet sheet:—

Breakfast (every day),	Milk and Oatmeal.
Dinner. Sunday.	Butchers meat, potatoes.
Monday.	Hasty pudding. (This was made by boiling about 12 ounces of oatmeal in a quart of water. It was eaten flavoured with salt, and with milk or beer poured over it. Sometimes butter or treacle were added).
Tuesday.	Wheatmeal dumplings.
Wednesday.	Meat and potatoes.
Thursday.	Baked pudding.
Friday.	Fruментy of barley. (Fruментy was like Hasty pudding, but barley was used instead of oatmeal).
Saturday.	Boiled potatoes with melted butter.
Supper (every day).	Milk and bread.

At Pocklington, Cottingham and some few other places the poor were farmed. That is to say the parish handed over the care of its paupers to a contractor, who received an agreed sum of money for each person under his care. When Eden wrote in 1796 this had been the state of affairs in Pocklington for twenty years. At first the contractor had been paid 1s. 6d. per head, in 1796 he was receiving 2s.

From the point of view of the parish the farming system had advantages. It meant that local officials were saved a great deal of work and, more important, the parish saved money, for a contractor could always provide for the poor at less cost than could the overseers. Under this system however, the poor did not fare so well, for inevitably, after the contractor had provided for his own profit less remained to be spent on the poor than was the case in parishes where funds were handled by the overseers.

The workhouse was hated by the poor. It was usually a fearful collection of idiots, children, sick and senile people, unmarried mothers and unemployed. Crabbe's savage criticism in his poem *The Village* (1783) probably gives as true a picture as any of the rural workhouse.

Quite clearly the overseer of the poor spent a busy year of office. It is refreshing to see that occasionally he allowed himself a little relaxation when on duty—"September 12th, a Meeting of Overseers at Hornsea when we Both was warmed up 6s. 0d." and "To Ale Backer and pipes 5s. 0d."

A Note on Sources.

This paper is based on manuscript sources from various East Yorkshire parishes. To the student of any type of parish record in this county M. W. Barley's *Parochial Documents of the East Riding* (Y.A.S. Record Series. Vol. 99), is indispensable. Since Mr. Barley's book was published in 1939 changes may have taken place in some parishes; anyone who notes such changes could very usefully report them to this Society in order that records may be kept up to date.

The *Parish Chest*, by W. E. Tate, is a useful account of the type of record to be found in rural parishes.

Volumes 5, 6 and 7 of *York Civic Records*, (Y.A.S. Record Series) give many useful illustrations of the treatment of the poor in a Tudor town.

Unfortunately the *East Riding Quarter Sessions Records* remain unpublished, but any student could usefully consult the published *North Riding Records*.

Most economic and social histories of the 18th and 19th centuries contain sections on the poor law. Amongst standard histories may be mentioned J. W. Clapham—*An Economic History of Modern Britain*, W. Cunningham—*Growth of English History and Commerce*, and E. Lipson—*The Economic History of England*. J. L. and Barbara Hammond's two famous books—*The Village Labourer* and *The Town Labourer*, will be found invaluable.

The fullest account of the old poor law in any rural area is W. H. Hampson—*The Treatment of Poverty in Cambridgeshire*, whilst the standard histories of the old poor law are S. and B. Webb—*English Poor Law History*, Volume 1, and E. M. Lennard—*The Early History of English Poor Relief*, which deals mainly with the situation before 1650. Both these works contain many references to Yorkshire. Finally Sir Frederick Eden's great first hand account, *The State of the Poor*, published in 1796, is of first rate importance, particularly the section in Volume III dealing with various Yorkshire parishes.

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