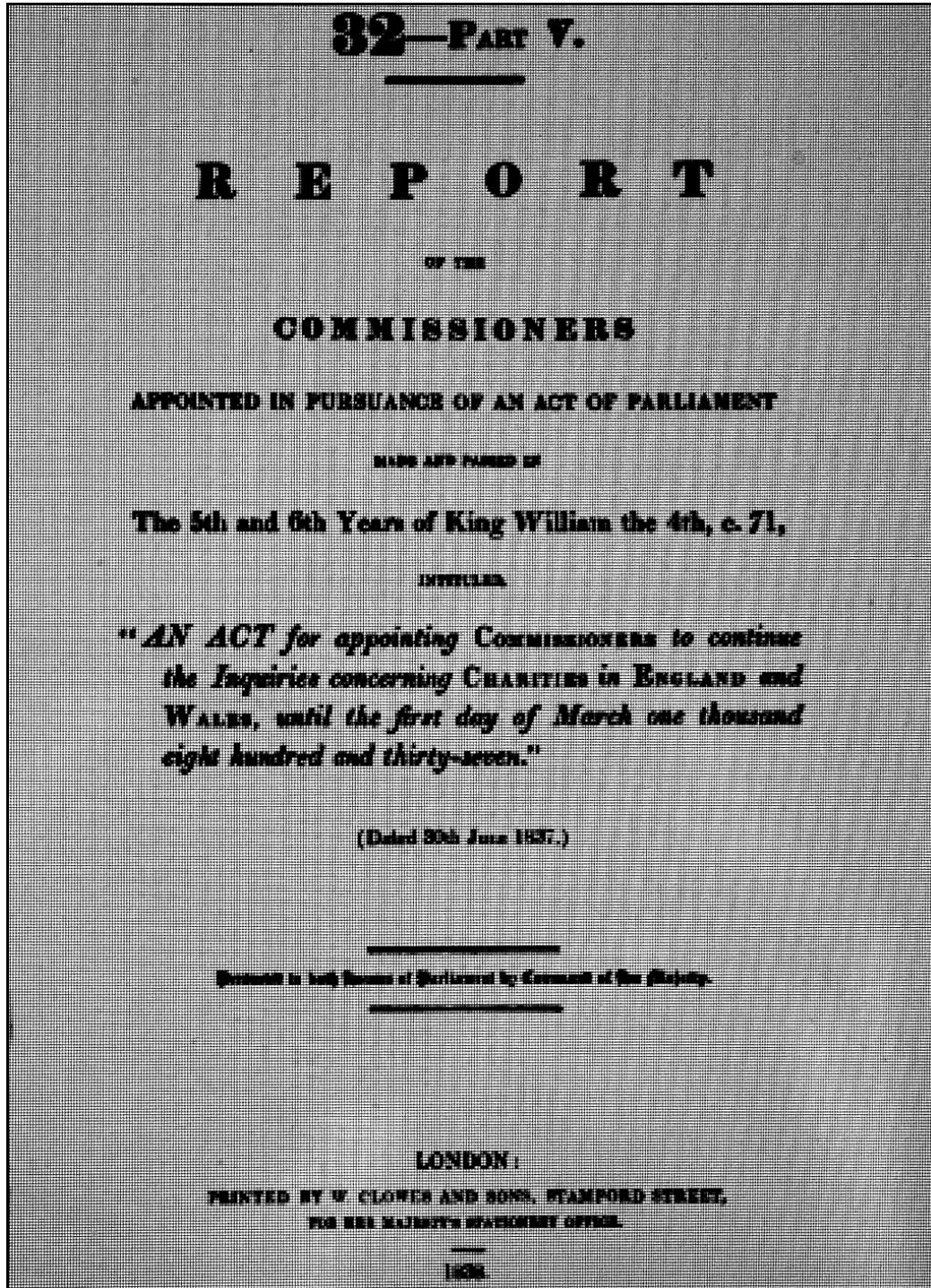


**'MARGARET MEAD'S CHARITY' RELATING TO
OSGATHORPE, BELTON AND THRINGSTONE
INCLUDING AN 1837 REPORT
BY THE CHARITY COMMISSIONERS**



BY SAMUEL T STEWART - NOVEMBER 2023

Margaret Mead of Osgathorpe was buried in St. Mary's Church, Osgathorpe graveyard on 27th June 1707 having made her will on the 25th of July 1705. The burial records indicate that her grave had a headstone with an inscription. There is no record of her in the Osgathorpe parish baptism records, so we do not know when or where she was born at the time of writing.

