

CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| PAGE 3 - | INTRODUCTION |
| PAGE 3 - | BACKGROUND |
| PAGE 3 - | OSGATHORPE ACCOUNTS |
| PAGE 4 - | CASE ANALYSIS & SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION |
| PAGE 14- | EXPLANATION OF STATUTES RELATED TO THE POOR PLUS SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON 'THE WORKHOUSES' |

RESEARCH SOURCES

L&RRO Ref. DE.1668.71

W.E. Tate, The parish Chest, Phillimore 1893, p.189.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many thanks to Robert Jones for making available to the author the research he carried out whilst a resident of Osgathorpe in the 1990s which has proved invaluable in the writing of this publication.

© Samuel T Stewart – December 2023

**All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise without first seeking the written
permission of the author**

INTRODUCTION

Whereas the churchwardens dealt partly with support for the travelling destitute, the village overseer organised the parish's maintenance of the poor or sick at Osgathorpe. The surviving detailed accounts are not very numerous but offer an insight into the social obligations of the parish and how they were discharged. Paupers were on one hand stigmatised, and on the other supported, not only by subsistence payments, but to help with property repairs, rent, clothing and medical attention. The sense of almost a benevolent parish acting for those in temporary need, with a stricter approach demonstrated to others. The term '*benevolent*' is misleading, as parish relief would have enabled survival and probably little more. **For example, the Overseer of 1746 "*delivered 10s. 5d. to Elizabeth Hodgkinson who was ready to starve*".**

BACKGROUND

The parish was responsible for maintaining its poor who were settled in the township. The Poor Law Act of 1601 ordered the nomination of an Overseer to maintain and set the poor to work, the funds for this being collected from the village. Tate cites the poor law settlement system as the reason why the parish could be described as a prison, and also blames the "*pauperisation of the labourer and the bankrupting of the small farmer*" on "*the relaxation of poor law principles*". Inhabitants born in a village were classed as settled and could have a certificate saying that their parish would support them if they required assistance. With this certificate it was possible to live outside the parish of origin. For those without certificates, temporary work for less than 52 weeks was possible if available, permanent tenure within the parish was not. With a few exceptions, if it were deemed possible that they could be an expense to the parish, they and their dependants were removed back to the place of settlement. Women carrying illegitimate offspring were questioned until they revealed the name of the father, without this information the parish would be put to the expense of supporting both mother and child. Youngsters were apprenticed, preferably outside the parish, they then became the responsibility of the parish where they worked. Every effort made by the Overseer was directed in avoiding adding to the financial burden of the rate paying parishioners.

OSGATHORPE ACCOUNTS

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1712 to 1727 | Fully itemised accounts with totals of levies and disbursements |
| 1728 to 1798 | Levies & disbursements only (except 1749 which is itemised) |

All the accounts were prepared annually and presented at the Easter parish meeting. The Overseer also had to attend monthly "*Vestry*" meetings, and was chosen in rotation from amongst the most considerable householders, yeomen and tradesmen of the parish. The genealogy of the Overseer and their relative standing in the community would be examined elsewhere. Suffice it to say that there are amongst their numbers plenty of yeomen, husbandmen and gentlemen, and the family relationships between these over the years are most interesting. These being a hard core of parish worthies.

These 16 years are hardly long enough to find out whether Osgathorpe was benevolent or harsh in its treatment of the '*impotent*' poor. However, during the period of study, only three removal certificates survive, returning the Smith family to Breedon in 1718, the Wootton family to Gotham in 1721, and the Ward family with

their 9 month old baby to Findern in 1731. Suspicion of a further 3 non-surviving orders exist but over the same length of time Osgathorpe issued at least 14 settlement certificates to "*incomers*", including changing their minds over the removal of the Wootton family (or did they?). The subjects of the certificates often went on to be prosperous members of the community, and certainly no risk to the Overseer's budget. Tate's analogy of the parish "*prison*" would have applied to the period between 1601 and the introduction of the settlement certificate in 1697, the pauperism of the labourer was certainly aggravated by later relaxation of the system of relief and the soaring rate charges made.

CASE ANALYSIS & SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Between 1712 and 1727, eleven families received help from the parish and appear in the "Overseer's accounts".

CASE 1 - THOMAS ORTON

Mary North, married Thomas Orton on 2nd December 1693 at St. Mary's church, Osgathorpe, possibly by Banns although no indication is given in the registers. Mary was part of the large North family of Osgathorpe and Belton. At the time when they received payment of 6d. per week in 1712, there would have been many of Mary's relatives in the village, some fairly prosperous. Aunts had married into the Roe and Bradley families both of whom were churchwardens. The inventory of one John North in 1714 was that of a man who was comfortably well off even though described as a "labourer". It is assumed that the Ortons' received no help from the North family however large and comfortable they were. Did Mary marry without the families approval or had estrangement come gradually over the 19 years of their marriage before they became paupers? The Ortons' received 1/6 worth of coal on top of 6d. per week in 1712. Mary was buried in St. Mary's church graveyard on the 8th April 1713 and the parish paid 1 shilling for "*bread at wife's funeral*". Thomas continued to live alone receiving 1 shilling each week for 42 weeks which reduced to 6d. weekly until his death on Oct 4th 1714. He was buried in St. Mary's church graveyard on the 13th October 1714.

CASE 2 - MARY DUALL OR DOWELL

Mary received 4d. each week from the parish from 1712 to 1715 but in 1716 this was increased to 6d. and then to 1 shilling in 1725. She also benefited from a collection in 1721 which raised £1 6s. 10d. Mary Dowell does not appear in the parish registers so we don't know how old she was or who her relatives were. In addition to the weekly payments she received assistance in practical ways, in 1716 the parish paid for 2 shillings worth of coal and had her chimney mended. The following year "*helping in the wind to preserve (her) thatch*" and further repairs to her chimney cost 10d. Further house repairs and deliveries of coal were paid for up to 1725 which was possibly when she died.

CASE 3 - JANE GADSBY

The only entry for Jane Gadsby in the parish registers is that for her burial in St. Mary's graveyard on 19th March 1728. The parish had been paying her rent for lodgings sometimes with Ben Waldrum (a churchwarden of some repute) from 1712. The rent varied between 4d. and 6d. each week. No other payments were recorded and no other details are known.

CASE 4 - JOHN BROWN(E), THOMAS, WILLIAM, MARY AND 'BROWN' GIRLS.

