

## THE SHIPMEADOW UNION HOUSE.

EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF AN INMATE OF SHIPMEADOW

UNION HOUSE, FROM 1837 TO APRIL, 1850.

BY MRS. E. MANN.

This Poor Law Institution was built in the year 1765 at the cost of about £8,500. At the time of its erection and for many years later the chief employment carried on in it was spinning for the Norwich manufacturers.

With the closing of the Institution in this year, 1838, some stray notes relating to its inmates in the earlier part of the last century may be of interest. They are taken principally from the diary of one of them, who had been a Schoolmaster in Bungay, a well educated man who through intemperance and extravagance found himself at the age of 50 in desperate circumstances.

He entered the Union House on Thursday, the 28th Dec., 1837; and occupied his spare time in writing his recollections of Bungay and occasionally made entries in a Day-book when anything took place to break the monotony of his daily life.

1839. April 20th. Left the House for a few days and proceeded to Bungay, Mrs. S. 1/-. Monday to Topcroft. T.T. 6d. dined with a friend & returned in the evening to Bungay.

23rd. Dined with Mr. A. & spent the evening with R. White. Lodged the four nights at Mrs. King's very comfortably and Wednesday the 24th returned to Shipmeadow — ALL RIGHT.

He appears to have had two or three rounds that he took at intervals when he called at various houses on the road and begged for money or anything else he could get. I find from his notes that he sometimes obtained several sovereigns in cash, besides clothes and very often food. "ALL RIGHT" was his way of expressing his return to the House "*Sober.*"

Sept. 16th. Resumed labour—loading gravel in the pit. Much distressed by the bodily exertion—too great for me.

1840. Feb. 10. The Queen's wedding day. By request of Mr. George Baker & by permission of the Governor, I went to Bungay. A very wet and disagreeable day. Kindly invited to dinner by Mr. Todd at the King's Head, but 6 o'clock in the evening being the appointed time to return, declined attending lest I should be detained too late. Returned about  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 6. Did not enjoy the day. Friends hospitable as usual. Mr. T. C. 1/-. .

March 10th. At this time only one-able-bodied man in the House.

1841. June 17th. Left Shipmeadow for Bungay to confer with Mr. Hayward respecting fixtures for a Schoolroom, etc. Consulted with Mr. Baker about raising the "Wind," issued circulars & called on various people. (Some of his friends in the town were trying to start him again with a few pupils but his intemperate habits rendered their efforts useless).

24th. Thursday. Took possession of Mr. Mayhew's lodging in Bungay & the following Monday opened school in the room, late Mr. H's, with only two pupils.

July 13. Attended a meeting at the New Theatre. (Teetotal). On the 16th signed the Pledge.

Sept. 18. Went to H.D.'s of St. Peter's & he engaged to send me three pupils—dined at Adam's & returned at 4 o'clock on Sunday afternoon, attending chapel in the evening.

Returned to Shipmeadow, Wednesday, Oct. 13th. (SICK).

1842. March 21. Meet with what might have been a most serious accident if not a fatal one but for the interfering mercy of Almighty God. Fell from the floor of a granary into the area below in the Mill house; 8 feet. Much bruised—right elbow and back. Spine restored by God's blessing on medical assistance but feel the effects of it still, this 27th of April.

May 5. In the midst of all my privations & mortifications which my present residence subject me to, I meet with many instructive lessons to teach me submission and resignation and to silence inward murmurings or expressions of discontent in others. There is a poor old man here, 88 years of age, who until very lately has been employed here in the exercise of his business, a tailor, although by the present regulation (of the falsely so-called amendment) of the Poor Laws, he is not entitled to receive any remuneration for his services, yet he derived certain little privileges from his ability to render himself useful: but being now nearly deprived of his sight by age and indefatigable attention to his said employment, he is now incapable of any further service. This old man has paternal claims on children now living, both male and female, who have means of contributing to his comfort to a certain degree. Yet these children not only withhold these, but refuse to correspond with or answer letters which myself have written for him.

Now so far as this applies to myself, the former (paternal claims) I have none. Relatives, I have none,—time has removed them,—former friends, my imprudence has alienated and I justly experience their neglect and must silence all claims to their further attentions. Yet I am preserved in some health, my natural faculties, such as God thought fit to bless me with, are unimpaired and I can still enjoy the humble fare furnished to me by the powers that be.

Employed in the Mill house from the first week in March to Saturday the 28th of May.