The following is transcribed form the first and most significant part of the 1837 Charity Commissioner's report, which features in full on pages 4 to 6 :-

Margaret Mead owned land and hereditaments in Belton and Osgathorpe and in her will she devised to the Church Wardens of Osgathorpe and their successors a rent charge of £5 per annum out of her lands and hereditaments, to be paid free from deductions, by equal payments, at Michaelmas and Lady Day in each year, which was to be disposed of in buying 2s. worth of bread every week (except Christmas week and the week following); 1s. worth of the said bread she directed the said wardens or overseers to distribute on each Sunday (except as aforesaid) to such of the poor of Osgathorpe as should be aged and impotent, and should have been at the parish church on such Sunday; and the other 1s. worth of the said bread to be given by the said persons, or the baker of Osgathorpe, at the parish Church every Friday in every week (except the weeks aforesaid), between the hours of 10 and 12 in the forenoon to such of the poor of the neighbouring villages to Osgathorpe (these would have been Belton and Thringstone) as should come on the day for the same.

And the said Testatrix gave to the Church wardens of Osgathorpe and Belton, and their successors, one other rent charge of £10, out of the aforesaid hereditaments, to be paid on the days aforesaid, without any deduction whatsoever, and to be yearly disposed of in apprenticing in some good trade within the city of London, or the weekly bills of mortality, a poor boy born in one of the parishes of Osgathorpe, Belton or Thringstone (within the parish of Whitwick), in the county of Leicester, to be chosen by the minister and churchwardens of Osgathorpe and the next Justice of the Peace residing next to such parishes, or any three of them, whereof the minister of Osgathorpe, should always be one, and to be selected the first year out of the parish of Osgathorpe, the second year out of the parish of Belton, and the third year out of the village of Thringstone, and so out of one of the said parishes in the same course, one after another, alternately and successively : and she directed that the boys so to be put out apprentice should be born of honest parents, and be perfect in their parts both of body and mind, and should be expert in reading and writing, and understand the four first rules of arithmetic (**add, subtract, divide and multiply**), and should repeat without book, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the catechism of the Church of England, and be educated in the principals of that communion, and should be between the ages of 14 and 18 years ; and that such boys who should be of kin to her, and should be qualified as aforesaid, should be preferred above all others : and she ordered that, **out of the first receipt of the rent charge of £10, three brass plates should be made, on which should be engraved as account of the said gifts; one of such plates to be set up in a convenient and conspicuous place in every of the parish churches of Osgathorpe, Belton and Whitwick.**

In 1752, information was filed in 'The Court of Chancery' by the Attorney General relating to the fact that the poor people of the villages could not afford to send their children to be apprenticed in London taking into account the small sum of £10 to be allotted, whereby the charitable intentions of the Testatrix were defeated and 'The master of The Rolls' decreed that boys would be appointed out of the villages of

Osgathorpe, Belton and Thringstone and to be apprenticed out in proper trades near to the nominated parishes or villages.

The author has carried out some research into what happened to Margaret Mead's charity. The current Charity Commission website shows that individual charities for an apprentice boy were actually established separately in Osgathorpe, Belton and Thringstone.

- Thringstone (Charity number 527814) was registered on 30th November 1967 and known as 'Thringstone Vicar and Churchwardens'. It was removed and ceased to exist on 19th October 2004. No accounts and annual returns available.
- Osgathorpe (Charity number 527869) ceased to exist on 31st March 2016 as it had no income or expenditure.
- Belton (Charity number 527815) ceased to exist from 2nd May 2019 as it only had an annual income of £6.

[A gentleman who was living in Osgathorpe as a young man, recalls receiving a gift of £10 from the trust towards an apprenticeship c.1963.](#)

MARGARET MEAD'S CHARITY.