John Brown received 6d. per week in 1712. The 'girls' Sarah and Mary (?) received 1 shilling each week in 1713 and went to lodge with Ann North in 1714 after which the

only entries were for shoes and clothes in 1714 for Sarah and coals for Mary in 1749. Thomas Brown's wife's lodgings were paid for in 1719 at the rate of 6d. per week. "For caring for head" in 1727 one 'Mantadon' was paid but the amount is illegible, then Tom Brown received 2 shillings per week. John and Thomas died in 1727 and 1729 respectively, although several Brown's appear in the baptism register it is not possible to unravel the relationships, neither do Sarah or Mary appear in the church records. William Browne however is probably the son of John and features in the Overseer's accounts by virtue of having his shirt (or shift) washed in 1714.

CASE 5 - JOHN JOYNES

John was paid 6d per week in 1712 and received various amounts in 1714, "*several times in his sickness*". In addition, John received, coal, barley, and hay at intervals from 1714 to his death in 1730. He was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 14th March 1730. Another John Joynes, a bastard of Mary was buried on 16th June 1731. Elizabeth, his wife or daughter received coal in 1749, so the intermittent support to the family continued. John Joynes had been married twice and at least 6 children survived to become adults. This probably accounts for subsistence payments only having been made in one year 1714, the family being able to keep him, apart from occasional larger purchases.

CASE 6 - SUSANAH HALL

The parish paid for her lodgings with Ann North in 1714 at 6d. per week until her death in 1715 aged 29. She was a widow and was also a member of a large Osgathorpe family. Susanah, the daughter of George and Ane Hall, was baptised at St. Mary's church on 25th July 1686. She was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 11th of May 1715.

CASE 7 - JOHN SMITH

John Smith received a payment of 10 shillings in 1714 and the parish also paid Dr. Gerey's bill for 5/4

CASE 8 - RICHARD WOOTTON OR WHOTTON

Richard's rent was paid by the parish from 1716 to 1719. In 1720 he lived with his brother who was paid 6d. per week for 6 weeks until Richard was removed from the parish back to his place of settlement in Gotham in 1721. In the intervening period he had been supported by a "*woman helping him when he was ill*" in 1717 and by having his housework and washing done in 1718, 1719 and 1720. Richard Whotton started to become a 'charge to the parish' in 1716 but it was not until 1721 that the Overseer finally got round to getting the justices to issue the removal document. The mystery is compounded by the entry in the parish register recording the baptising of their daughter Alice on the 1st of June 1722. It is partly solved by the settlement certificate of 22nd January 1721 signed by one of the same justices who had endorsed the removal order the same day. What caused the delay and the last minute change of mind? Could it have been because the Wootton family were well established in Osgathorpe, Thomas Wootton had been a churchwarden in 1677, 1685, 1695 and 1715, were they looking after their own? Strangely 1722 also marks the last entry of Wootton in the parish register. Did they leave or perhaps even leave the church? Further confusion is added by entries in the accounts of Nicholas Kiddiar, Overseer in 1720, for "*hors and expense of going to Gotham*" and for Robert Morley in 1721 for £1.0.0. for "*carrying Richard Wootton and his wife to Gotham*". There is a removal order which was apparently executed, a certificate for permission to live in Osgathorpe and a baptism entry in the register for a child whose parents had been removed back to Gotham the year before she was christened in Osgathorpe. (Gotham parish records 1700-1740 need to be researched).

CASE 9 - THE BAYLEY (BAILEY) FAMILY

The only entry in the accounts for "*badging*" at a cost of 2 shillings in 1724 occurs for the Bayley family. This refers to the "*Poor Badge*" to be worn by paupers (see later explanation). Also interesting is the payment of £1 15s. 0d. "*for Mr. Wildebores frame rent for Bayley*" plus carriage of 1 shilling. Bayleys' house rent was paid by the parish at £2 per year and Josh Bayley was supplied with "*half a strike of barley, then one strike per week in 1726*". Clothing and bedding and subsistence were found for Thomas Bayley through to 1749 and a Mary Bayley (recorded as Baily in register) was given a paupers burial in St. Mary's graveyard on the 9th of January 1745.

CASE 10 - GEORGE TOMLINSON

George Tomlinson was ill in 1726 and 1727. He received, wheat, barley, coal, and meat in addition to money and "*other things at the shop during his illness*". In 1727 he received 2 shillings a week reducing to 1 shilling and died in 1734. He was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 1st of June 1734. George and his wife Ann who died in 1730, had three surviving children of whom at least one lived with the family in the parish. Ann was buried in St. Mary's graveyard on the 3rd of January 1730.

CASE 11 - WIDOW ELIZABETH WILLOWS

This lady is recorded as doing the washing for paupers, herself receiving assistance in 1727.

The Poor law Amendment Act of 1697 introduced the degrading provision that every pauper, wife and children "*shall wear upon the shoulder of the right sleeve of the uppermost garment.....in an open and visible manner.....a large Roman P together with the first letter of the name of the parish.....in red or blue cloth*". This and the penalties for non-compliance, were designed to discourage pauperism.

References to 'badging' in the surviving accounts include:-

- 1721 "paid to the poor about badging £1
"going to Nottingham to badge Mason 2s. 8d.
- 1724 "going to Nottingham to badge Bayley family" 2 shillings
- 1727 "cloth and badging"

The only other reference is in the Vestry minutes of 1770 - "*At a meeting the first day of April 1770 in order by us whose names are under written.....that all people that Receive Reliefe shall come in (and) shall ware the Pooare Leater acoording to Act of Parlement*"

It is not known what encouraged the Vestry to take the above action, 80 odd years after the Act came into force. After 1697, the poor were excused wearing the badge "*on proof of very decent and orderly behaviour*", certainly there were no records of 'badgings' of the sick, or of relief having been given to 'Mason' mentioned above. In the absence of records before 1712 no further conclusions can be drawn regarding this custom.

Another provision of the Poor Law was that the Overseer paid a Mr. Wildebore £1 15s. 0d. for the rent of a frame for Bayley. The Overseer was enabling the Bayleys' to work as Framework Knitters by hiring a frame and paying their rent. Unfortunately, no other references survive. Six out of the eleven recipients of relief were ill or recovering from sickness, it is suspected that two more were too old to be given work. Medical attention was paid for in two cases. Reference to the village "*house for the use of the poor*" does not appear in the records until 1776 when John Bradley's

house was so designated. Paupers mentioned in the Overseers accounts were lodged with other villagers or remained in their own homes.