June 22. Obtained liberty for two days. Went to Beccles and met my friend Mr. M. A. on the road. Dined at Mr. Smith's on eggs, bacon, etc. In the afternoon walked to Worlingham and Cove: returned and slept at Beccles. The day following breakfasted at Mr. Wright's and dined at Smith's, as yesterday. Set off for home in the afternoon and arriving at 5 o'clock was searched by the porter—lost  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of vinegar, newspapers, etc. Amounts received 6/2. Disbursement 3/7. In hand 2/7.

August 17. In the evening went to Mr. Bewicke's. Afterwards read "What do ye more than others," likewise "The last hours of the Rev. Jno. Cowper," written by his brother, the late Wm. Cowper, Esq., author of "The Task," from which I derived much spiritual instruction.

Infalible remedy for a cold or troublesome cough.

$\frac{1}{4}$  oz. finest salad oil.

1 oz. paregoric Elixir.

30 to 35 drops of Opium.

Dose 2 tablespoons in a wine-glass of water.

Note.—I am a decided enemy to Quackery, this was given me by an eminent medical man and I have witnessed so many instances of its salutary effect, that I feel bound to recommend it generally, except in instances of a confirmed or constitutional cough occasioning consumption.

Men balance a moment in possession against an eternity of anticipation but the moment passeth away and the eternity is yet to come.

Dec. 25. *Sunday 1842 Christmas Day.* Left (on leave) for two days. Went to St. Andrews. Breakfasted at G. Stannard's and attended service at the Wesleyan Chapel—here the Rev. Fish, a stranger, preached from the 2nd Luke, 14th verse. An excellent discourse. I was highly gratified. Dined at Mr. Green's and in the afternoon attended St. Andrew's Church. The Rev. F. Barkway preached from Luke 14, verse 30. "And the servant said, Lord it is done as thou commandest and yet there is room." I was much pleased with the sermon—plain language but at the same time very impressive to apparently a most attentive audience and the Preacher thought fit to give me a very savoury relish to it. I sat in the pew adjoining the desk and in descending from the pulpit, he honoured me with a cordial shake of the hand; observing "put this in your pocket," and I sensibly felt the pressure of a coin in my palm. On examining, discovered her gracious Majesties picture set in silver (not a miniature). The like had not occupied a place in my fob for a long time and I welcomed the stranger and silently said to myself, "Sir, I have done as thou commandest me and yet there is room." In the evening attended the Wesleyan Chapel at Bungay.

1843. In January of this year there were 256 inmates in the House.

17th. A pretty row in the Hall at the dinner hour amongst the juveniles. They committed a successful assault on the stores (pudding) and carried the same by storm. Six of the ringleaders were afterwards

conveyed, in irons, to Bungay to appear before the Magistrates for examination. The results were that these and three additional ones were conveyed to Fort Beccles as prisoners of WAR.

Feb. 8. Further trouble at Shipmeadow. The men refuse to quit the Hall without more food but afterwards retire. Frequent meetings take place this Spring about the question of food and in April Sir John Walsham attends the meeting of the guardians to discuss the dietary and the cause of the late disturbances.

March 31. Left employment at the Mill house, grinding being given up. No superintendent being necessary I rejoined the society in the old men's room, much to my regret.

April 7. I this day complete my 66th year. What portion of this departed period has been devoted to God my Creator? Momentary enquiry, I might here exclaim with King Richard, "Conscience, avaunt, thy clamour is too loud."

1843. Nov. 22. This morning, about 5 o'clock, an alarm of fire was raised throughout the house. I, with the rest of my associates arose and dressed ourselves, principally by the assistance of the light from the flames. About 10 minutes elapsed before the doors were unlocked to set us at liberty but this short time was indeed productive of much anxiety. The fire had originated in the cellar, directly under the Laundry, in which a quantity of Oakum had been deposited. The general opinion at the time was, that this was set on fire by some persons who by means of a false key obtained entrance to the cellar. Suspicious circumstances have already been brought to light which favour this opinion. The matter is now undergoing strict investigation. In about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour the flames were got under and all fear for the safety of this large establishment subsided so that by 8 o'clock, the usual breakfast hour, the pauper population were served with their morning meal. Great credit is due to the Governor and subordinate officers. There appears nothing less than a Providential interference in the circumstances that led to the discovery of the fire. The stable door, on the previous night, had not been effectually secured, so that the horse got out and wandered up the yard directly to the window (on the 1st floor) of the room in which the ostler slept. He, hearing the horse, immediately got up to secure him and instantly discovered the fire and gave the alarm. A young woman named Watson, drew on a pair of Mr. Riches' boots and with no other protection from the cold, except a petticoat and a nightgown, entered the pond and filled pails of water for the men—an act of female heroism that was very honorable. She possesses a robust constitution and is rather good looking in person—in character, as respects chastity, etc., etc., NIL. Frailty, thy name is WOMAN.

