

The Workhouse

Introduction

Those unable to support themselves, whether they be whole families, widows, orphans, or the sick were accommodated in the workhouse. Here they were fed and clothed and put to work. The regimes varied in degrees of harshness but generally society perpetuated the concept that people should fear the workhouse. There is evidence suggesting workhouses existed in some places from the 17th century. The system evolved through various stages of legislation and the 1834 Poor Law Act stipulated

that parishes would be grouped into 'unions', each union would have to build a workhouse and that 'relief' would only be given in the workhouses. The same Act created the principle of 'boards of Guardians' which were to oversee the operation of the local workhouse.

Relieving Officers received requests for 'out relief' (ie assistance outside the workhouse) and kept books of account recording what had been paid.

New Workhouse for Malton

Malton Union built a workhouse in 1789, on a site of a previous building at Sheepfoot Hill. It was referred to as Spring Hall for many years, probably because there was a spring on the same ground. An advertisement appeared in 1790 for a workhouse master.

**New erected POOR-HOUSE, at NEW MALTON
WANTED Immediately**

A Person to undertake the Management and employment of the Poor. A handsome Salary will be given to the Person approved of. A Manufacturer will be preferred. The House is very commodious, has an excellent Spring of Water in the Yard, and a large Garden of very rich Land adjoining.

All Letters: Post paid; mentioning fully the Terms of the Person wishing to contract, with the Mode or Method intended for Employment of the Poor, to the Overseers, or Mr. Birch, Attorney, New Malton, will be duly attended to.

Manchester Mercury, 18 May 1790

**NEW MALTON
WORKHOUSE
WANTED**

at MICHAELMAS next,

A MASTER or GOVERNOR to the WORKHOUSE at NEW MALTON in which are usually about thirty Paupers. A Salary of Twenty Guineas a year will be allowed, together with the occupation (Rent and Tax free) of the House, Garden and Orchard, well stocked with Fruit Trees, containing nearly two Acres of Land, and worth upwards of 20L a year, making the whole annual Allowance more than 40L a year. A fair weekly Allowance will also be made for each Pauper. A Weaver, Wood-comber, or other Manufacturer, who would be able to readily instruct and employ the poor Persons and their Children to the greatest advantage, would be preferred; and none but married persons of good character need apply. All applications to be made to JOHN GOODRICK, one of the Overseers of the Poor. MALTON, Sept. 19, 1807.

York Herald, September 26, 1807

In 1807, another advertisement for a master appeared

State of the Workhouse 1818

Proceedings of Committee appointed to enquire into the state of Spring Hall, Malton - Spring Hall 5th November 1818 The above committee inspected the state of the bedrooms and found all clean neat and in order . . . The present inmates of Spring Hall consist of, the Master, his wife, and four children, one of whom is 12 years of age, the others 10, 5 and

3 years old. Also 37 Paupers . . . The Master is also allowed a salary for the support of himself and family of £35 per year. The Master and his family also earn at his Trade of a Weaver about 5/- per week.

[Then a list of the Master's expenditure over the last year including Clothing of the Master, his wife and family £12]

[Then a menu for the week, Breakfast, Dinner, Supper]

The present Master has had the management of the workhouse during 11 years and was ? of £20 in money ? furniture on entering to the ? and during that time he has incurred a debt of £180 towards which the Parish have allowed him at various times the sum of £70, and he is now indebted to sundry persons to the amount of £100.

The 37 Paupers are listed together with their ages as: Men: Robinson 91, Watton 83, Yeoman 82,

Managing the Workhouse

Prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 attempts to help the poor were generally at a parish level. This act however centralised the administration and defined Poor Law Unions and encouraged the development of workhouses. The Malton Poor Law Union consisted of many local parishes, each of which had a 'guardian' who was elected by local land owners and occupiers. They sat on the Board of Guardians and administered the workhouse. They also reviewed requests for 'out-relief' - payments made outside the workhouse system to those old and/or poor not living in the workhouse. Meetings of the Board of Guardians took place weekly, in the Town Hall, and the proceedings of these meetings are well reported in the local newspapers. Boards of Guardians were abolished in 1930 by the Local Government Act, 1930.