In 1714, John Stinson, the village shoe maker, was paid 1/1 for mending Sarah Brown's shoes and for a further 2 repairs in the same year he was paid one penny. The same girl was supplied with a shift made out of hemp cloth value 4 shillings including thread, an un-named garment made out of "*two and a half yards of Linsey Woolsey at 13p per yard and thread made at a cost of 3p, a hat (3p) and an apron cost 14p*". A gown was made out of 7 yards of the same material 'Linsey Woolsey' for 10/10 including thread and (beading). By the end of the same year, her shoes must have been beyond mending as 2/6 was paid to Stinson for a new pair. Sarah finished the accounts year with another hat, value 8p. John Brown received a coat costing 10/6 in 1725 and 10 yards of cloth at 10p per yard with thread and "*the making*" in 1726. Further entries detail clothing brought in 1749 for Thomas Bailey; a "*westcote, a new pair of shoose and a new pair of stockings*".

A large proportion of the levies collected was spent on administering the system.

- 1712 "2 warrants (purpose not known) 1/6
expenses for monthly meeting
paid for an order to remove a child from Ben waldrum
a warrant for Ben Waldrums expenses of Loughborough
paid for removing the child to Normanton
expenses for the gathering of the levies"
- 1713 John Bradley, the Overseer, had to visit Nottingham and Loughborough
- 1714 William Allen also visited Loughborough twice in addition to monthly meetings and a visit to Ashby regarding the "*coming hither*" of one Smith

Visits to Nottingham to pay £3 10. 0 on behalf of Thomas Bailey became fairly regular until 1717. Were these the annual payments of the knitting frame rent? If so, why Nottingham? Loughborough was the nearest centre of framework knitting outwork.

The fees paid to the Overseers for collecting the levies complete the accounts.

Continued over page

Examples of accounts follow for:-

- a removal certificate from Osgathorpe to Gotham for Richard Wootton and his wife Alice in 1721
- A settlement certificate issued by Ashby for a family wanting to live in Osgathorpe in 1723
- The accounts of overseer James Elliot for the year 1716
- The accounts for Thomas Clarke overseer for the year 1718

Wm. J.
Lee: J.
 To the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Par of
 the Parish of Osgathorpe in the County of Leicester
 And also to the Churchwardens and Overseers of the
 poor of the Parish of Gotham in the County of Nottingham
 WHEREAS Com^{rs}. Hall. has been made unto us whose Tunes &
 Seals are hereunto set by of his Ma^{ty} Justice of the
 Peace for the said County (Quorum sumus) by you that
 Richard Wootton and Alice his pretended wife are
 lately come into your said Parish endeavoring to gaine
 a Settlement there contrary, Law. And that they are
 likely to become Chargeable to your said Parish all which
 fully appeares and we doe accordingly hereby Adjudge
 them likely to become Chargeable to your said Parish
 And whereas it appeares unto us upon the Call of
 the said Richard Wootton that he was Legally settled
 in the Parish of Gotham in the County of Nottingham
 which Parish we doe hereby Adjudge to be the place
 of his last Legall Settlement.
 We are therefore in his Ma^{ty} Name to Charge &
 Com^{ds} you forthwith upon Sight hereof to Remove
 and Carry the said Richard Wootton and his said
 pretended wife from the said Parish of Osgathorpe
 aforesaid to the said Parish of Gotham in the County
 of Nottingham aforesaid and when their orders to the
 Churchwardens or Overseers of the Poor shal be
 unto some or one of them who else shal be
 required to provide for them according to Law
 these of faile not at your Perill Given under our
 Hand and Seals this 29th day of January Anno Domⁿⁱ
 1721
Henry Tate
Jerry

To the Church Wardens and Overseers of the
poore of the parish of ~~Wigthorpe~~ ~~Wigthorpe~~ in the
County of Leicestershire and to any or either of them

We whose names are here under written being
the present Church wardens and Overseers of the
poore of the Parish of Nthbydale in the
County of Leicestershire aforesaid do hereby give and
Acknowledge Robert Row and his wife and family to be an
Inhabitant legally settled in the Parish of Nthbydale
aforesaid in witness whereof we have hereunto
set our hand and seals the three and twentieth day of
march in the 10th year of the Reign of our most Excellent
George by the Grace of God of Great Brittain France and
Ireland King Defender of the faith Ruler of the Sea 1723

Witnessed by us
Fran. Leake
The Ward

William Hudson

John Hampden Churchwarden

Geo. Pilkington Overseer

To the church wardens
and overseers of the poore
of the parish of Wigthorpe
or to any or either of them

We whose names are hereunto subscribed Justices of the peace of the
County of Leicestershire aforesaid do show of the Certificate aforesaid
dated the three and twentieth of march

Arch. Palmer

Mrs. Harkness

James Ellott accounts for the year 1716

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| | £ s d |
| paid to Mary Duwall 6 ^g weeks for 52 weeks | 01: 06: 00 |
| paid on Thomas Bayliss account | 03: 10: 00 |
| paid for carrying it to Nottingham | 00: 01: 00 |
| paid for Jane Cradley lodging | 00: 17: 04 |
| paid to Richard Whotton 1 ^g weeks for 31 weeks | 01: 11: 00 |
| paid his rent coming one year and half due | 00: 15: 00 |
| paid for washing of Richard Whottons shifts | 00: 03: 00 |
| paid for washing of John Brookes shifts | 00: 05: 05 |
| paid for coals for Mary Duwall | 00: 02: 00 |
| paid for mending his chimney | 00: 00: 06 |
| paid to John Joynd | 00: 01: 06 |
| paid to Mr Gillsloy that was due to him | 00: 06: 00 |
| gatherings the loan | 00: 01: 00 |
| paid to John Marshall upon John Joynd account | 00: 01: 05 |
| | paid 09: 01: 02 |
| this account was given up | |
| the 29 th of April 1717 | £ s d by d Louie 09: 01: 02 |