Margaret Mead, by Will, dated the 25th day of July 1705, devised to the churchwardens of Osgathorpe and their successors a rent-charge of 5*l.* per annum out of her lands and hereditaments in Osgathorpe and Belton, to be paid, free from all deductions, by equal payments, at Michaelmas and Lady-day in each year, and to be disposed of in buying 2*s.* worth of bread every week (except Christmas week and the week following); 1*s.* worth whereof she directed the said churchwardens or the overseers to distribute on each Sunday (except as aforesaid) to such of the poor of Osgathorpe as should be aged and impotent, and should have been at the parish church on such Sunday; and the other 1*s.* worth of the said bread to be given by the said persons, or the baker of Osgathorpe, at the parish church every Friday in every week (except the weeks aforesaid), between the hours of 10 and 12 in the forenoon, to such of the poor of the neighbouring towns to Osgathorpe as should come on that day for the same. And the said testatrix gave to the churchwardens of Osgathorpe and Belton, and their successors, one other rent-charge of 10*l.* out of the aforesaid hereditaments, to be paid on the days aforesaid, without any deduction whatsoever, and to be yearly disposed of in apprenticing to some good trade within the city of London, or the weekly bills of mortality, a poor boy born in one of the parishes of Osgathorpe and Belton, or in Thringstone, in the parish of Whitwick, in the county of Leicester, to be chosen by the minister and churchwardens of Osgathorpe and the next justice of the peace residing next to such parish, or any three of them, whereof the minister of Osgathorpe always should be one, and to be selected the first year out of the parish of Osgathorpe, the second year out of the parish of Belton, and the third year out of the village of Thringstone, and so out of one of the said parishes in the same course, one after other, alternately and successively: and she directed that the boys so to be put out apprentice should be born of honest parents, and be perfect in their parts both of body and mind, and should be expert in reading and writing, and understand the

four first rules of arithmetic, and should readily repeat, without book, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Catechism of the Church of England, and be educated in the religion and principles of that communion, and should be between the age of 14 and 18 years; and that such boys as should be of kin to her, and should be so qualified as aforesaid, should be preferred before all others: and she ordered that, out of the first receipt of the rent-charge of 10*l.*, three brass plates should be made, on which should be graven an account of the said gifts; one of such plates to be set up in some convenient and conspicuous place in every of the parish churches of Osgathorpe, Belton, and Whitwick, and to be renewed as there should be occasion; and that out of the same rent-charge three large parchment books should be bought, in each of which should be written a true copy of her Will and the names of the boys to be appointed, and of their masters, with their respective trades. And

she further directed that once in every 20 years a survey and description should be taken of the lands and hereditaments charged with the aforesaid annual payments, which should be written into each of the said parchment books, and be subscribed and attested by the persons who took the same, and that the costs of such survey should be also paid out of the rent-charge of 10*l.*: and she desired that so much of her Will as should concern the said charities should every Palm Sunday be read in the parish churches of Osgathorpe, Belton, and Whitwick, by the respective ministers thereof, immediately after Divine service in the forenoon or afternoon, before the sermon: and she declared that such of the said parishes whose ministers should neglect to read the same should forfeit the sum of 10*l.* the next turn that it would be otherwise payable to such parish, and that such sums should be paid to such of the said three parishes as should be next in turn to the one so forfeiting the same: and she further declared that such parchment books should be provided, and a copy of her Will and other matters aforesaid be entered therein, and such surveys taken, and brass inscriptions made and set up, under the like forfeiture for every of the said three parishes which should neglect to do the same. And the testatrix gave to the minister of Osgathorpe 20*s.* yearly out of her real estate, on the first Sunday in Whitsun week, for reading prayers every Friday, and to see that the poor should not be wronged of her intended charity, and for reading her Will once a year.

In the year 1752 an information was filed in the Court of Chancery by the Attorney-General, at the relation of the churchwardens and overseers of Osgathorpe, Belton, and Whitwick, against Abraham Alleyne and Mary Allestree, whereby, after stating that none of the rent-charges devised by the said testatrix had been paid, except a small sum for the purchase of some books and plates for perpetuating the memory of the said charity, and that,

by reason of the great distance of the said parishes from London, and the smallness of the sum allotted for putting each boy apprentice, the people of the said parishes refused to send their children so far from home, whereby the charitable intention of the testatrix was defeated; It was prayed that the rent-charge of 10*l.* might be applied in placing out such children as by the said Will should be entitled thereto unto some trade or business in or near the aforesaid parishes, and that the defendants might be ordered to pay the said rent-charge and all arrears thereof.