The first meeting of the Board of Guardians for the Malton Poor Law Union (sixty-eight Townships) took place on the 13th January 1837 at the New Talbot Inn, Malton. [1] Henry Willoughby of Birdsall was elected chairman and Mr. Allen of Malton, vice-chairman. The first officers were: clerk, Mr. Alfred Simpson, of Malton, solicitor; treasurer, Robert Bower, Esq., (of the East Riding Bank); auditor, Mr. Chas. Jagger, solicitor of Malton. Medical and Relieving Officers were not appointed. An open letter appearing in the Yorkshire Gazette, in January 1837 from J.J. Wilcocks, Member of the Royal

Watson 78, Hawkswell 77, Wray 77, Fenton 76, Eller 74, Cave 71, Gibb 70, Atkinson 68, Taylor 62
Women: Kinber 70, Atkinson 58, Wilson 49, Walkington 35, Gordon 21, Daltree 60, England 13, Steward 11, Steward 6, Bradley 9, Bradley 7, Moore 62, Frank 67, Farrer 28, Steward 3, Bradshaw 13, Allan 14, Welbank 14, Walkington 9, Wilson 9, Walkington 2, Turner 28, Turner 3, Turner 1/4

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College of Surgeons, and residing in Hovingham, solicits his appointment as surgeon [2].

MALTON POOR LAW UNION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that any Person desirous of being the RELIEVING OFFICER to the above Union . . . is requested to attend a Meeting of the Board of Guardians at the ASSEMBLY ROOMS, in New Malton, on SATURDAY, the 28th day of January instant, at TEN o'Clock in the Forenoon, when such Officer will be elected . . .

AND NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN That any Persons desirous to be the Master and Mistress of the Workhouse of the said Union are requested to attend at the time and place aforesaid, when, if the Board of Guardians think proper, such persons will be elected. The Salary of the Master will be £40 per annum, and that of the Matron £10. They will reside in the Workhouse, and have their Board provided at the Expense of the Union. The Master will have to assist the Relieving Officer, and will be required to give security to the satisfaction of the Guardians for the due execution of his Office. By Order, ALFRED SIMPSON Clerk to the Board of Guardians of the Malton Poor-Law Union. Malton, Jan 16, 1837

Yorkshire Gazette, 21 January 1837

The Relieving Officers received requests for 'out relief' and kept books of account recording what had been paid. Periodically they presented their accounts to the Board of Guardians for approval and reimbursement. In August 1840, Mr. Pearson was Relieving Officer for the 'rural district' and, had expended £65 14s 8d. Mr. Rutter held the position for the 'town district' and had expended £31 11s 5d. The meeting of the Guardians approved these amounts and they were reimbursed [4].

Provisions

Another responsibility of the Board of Guardians was to invite tenders and assess responses for the supply of food, drink, coal and clothing to the workhouse. In the early period the tenders were requested quarterly except for clothing which was annually. The meeting of 12th December 1840 concluded which suppliers had been chosen: Mr. John Jefferson to supply bread to be made from seconds flour, at 1 3/4d per pound; Mr. James Metcalfe to supply seconds flour at 2s 2d per stone and fire coals at 15s 6d per ton, and to supply the poor in the towns of New Malton, Old Malton and Norton with seconds flour at 2s 2d per stone; Mr. Robert Stabler to supply candles at 6d per lb; Mr. Robert Clegg to supply sugar at 9 1/2d per lb, tea at 5s 4d per lb, soap at 6s 9d per stone, rice at 2s 4d per stone and salt at 5d per stone; Mr. John Crawford to supply paupers in the workhouse with men's and women's shoes at 7s per pair and boys and girls above 9 years at 4s 6d and below 9 years at 2s 6d per pair; Mr. Robert Clegg to supply the poor in the workhouse with articles of clothing for the next 12 months [5].

The Malton Guardians placed quarterly advertisements in the local newspapers inviting tenders for the supply of various provisions. Samples of the goods had to be supplied with the tender and the Board would discuss the various tenders received at one of their meetings. The advertisement here was taken from the Malton Messenger, 17 September 1870.

Invariably, on Christmas Day, the inmates of the workhouse would be 'treated' to 'roast beef and plumb pudding, with ale to wash it down and tobacco for those who use it' and in the afternoon 'good cake and tea.' This would be funded by subscription among the Guardians [6]. Probably this would be the only treat the inmates would get.