Thomas Clarke's Account Began to pay the 4th day of the
 1717 and ended the 26th day of April 1718

| | |
|--|---------|
| paid to Richard Whatton the first week | 0-5-0 |
| paid him 51 weeks more 1 st 4 weeks | 3-8-0 |
| paid to Mary Doorell 52 weeks 6 a week | 1-6-0 |
| paid for washing John Brown 52 weeks five farthings a week | 0-5-5 |
| paid for Jane Gadsboys Lodging 52 weeks | 0-17-0 |
| paid to Mr Vaughan and Mr Smith (which they laid down) | |
| for hay last year for John Goynd | 0-10-0 |
| paid at Nottingham for Thomas Bailey | 3-10-0 |
| for carrying of it | 0-1-0 |
| for half a year's rent for Ric ^d Whatton that was due last year | 0-5-0 |
| for his rent this year | 0-10-0 |
| for his washing | 0-6-0 |
| for the woman for helping of him when he was ill | 0-0-6 |
| Expenses going to Leuborough to give account how the poor <small>& how he</small> was provided for | 0-1-0 |
| for Tho: Brown for helping Mary Doorell in the winter to provide her thatch | 0-0-2 |
| for Tho: Shaw for mending her Chimney | 0-0-8 |
| for carrying Ric ^d Whatton's goods to Matchetts | 0-0-6 |
| for horse hire to Bunney hay & corns concerning Henry Smith | 0-1-3 |
| expenses at the same time | 0-0-10 |
| horse hire & hay upon the same account to Leuborough | 0-0-8 |
| horse hire to Leicester to obtain Lawyers | 0-9-6 |
| my expenses all night | 0-1-6 |
| my and corns all night for my horse | 0-0-8 |
| expenses going to Northington 3 times | 2-5-6 |
| to the Lawyers at the session | 0-12-4 |
| expenses at the same time 5 men & 4 horses | 0-1-0 |
| for my horse hire | 0-0-6 |
| for an abstract of Parliament | 2-0-0 |
| for Collecting 2 Levies | 0-0-8 |
| our expenses when we went to Leuborough concerning Henry Smith | 0-0-8 |
| Disbursements | 14-11-0 |
| Rec ^d by Levies | 14-13-7 |
| to Tho: Simpson | 0-2-7 |

After having given inadequate accounts in 1715 as a churchwarden, Benjamin Waldrum further exhibited his shortcomings as Overseer in 1722. The parish meeting refused to accept the details of his accounts again because they were so unreasonable and ordered that they be "not entered here for others to copie after". even the inadequacies of Ben Waldrum do not compare with the escapade of William Boulton of Stordon Grange.

"William Boulton served the office of overseer of ye poor for ye year 1723 his accompts was given up and the spare money was drank at Bradfords by ye persons there met (etc) but he took them home (if not being there) and afterwards lost ye same".

The Disbursements of Ben^m Waldrum Overseer of
 y^e Poor he began his Office May the 1st 1722

The sum of his Disbursements $\overline{12-14-08}$

Collected by a { 3^d Levie — 6-16-0
 2^d Levie — 4-10-4

Rec^d of Tho Bondosa — 1-00-0

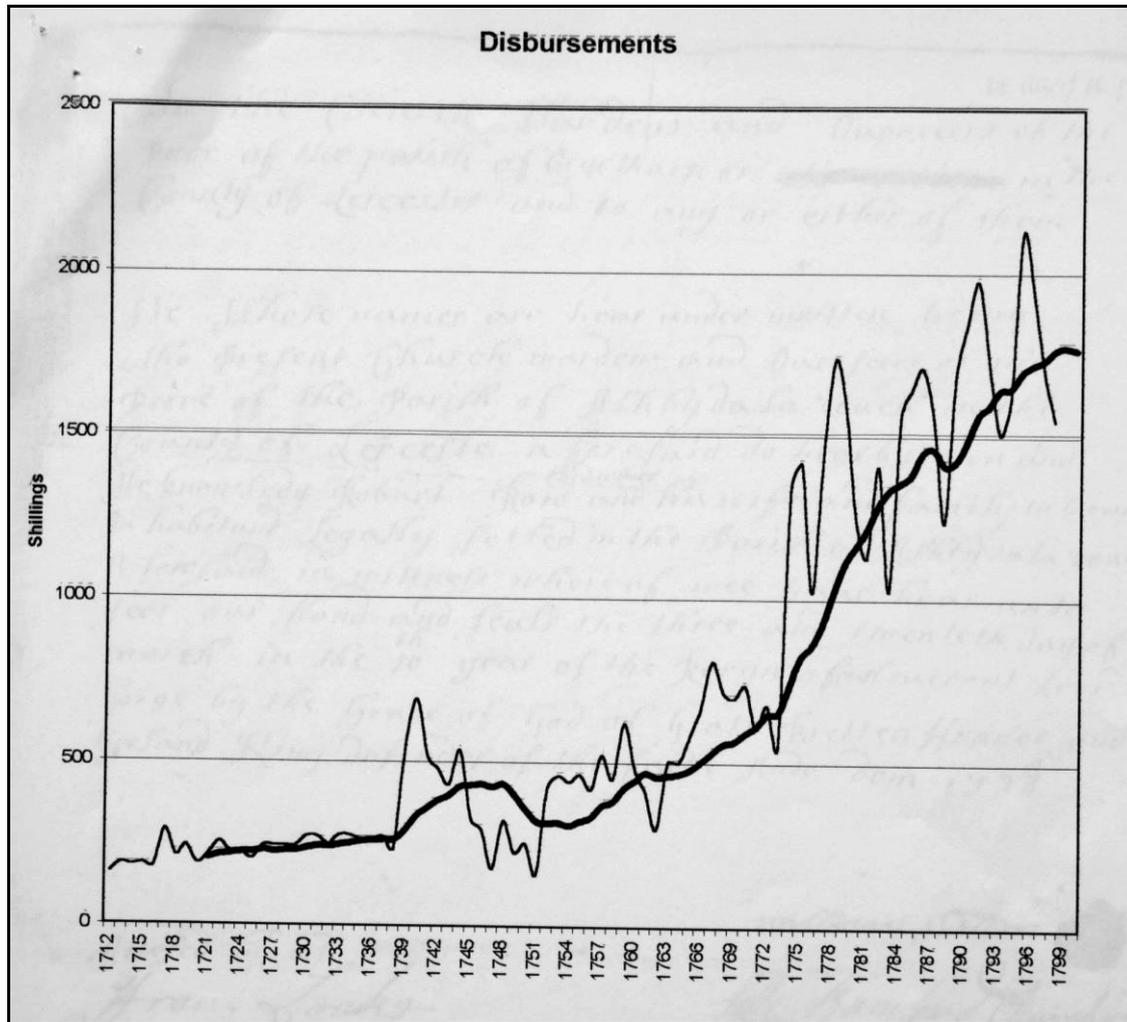
the sum of w^{ch} he received $\overline{12-06-4}$

Due to y^e Overseer — 0-08-2

The particulars of these Accompts are so unreason-
 =able that they was ordered not to be entered here
 for others to copie after

William Boulton served the office
 of overseer of y^e Poor for y^e year 1723 his accompts
 was given up ~~at~~ and the spare money was drank at
 Bradfords by y^e persons there met &c. but hee took the
 same (if not being there) and afterwards lost ye same

The graph below shows the disintegration of the Poor Law System (the thick black line on the graph is a trend line representing a ten year rolling average). The financial demands on ratepayers was becoming such that these demands in themselves generated poverty. Enclosure in Osgathorpe was in 1785/6 and the soaring claims on the system may well be due, at least in part, to the loss of common land and the inability of the very small landowner to afford to enclose. Whatever the reasons, the parish funded system of relief seemed doomed but staggered on until the reforms of the 1830s.