1844. Jan. 1. Went to work in St. Andrew's Chapel, lettering the pews and the dial plate of the clock.

Sunday 7. Returned to Shipmeadow at 4 in the afternoon to the Probationary room and to my own on the following Tuesday. P.S. Paupers in a very disorderly state, rioting continuing day and night.

Jan. 13. I think as many as thirteen policemen made their appearance this morning, the able bodied men having forced their door and rioting continued until 10 o'clock, when a committee assembled with two Magistrates and the men were confined in custody of the police, in the Hall and conducted to the Committee room, two at a time, for examination. 12 were conveyed away in the evening in irons. The conduct of the women was equally violent and more destructive. They broke every pane of glass in the room, destroyed and burnt chairs, forms and all they could lay their hands on.

On the 19th of February Sir John Walsham, Assistant Commissioner, and 30 guardians met at Shipmeadow House when a report of the riot was presented and an enquiry took place, which turned much against the Governor. Ten days later a letter was received from the Commissioners and the Governor was recommended to resign. Editor.

The next entry in the diary is as follows: "Extract 1844. The following we receive from a correspondent at Bungay. The anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo is, we understand to be celebrated with more than usual festivities on the evening of the 18th June at the Wangford Hundred Union House at Shipmeadow in this County. The reason for the extended preparations now making here is this. The present Governor of this Establishment after completing seven years of *Misrule, Tyranny & Oppression* on this day resigns his authority (which he never ought to have possessed) and leaves to other hands the Ruins.

It has been suggested by certain Paupers now in the House that it is advisable that a public Thanksgiving be held on the morning of the day *in the Hall*, to express our religious feeling for the National and local Blessing that, under the Guidance of a Divine Providence, distinguishes this 18th June.

June 18. Tuesday. Mr. Charles Hammond took possession of Shipmeadow House, as Governor.

August 12. On leave for one day. Went to Bungay and see Van Amburgh's cavalcade of horses and carriages with trained animals. Very handsome horses, etc. A fine Brass band consisting of 16 performers. Saw Mr. Smith, solicitor.

13. Returned about 5 in the evening.

15. Receiving an allowance from our Committee of 2/6, I this day left, intending to employ myself in a few Jobs I had engaged in. But this has turned out a most unfortunate adventure. I set off for Beccles, being engaged one day at Mr. W.'s, stone-mason, but he was from home. I employed the afternoon in waiting at "the White Lion." Between 8 and 9 in the evening, returning home from Red Lion St. to my lodgings, I was walking on the flagstone path, but on the roadside. I heard a carriage coming somewhat rapidly, made an ineffectual effort to evade it but setting my foot on a rolling stone, it threw me down in the wrong direction. The wheel caught me violently, threw me down and passed over my leg. Some person assisted me up. I was stunned by the fall but heard a voice enquiring

"I hope S. you are not much hurt." This was no other than Mr. Hammond, the Governor, who was driving the gig in question. He took me to a near druggist's shop and had my face washed and plastered and I hasten to the White Lion and went to bed, not fully aware of the extent of the injury I had sustained until the morning when I found my right leg and knee dreadfully bruised, right wrist violently sprained and left arm much hurt, etc.

16th. Disabled for some time from employment so thought it best to return to Shipmeadow as soon as possible. Set off in the evening for Bungay to obtain a note of admission from the relieving officer. Sleep this night at "the Angel."

Aug. 17. Visited Mr. Butcher for a note—he referred me to the Governor stating that as I had received a week's allowance, he could not undertake the responsibility of giving me a note. I then went to Shipmeadow, waited on Mr. Hammond who had the same opinion and I was obliged to proceed to Beccles, almost destitute. Slept again at "the White Horse."

18. Monday. Walked to Worlingham, from thence to St. Margarets and on to Bungay. Compelled this day to walk 16 miles, notwithstanding the bad contusion on my knee.

20. Returned to Shipmeadow, got admitted to receiving ward and to my own room the following day.

No more entries, except accounts, until 1846.

June 29. Having received permission for one day's absence, walked to Worlingham. Called at R. Jarman's printing office and here I accidentally, I mean providentially, met an old friend, whose voluntary bounty enabled me to procure several little trifles I stood much in need of. Left Beccles at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 5 and arrived home about 7. "ALLS WELL."

Sept. 8. To Beccles, and Worlingham to-day. Not very well. Returned home about 6 o'clock, much fatigued.

9th. Somewhat better. Apply to Mr. Currie (doctor), I hoped against hope that he would have allowed me a week's animal food to renew my exhausted strength but No. Well I can rely and I have abundant cause to rely on the heavenly Physician in sickness and in health. To Him and to his care I can faithfully commit myself. Nervous debility prevent my now writing more.