By a decree of the Master of the Rolls, made in the said cause, bearing date the 9th day of March 1752, one boy was ordered to be forthwith nominated out of each of the parishes of Osgathorpe and Belton, and the village of Thringstone, according to the directions of the testatrix, and to be placed out apprentices to proper trades in or near the said several parishes or village, with a sum of 10*l.* to be paid by the defendants for each of the said boys; and it was referred to one of the Masters of the Court to take an account of the arrears of the

said charity of 10*l.* per annum: and it was decreed that such arrears, and the growing payments thereof, should be annually applied towards placing out apprentice one boy of the parishes of Osgathorpe and Belton, and the village of Thringstone, alternately, according to the aforesaid Will, to some proper trade in or near the said parishes or village; the first boy to be chosen out of Osgathorpe, the second boy out of Belton, and the third boy out of Thringstone.

A survey of the property charged with the above annual sums was made in 1734, according to the direction of the testatrix, and was then found to contain in the parishes of Belton and Osgathorpe of—

	A.	R.	P.	
Inclosed land	66	1	31	
Uninclosed land	14	2	18	in Brand Field.
"	12	1	2	Grace Dieu ditto.
"	0	3	5	Belton ditto.
"	15	3	11	Dodgyford ditto.
	<u>109</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>27</u>	

And again in 1763 another survey was taken, which differed from the former one as to the number of acres in each field, although the total quantity reported was nearly the same, viz., 108*a.* 1*r.* 1*p.*

Upon the inclosure of the open fields in Belton and Osgathorpe the following exchanges were made:—

A.	R.	P.		A.	R.	P.
0	1	34	in Brand Field for	0	3	36 in same field.
1	0	23	Dodgyford Field for	0	1	38 ditto.
2	0	11	Grace Dieu do. "	2	0	38 ditto.
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>28</u>		<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>32</u>

No further survey appears to have been since taken.

The whole of the land now constitutes a farm, called the Hall Farm, containing about 106*a.* in the possession of Mr. Benjamin Johnson, by whom it was purchased, subject to the several before-mentioned rent-charges. These are annually paid by him, as follows, viz., 5*l.* to the parish clerk of Osgathorpe, by whom the bread directed to be purchased with that sum is ordered; 10*l.* to the master of the boy apprenticed under this charity, and 1*l.* to the minister of Osgathorpe for his own use. One boy is annually apprenticed, alternately out of the three parishes mentioned by the testatrix; and this appears to have been regularly done since the decree of the Master of the Rolls before referred to.

When this parish is entitled to receive the benefit of the 10*l.* public notice of it is given in the church after Divine service, and the persons who are desirous of having their children apprenticed are required to apply to the minister. From the applications he receives, five or six boys, who are considered the most deserving and the greatest objects of charity, and whose parents are not in the receipt of parochial relief, are selected and sent to the minister of Osgathorpe, to be examined by him in the several matters in which they were required by the testatrix to be proficient; and that boy is chosen who passes the best examination.

The boys are usually bound to a master residing in the neighbourhood. The fitness of the masters is investigated by the officers of the parish from which the boy comes.

The last time that a boy was apprenticed from this parish previous to the Inquiry was in 1834.

The brass plates commemorating her gifts were put up in the three churches as directed by the testatrix; and in each of the three parishes books are also kept, in which her Will is copied, and the names of the boys apprenticed, and of their masters, are entered.

SUMMING UP

MARGARET MEAD'S CHARITY.

The Will of *Margaret Mead* has been already fully recited in the Report of this charity in the parish of Belton, *ante*, p. 368, on reference to which it will be found that an annual sum of 5*l.*, charged on certain lands, is directed to be laid out in the purchase of bread to be distributed in this parish; that a further sum of 10*l.*, charged on the same lands, is directed by the testatrix to be applied once in every three years in apprenticing a boy belonging to this parish; and that 1*l.* is given to the minister for his trouble in superintending the distribution of the bread and reading prayers every Friday.

The 5*l.* are laid out and distributed in bread as directed by the testatrix, *viz.*, six twopenny loaves are given away at the church every Sunday except in Christmas week and the week following, to the same number of poor persons of the parish who have attended Divine service; and the same quantity is distributed every Friday except in the week aforesaid, to such poor persons of the neighbouring parishes as may come for it.

With respect to the 10*l.* for apprenticing a boy, a similar notice is given in the church when this parish is entitled to that sum, as has been already mentioned in the case of Belton, and from the number of applications received by the minister he selects that boy who is found most proficient in the several matters on which he is required by the testatrix to be examined. A boy was apprenticed from this parish the year of the Inquiry (1836).

The 1*l.* is received by the minister, who superintends the distribution of the bread, but it does not appear that prayers have been read by him on Fridays.