AN EXPLANATION OF STATUTES RELATED TO THE POOR PLUS SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON THE WORKHOUSES

THE 1597 ACT

In 1597, an Act for “The Relief of the Poor” was passed in Parliament (39 Elizabeth c.3.). The following is a synopsis of the major objectives:-

- Churchwardens and four overseers in every parish to set children and able poor to work, relieve the impotent and bind out pauper children as apprentices.
- The above officials can tax “every inhabitant and occupier of lands” in the parish for these purposes. They can distraint the goods of those refusing to contribute to poor-rates.
- The same officials to see that habitations are provided for the disabled on waste or common lands, with the agreements of the lords of the manor.
- Two JPs to nominate overseers and take their accounts.
- JPs may tax some parishes to help others and shall (in session) hear appeals against rates.
- Begging forbidden except by those allowed to beg food in their own parishes
- County treasurers to be appointed to administer funds for the relief of prisoners and soldiers and mariners passing through the county.

Although it was essentially a refinement of the 1597 Act, in 1601 a further Act for “The Relief of the Poor” was passed in the 43rd year of the reign of Elizabeth 1 (43 Eliz 1.c.2). Under the 1601 Act, each parish was obliged to relieve the aged and the helpless, to bring up unprotected children in the habits of industry, and to provide work for those capable of it, but who were lacking their usual trade. The main objectives of the Act were:-

- The establishment of the parish as the administrative unit responsible for poor relief, with churchwardens or parish overseers collecting poor-rates and allocating relief.
- The provision of materials such as flax, hemp or wool to provide work for the able bodied poor. Any able bodied pauper who refused to work was liable to be placed in a “House of correction” or prison.

The relief of the impotent poor, the old, the blind, the lame and so on. This could include the provision of a “House or Dwelling” – Almshouses or Poor Houses rather than the Workhouse. The Act also made the relief of maintenance of such persons, the legal responsibility of their parents, grandparents or children, if such relatives were themselves able to supply support.

- The setting to work and apprenticeship of children.

THE POOR RATE

The 1601 Act empowered parish overseers to raise money for poor relief from the inhabitants of the parish according to their ability to pay. The poor rate was originally a form of local income tax, but over time evolved into the rating system – a property tax based on the value of real estate. In general, the poor rate was paid by the tenant and not the owner. Failure to pay the poor rate would result in a summons to appear before a JP who could impose a fine or the seizure of property or even a prison sentence.

THE 1662 SETTLEMENT ACT

This new settlement Act allowed for the removal from a parish, back to their place of settlement of newcomers when local justice deemed they were likely to be chargeable to the parish poor rates. Exemption was allowed if the new arrival was able to rent a property for at least £10 per year, which was well beyond the capabilities of the average labourer.

The basic principles of the act had already been long established. A child's settlement at birth was taken to be the same as that of its father, at marriage, a woman taking on the same settlement as her husband. Illegitimate children were granted settlement in the place they were born. This often led parishioners to try and get rid of an unmarried pregnant woman before the child was born, for example, by transporting her to another parish just before the birth, or by paying a man from another parish to marry her.

AN EXAMPLE OF A SETTLEMENT AND REMOVAL APPEAL CASE

Leicestershire Mercury – April 10th 1852

LEICESTERSHIRE APPEAL SESSIONS

REMOVAL APPEAL CASE – Osgathorpe appellants; Loughborough respondents; Council for appellants; Messrs. Roberts and Merewether; Attorneys – Dewes and Son, Council for respondents, Messrs. White and Maunsell; Attorney – Mr. Inglesant.

This was an appeal against an order made January 15th for the removal from Loughborough to Osgathorpe of the four illegitimate children of Mary Poxon who had deserted them about twelve months ago and who not having obtained a settlement herself followed the settlement of her father Thomas Poxon, who resided about 1784 at Castle Donington under a certificate from the officers at Osgathorpe. The mother had also been removed under orders to Osgathorpe in 1815 and had afterwards received relief from that parish while living at Loughborough. The grounds of appeal were that the mother was married to William Glover about 1841 and that the children were not illegitimate; that the settlement of the grandfather was not as stated; and that the three first of the children had resided in the parish of Loughborough above five years besides the time in which they had received relief.

Mr. White, in reference to the ground of appeal, first denied that this was the case with respect to the third child, and contended that granting it to be true with respect to the others, the children were liable to removal, owing to the mother, by breaking her residence, having made herself removable, and not having exhibited any intention of returning. In support of his opinion Mr. White quoted several cases in which women and children had been held to be removable, when the husband and father had broken his residence, and shown no intention to return.

Elizabeth Rossell, mother of Mary Poxon, stated that her daughter was never married, but had had six children. She was living with a person named William Glover, when she had the first child (now about fourteen years of age), and she had another very soon after also by Glover, She lived with another person after Glover's death, and had the children by him. She had now the youngest child with her. She went away twelve months last January. **Glover died about eleven years ago, and when he was buried the bearers wore "white trousers, which was the usual sign that the deceased was a single man"**. Witness married Thomas Poxon, at Lockington, in 1813 and they lived at Castle Donington with his father and mother. When she lost her husband in 1815, she was removed under orders, with her daughter and a boy named Robert from Donington to Osgathorpe. She remained there not quite a week, and was allowed 4s. a week and went to live at Loughborough, where she continued to receive the relief between four and five years. Her daughter when she went away and said nothing about coming back, but the man with whom she went said, he might come back and fetch the children, but it was a thousand to one if ever she saw her daughter again. She asked her daughter to let her know where she was, and she promised to write in about three weeks, but had not done so. Witness's father and mother lived at Hemington. **Cross-examined.** - Went to see her daughter when she lived with Glover at Loughborough, where they lived three or four years. Her son Daniel was born at Nottingham, where the parents had gone to live a short time at the commencement of the connexion. The neighbours used to call her daughter Glover. There was one child born at Mountsorrel. Witness always thought her daughter was married to Glover till after his death.