The writer of these notes would constantly take a week's absence during the Summer months. One of his expeditions when on leave, was to Hedenham, Topcroft, Seething and as far as Claxton. There were various places on the road where he was always sure of a meal and he slept at the public houses on the way. He would beg from various acquaintances in Bungay to start with, thus getting a few shillings together to help him on his journey. His great difficulty was to return to the Workhouse "All right" as he describes it.

1847. April 19. Monday. Two paupers, man and wife, were admitted to the House; they had lately inhabited a cottage in Shipmeadow. On Wednesday the 21st the woman, while changing her

dress, expressed some anxiety about two bags in her possession. Mrs. Hammond on taking hold of them, found them to be heavy; they weighed  $6\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. She referred to the Governor who came and examined them and found them to contain gold and silver to the amount of £296, including two securities on the Norwich Bank. The parties were conveyed before a Magistrate in the afternoon and the man was committed to Beccles gaol for a hearing at the next Quarter Sessions. N.B. The cash amounted to £132 0s. 4d.

1849. January 10th. A most important change takes place at Shipmeadow, viz. outdoor relief to the abled bodied. The House is too full and Oakum is given to them at home to pick—4 lbs. per man.

1850. On the night of the 25th January 413 paupers slept at Shipmeadow House, a greater number than at any period since I have been an inmate. 40 beds were made up in the large Board Room and some in the Library.

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To all who it may concern.

Be it known that I am perfectly indifferent as to the deposition of my mortal remains after death. But if any of my surviving friends think fit to render me a favour, I should like (there being a stone erected, in the burying ground of St. Mary's, Bungay, to the memory of my lamented wife), the following inscription to be added, after my decease.

Name and date of birth and death and  
 "Tis mercy all immense and free  
 For Oh my God, it found out me."

#### PARISH APPRENTICES.

Parish Apprentices were young persons who were bound out by the Guardians of the poor of England.

By the Poor Relief Act of 1601, overseers were employed, with the consent of two Justices, to put out poor children as apprentices till they were of the age of 21 years or before, if they married "where they may be convenient."

From the unwillingness of persons to receive such apprentices, it became necessary to make the reception compulsory in 1696.

The number of paupers at Shipmeadow in 1818 was about 200. Before the Incorporation of the Wangford Hundred, i.e. 1706 to 1762, the Indentures of Apprentices were signed by two Churchwardens of the parish, two Overseers and two Justices of the Peace.

A fine of £10 was obliged to be paid by anyone refusing to take the apprentice allotted to him. It was not until 1844 that the Act was abolished which compelled tradespeople and others to take poor children from the Workhouse.

Amongst some 40 or 50 Indentures of Parish Apprentices relating to and dating from the reign of Queen Anne to 1755 it is required "That the poor child shall dwell and serve his Master, until he accomplish the full age of 24 years, during which time he shall his said Master faithfully serve in all lawful businesses, according to his Power, Wit, and Ability; and honestly, orderly and obediently in all things; demean and behave himself towards his said Master and all his."

In return he is to be provided with sufficient Meat, Drink, and Apparel, Lodging, Washing and all things necessary and fit for an Apprentice. He is to be so provided that he is no charge to the Parish during the said term. And at the end of it, he must be provided with double Apparel of all sorts, good and new, that is to say a good new suit for Holy Days and another for working days.

A female Apprentice had to serve until the age of 21 or the day of her marriage.

From the Vestry Book of St. Mary's, Bungay, I have taken a few notes, which relate to the House of Industry at Shipmeadow.

1766, Sept. 30th. It is ordered that if Mary Hawes enter her service at Norwich and stay there one year, that then, if she should have the Small-pox within the year, she will be allowed 40/- towards the Small-pox.

1767. May 5th. Ordered that the Master of the Workhouse be allowed 18d. a week, with each person in the Workhouse, children to be included at that price.

Among the Accounts relating to the House of Industry are some curious entries. "Please to allow the Duke of Boulton twelve shillings towards burying his wife. Given under our hands the 5th May, 1770.

Wm. Pell. Val. Lumley."

24th Sept. 1771. For removing Richd. Bolton to the parish of Hightown, Yorkshire, 216 miles, £12 12s. 6d. (the sum erased).

Sept. 1777. Carrying Brown that dropped down dead in Bungay and belonged to St. James to a public house, 1/10½.

For shroud, laying forth and winding him, coffin, tolling ye bell, minister & clerk for burying and beer £1 8s. 7d.

Overcharge for burying Browne 18/7 which was deducted.

March 19th 1778. Funeral expenses of James Bleak that was drown'd at Wainford, £1 6s. 10d.