Martha Glover, sister to William Glover, remembered his death, which occurred about eleven years since. Witness lived in London at the time, and at Mountsorrel at the time her brother lived in Nottingham. Her brother told her about two years before he died that he was not married to Mary Poxon. In January 1851, Mary Poxon called on her at Mountsorrel, with the man she lived with, and said she was going a hundred miles off to seek for work, and had left the children with her mother, intending to send for them. **Cross-examined.** - Witness knew that her brother and Mary Poxon passed as man and wife, She had heard Mary Poxon called Mrs. Glover. Mary Poxon was by when her brother told her they were not married. Witness asked the question of him owing to having been told by a woman from Nottingham that they were not married.

Frances Jacques stated that, about three or four days before Glover's death, he expressed to her a deep regret that he and Mary Poxon were not married, as it might interfere with the future welfare of his children and partner.

W. Wortley stated that Mary Poxon told him positively that she was not married to the man she lived with, nor Glover before him; and he also spoke to a conversation with the parties, who lived next door to him, just previous to their going away, indicating no intention to return, **and leaving the children in his charge to take to the workhouse.**

Samuel Poxon proved that his parents received relief from Osgathorpe while residing at Castle Donington, and that his brother married the first witness.

James Newbold, overseer of Castle Donington, produced copies of the register of the marriage of Mary Poxon's father and mother at Lockington, and of her birth, also the order of removal of the mother and daughter to Osgathorpe in 1815.

Mr. Roberts remarked that the court would have to decide first whether the settlement of the mother of the children was not determined by her marriage; second whether the children were not irremovable under the clause of the act making a five

years' residence bar to removal; and third, whether two of the children being below the age of nurture were at all removable. He contended that apart from the late evidence that had been imported into the case, there were strong facts in favour of a marriage with Glover having taken place, as reputation and cohabitation, both a first class of evidence, were admitted. On the second point, he submitted that the children had resided above five years in Loughborough, and therefore were not removable. On all the points he submitted to the court that the order must be quashed.

Mr. White, in reply, contended that the mother of the paupers having made herself removable by breaking her residence, the children were removable also.

The Court confirmed the order.

Mr. White applied for costs on the ground that the appeal was vexatious and frivolous.

Mr. Roberts replied, and the Court declined to grant the application.

BADGING THE POOR

An Act passed in 1697, required, amongst other legislation "The badging of the poor". Those in receipt of poor relief were required to wear in red or blue cloth on their right shoulder, a badge with the letter "P" preceded by the initial letter of the parish – for Osgathorpe "OP". Badging was not taken up by all parishes and the procedure was eventually discontinued in an Act of 1810 (50 Geo III c.10).

AN EXAMPLE OF RELIEF BEING AWARDED PRIOR TO THE FOLLOWING 1832 ROYAL COMMISSION REPORT

Leicester Chronicle – June 24th 1829

LOUGHBOROUGH POLICE INTELLIGENCE

Mr. Meakin, Guardian of the poor at Osgathorpe charged by Wm. Higgit, with refusing him relief. Ordered to relieve him, or to find him employment, and pay costs.

THE 1832 ROYAL COMMISSION

A Royal Commission conducted a survey of the state of the poor law administration. The report published in 1834, came to the conclusion that poverty was essentially caused by the indigence of individuals social and economic conditions. Thus the pauper claimed relief regardless of his merits. Large families got the most, which encouraged improvident marriages; women claimed relief for bastards, which encouraged immorality. Labourers had no incentive to work because employees kept wages artificially low as workers were subsidized from the poor rate.

The main proposals of the report were that:-

Except as to medical needs attendance and subject to the exception of respecting apprenticeships herein after stated, all relief whatsoever to able – bodied persons or to their families, otherwise than in well regulated workhouses (ie; places where they may be set to work according to the spirit and intention of 43d Elizabeth) shall be declared unlawful, and shall cease, in manner and periods hereafter specified; and that all relief afforded in respect of children under the age of 16 shall be considered as afforded to their parents.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- The grouping of parishes for the purpose of operating a workhouse.
- The workhouse conditions should be “less eligible” (less desirable) than those of an independent labourer of the lowest class.
- The appointment of a central body to administer the new system.

The report also revived the workhouse test – the belief that the deserving and undeserving poor could be distinguished by a simple test: Anyone prepared to accept relief in the repellant workhouse must be lacking in the moral determination to survive outside it.

THE WORKHOUSE

By 1732, it is estimated (Slack, 1990) that about 700 workhouses were in operation. Parliamentary reports in 1776-7 listed a total of almost 2,000 parishes where workhouses were in operation in England and Wales – approx one parish in seven had a workhouse which is almost unbelievable.

A Parliamentary report in 1777 recorded workhouses were in operation locally in Loughborough (70 inmates – 171 in 1881), Ashby de la Zouch (50), Coleorton (30), Shepshed (80), Hugglescote & Donnington (30) (39 Eliz. O.3).

John Nichols recorded that in **Osgathorpe** in 1776, the rent payable for the Workhouses and habitations was £2. 9s. 6d. and that in **1776**, ending Easter, that money raised in **Osgathorpe** for the poor was £70. 10s. 0d. and £69. 5s. 8d. was expended.

Eden, in his 1797 report on the poor in England, recorded that at Ashby de la Zouch:-

The poor are partly maintained at home (33 out pensioners) and partly in the Workhouse, where there are at present 52 persons, chiefly old women and children, who are taught to read, spin jersey, do common house work, spinning, knitting, sewing and working in the fields. The bedding and wearing apparel are chiefly manufactured in the house, exclusive of which the poor earn by spinning jersey 10s 6d a month. The bill of fare has been much varied of late, on account of the dearness of bread. Two pudding dinners a week were formally allowed and the supper everyday was about 1lb of bread and one pint of beer for each adult; children somewhat less. Potatoes and vegetables are now generally substituted for bread. Breakfast – Every day - Milk pottage, water pottage or gruel. Dinner – Sunday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday – Hot meat, vegetable and broth; other days cold meat, vegetables and broth. Supper – every day – mashed potatoes, with milk or hashed meat.

A new Ashby de la Zouch Workhouse was built in 1826 on a site to the east of the town on the south side of Nottingham Road. Ashby de la Zouch “Poor Law Union” officially came into existence on the 28th of June 1836. Its operation was overseen by an elected “Board of Guardians”, which were 30 in number who represented its 23 constituent parishes. **Osgathorpe did not join the union until c. 1837 along with Worthington and Coleorton.**

**NOTICES OF THE ANNUAL ELECTION OF GUARDIANS OF THE POOR
IN THE "ASHBY- DE- LA- ZOUCH UNION"**

Leicester Journal – Friday March 9th 1838

The Churchwarden's and Overseers of the several Parishes comprising in the above Union, and herein – after named, will, in pursuance of the order of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales, proceed on the 29th day of March instant, to the election of the number of the **GUARDIANS OF THE POOR**, set opposite the names of such Parishes, for the Year ending the 25th of March, 1839.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|---|
| Ashby de la Zouch | 3 | Hartshorne | 2 |
| Packington, Leics | 1 | Smisby | 1 |
| Whitwick | 2 | Coleorton | 1 |
| Heather | 1 | Osgathorpe | 1 |
| Snarestone | 1 | Staunton Harold | 1 |
| Oakthorpe and Donisthorpe | 1 | Swepstone | 1 |
| Packington, Derbys | 1 | Appleby, Leics | 1 |
| Willesley | 1 | Normanton | 1 |
| Thringstone | 1 | Calke | 1 |
| Blackfordby | 1 | Measham | 2 |
| Over and Nether Seal | 2 | Ticknall | 2 |
| Swannington | 1 | Worthington | 1 |
| Hugglescote | 1 | Stretton – en – le – Field | 1 |
| Appleby (D) | 1 | | |

Any person entitled to vote in any of the said parishes, may propose as the Guardian or Guardian thereof, any number (not exceeding the number to be then elected) of persons who are severally rated to the poor-rate of any parish in the Union, in respect of property of the annual value or rental of £25. The proposal must be written, and state the names residences, and callings of the person proposed, and the name of the proposer, and must be delivered to one of the Churchwardens and Overseers of such parish on or before the 2nd Instant.

Owners of rateable property in such parish, as well as rate-payers, are entitled to vote, provided their names are on the register of owners; or if they send in to the Churchwardens and Overseers before the Day of Election their claims to vote, with a statement of their names and address, and a description of their property.

Owners may also vote by proxy, but proxies must make the statements above mentioned for their principals, and transmit to the Churchwardens and Overseers the originals or attested copies of their appointments.

In case of a contest for the office of Guardian in any of the said parishes, the votes will be given in papers, to be left by the Churchwardens and Overseers, ten days at least before the day fixed for the Election, at the Houses of those residents of the parish who are entitled to vote. All residents out of the parish, and all persons who become entitled after that day, must apply to one of the Churchwardens and Overseers for voting papers on the Day of Election.

The Forms of Nomination, Papers, Statements of Owners, and Appointment of Proxy, may be seen and copied by voters at the Board Room, in Ashby – de – la – Zouch.

**John Davenport
Clerk to the Board of
Guardians**

Ashby – de – la – Zouch, 3rd March 1838.

.....

CONTRACTING FOR THE SUPPLY OF GOODS TO THE WORKHOUSE

ASHBY – DE – LA – ZOUCHE UNION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

To all persons desirous of contracting for the supply of the undermentioned articles, from the 25th day of March Instant, to the 25th day of June next, that Proposals in Writing, addressed to the clerk to the Board of Guardians, Ashby – de- la – Zouch, sealed up and marked outside, "Tender For" – (specifying the articles) will be received on or before the 16th day of March Instant.

The Union for the purpose of supplying Bread is divided into the following districts:- No.1. Ashby de la Zouch workhouse and Town, Staunton, Calke, Worthington and **Osgathorpe**. - No.2. Hartshorne, Blackfordby, Overseal, Netherseal, Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe, Willesley, Stretton –en-le-Field, Ticknall and Smisby. – No.3. Measham, Appleby, Snarestone, Swepstone, Normanton, and Heather. – No.4. Packington, ravenstone, Hugglesctote Whitwick, Coleorton, and Thringstone. For all other purposes Tenders are to be sent in for the whole Unions, which comprise the above mentioned parishes.

BREAD, GROCERIES, &C.

Bread, good seconds, at per 4lb. loaf ; Flour, good seconds, at per stone ; Oatmeal, at per bushel of 32 pounds ; Yellow soap, at per cwt. of 112 lbs ; Patina Rice, at per pounds ; Peas, at per bushel ; Good Cheese, at per cwt. of 112 lbs, Leicestershire and Derbyshire ; Black Tea, at per lbs ; Raw Sugar, at per pound ; Coffee, at per pound ; Coal, at per ton ; Salt, at per cwt. of 112 lbs ; Dip Candles, at per dozen pounds ; Good Mutton Fore Quarters ; Good Beef, Beds, Rounds, (taken off at the joints) Sticking Pieces, and Shoulder Pieces, without bone ; Beef and Mutton Suet ; all the above at per pound : Offals at per set.

Good substantial coffins, to be made of Elm for paupers of the age of fourteen years or upwards at per coffin ; for paupers under the age of fourteen at per coffin.

Any person may contract for one or more of the districts, Samples and Specimens of the several articles must be delivered at the Workhouse in Ashby de la Zouch, (except meat, coals and coffins) on or before the 16th day of March Instant.

The articles must be delivered free of expense, by the Contractors, at such places within the respective Districts as the Board of Guardians may from time to time appoint, and the whole of the articles contracted for are to be supplied at such times and in such quantities as may be required ; and if not found to be of equal quality with the samples will be returned.

The payments to be made monthly, and the Contractors will be required to give adequate security for the due performance of their several contracts. No tenders will be noticed which are not sent in by the 16th day of March Instant.

By order of the Board

John Davenport

Clerk

Ashby de la Zouch, 3rd March, 1838.

Leicester Chronicle – February 24th 1849

ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH UNION

APPOINTMENT OF MEDICAL OFFICERS

The Board of Guardians of the Ashby de la Zouch Union, hereby give notice at the meeting to be held in the board-room on Wednesday, 28th day of February instant, they will proceed to the appointment of a Medical Officer for each of the following districts of the Union for the year ending 25th March 1850, viz :-

District No. 4. – Thringstone, Coleorton, Worthington, **Osgathorpe** and Swannington. **Salary - £34**

The Medical Officer will be required to attend all cases of sickness and surgery, to certify all cases of lunacy, and to provide medicines, leeches, and all appliances (except trusses) for all persons falling ill within their respective districts, whether belonging to any parish in such districts, or otherwise, for attendance on when they will receive a written order from the relieving officer, or other competent authority.

The candidate will be expected to possess the necessary qualifications as required by the Poor Law Commissioners order published the 24th July 1847, a copy of which can be seen at my office at any time previous to the day of selection.

John Davenport

Clerk to the Guardians

Ashby de la Zouch, 20th February 1849

Leicester Chronicle - December 13th 1862

ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH PETTY SESSIONS, SATURDAY DECEMBER 6TH

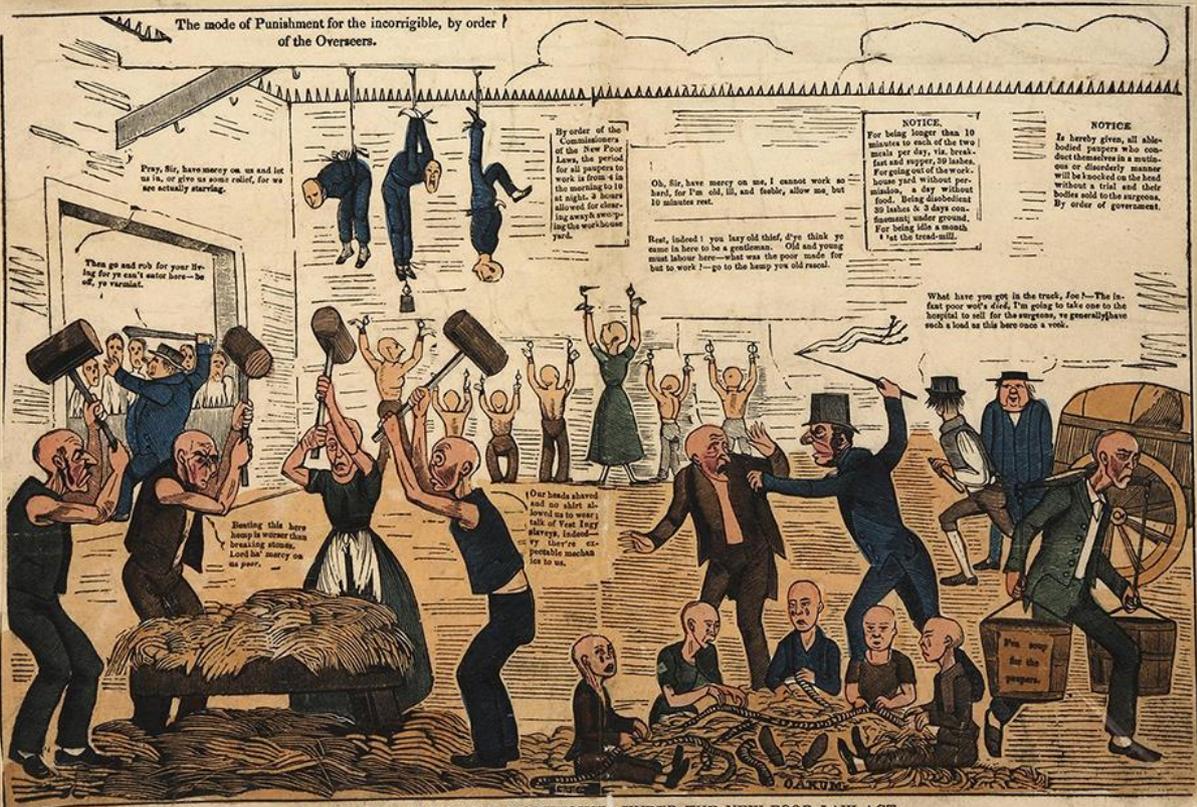
Mr. Arnold, governor of the Ashby Union, charged **Robert Young, a vagrant, of Osgathorpe**, with refusing to obey the orders of the Workhouse, &c. He was admitted into the house on the preceding evening in a filthy state and refused to be washed or have his body anointed, as ordered by the doctor. **Verdict - One month's hard labour and the magistrates remarked that he would be well washed when he got to Leicester.**

Grimsby, Grimsby, Staunton, and Calke.
Board of Guardians - Saturday, January 11th, 1873 -
Present: Chairman, M. Shields, Esq.; Vice-chairman, Mr. Newbold; Revs. J. Denton, W. C. Hodgson, Messrs. Love, Wright, Faux, Biddulph, Fox, Dennis, Yeomans, Thirlby, Kidger, B. Thirlby, Townshend, Edge, Stubbs.—
Indoor: Number in the house 155, last year 173; attendance at school, boys 17, last year 16; girls 25, last year 29; total 42, last year 45—**Out-door,** 1 and 2 districts, number relieved 1072, last year 1,285; money £58 0s. 0d., last year £64 11s. 6d.; bread £21 6s. 10d., last year £21 11s. 6d.; total, £79 6s. 10d., last year, £86 3s. 0d.—
Treasurer's balance. £511 8s. 4d.—**Cheques** were signed for £177 15s. 1d.—**Visitors** for January, Messrs. Fox, Booth, and German.—**Contribution Orders.**—Resolved that the following contribution orders be made upon the several parishes for the next quarters, viz: Ashby-de-la-Zouch £520, Appleby (Leicester) £65, ditto (Derby) £49; Bardon £22, Blackfordby £44, Calke £22, Coleorton £82, Hartshorne £137, Heather £49, Hugglescote £141, Measham £121, Normanton £47, Oakthorpe £62, Osgathorpe £37, Packington (Leicester) £126, ditto (Derby) £27, Ravenstone £68, Seales £190, Smisby £27, Snarestone £54, Staunton £45, Stretton £58, Swannington £147, Swepstone £93, Ticknall £79, Whitwick £229, Willesley £24, Worthington **£79**

Synopsis of the minutes of the Ashby Union Board of Guardians meeting on January 11th 1873, which provides details of the numbers of those in the Ashby Workhouse and those being relieved in the parishes, referred to as Out-door, together with expenditure. Also included are the contributions to be paid by the parishes who form the various districts of the Ashby, Union. The **Osgathorpe** contribution being set at £37 per quareter.

District No. 4. - Thringstone, Coleorton, Worthington, **Osgathorpe** and Swannington.

The New POOR LAW with a description of the new Workhouses Look at the Picture—See



INTERIOR OF AN ENGLISH WORKHOUSE UNDER THE NEW POOR LAW ACT.