Scandal at the Workhouse

In October 1901, the Board of Guardians revealed that the Workhouse Master, Mr. William Copley, had 'falsified accounts and submitted fictitious receipts' [7] Unsurprisingly he was suspended, and pleaded guilty at York to three charges of falsifying accounts. He was sentenced to three years' penal

MALTON UNION.

CONTRACTS FOR PROVISIONS,
&c. &c.

ALL PERSONS desirous of Contracting with the Guardians of the Poor of the above Union, for supplying the WORKHOUSE at Malton, for THREE MONTHS, commencing from the 25th day of March instant, with the several articles specified herein; and also for supplying FLOUR in the several flour districts in the Union, are requested to deliver in Sealed Tenders at my Office, at the Town-Hall, New Malton, before Eleven o'clock in the Forenoon of SATURDAY, the 18th day of March inst., being the last day on which Tenders will be received, and the day on which they will be opened at a Meeting of the said Guardians.

Estimated quantity likely to be required.

Bread to be made from the best Seconds Wheaten Flour, at per stone	400 stons
Best Seconds Wheaten Flour, at per stone	50 "
Good Oatmeal, at per stone	40 "
Beef and Mutton (specifying the parts) at per st....	150 "
Suet, at per lb.	80 lbs.
White Peas, at per peck	10 pks.
New Milk, at per quart	280 qts.
Old Milk, at per quart	2460 "
Fresh Butter, at per lb.	200 lbs.
Good Tea, at per lb.	50 "
Potatoes, of good quality, at per bushel of 5 stons	30 bush.
Good Coffee (unground), at per lb.	45 lbs.
Moist Sugar, at per stone	16 stons
Treacle, at per stone	5 "
Rice, at per stone	10 "
Salt, at per stone	15 "
Pepper (unground), at per lb....	3 lbs.
Soap, at per stone	15 stons
Soda, at per stone	5 "
Starch, at per lb.	7 lbs.
Stone Blue, at per lb	4 "
Coals (of good quality, to be delivered at the Work-house), at per ton	20 tons
Candles, at per dozen lbs....	3 doz lbs
Soft Soap, at per stone	10 stons

Samples of the articles will be required to be deposited with the tenders for inspection.
Security will be required, if thought necessary, for the due performance of the Contracts.
N.B.—Any Tender presented after the day and hour appointed for the delivery thereof in this advertisement, will not be received, and the Guardians do not pledge themselves to the quantities stated as likely to be required, they merely being given as a guide to the Contractors, nor to accept the lowest tender.
Further information may be known on application to me, and of whom forms of Tenders may also be had.

By order,
SAMUEL WALKER,
Clerk to the Board of Guardians.
Malton, March 2nd, 1871.

©British Library, Malton Messenger 17 September 1870

servitude and on hearing that broke down [8] In 1909, the then Workhouse Master, Mr. William Sherwood, committed suicide and was found dead in the store cupboard, having taken carbolic acid. He left a note to his wife in which he regretted his

gambling. The jury at the inquest found he had committed suicide during temporary insanity [9].

Masters and Matrons

There were frequent changes of staff at the Malton Workhouse! This list may not be complete.

1837 - Mr & Mrs Rutter (York Herald, 30 December 1837)

1839 - Mr Rutter (York Herald, 27 April 1839)

1841 - Mr & Mrs William & Elizabeth Rutter (1841 Census)

1841 Mr. Wright recently elected (York Herald, 27 November 1841)

1844 - Mr Wright (Yorkshire Gazette, 31 August 1844)

1849 - Mr. Webster (reference to his daughter, Yorkshire Gazette, 25 August 1849)

1851 - Mr & Mrs John Webster (1851 Census)

1852 - Mr & Mrs John Lockey (Yorkshire Gazette, 6th March 1852)

1864 - Mr & Mrs Livesey, appointed Saturday 4th June 1864 (York Herald, 11 June 1864)

1865 - Mr & Mrs Livesey, (Yorkshire Gazette 11th February 1865)

1865 - Mr & Mrs Wm. Smith, from 25th March (Yorkshire Gazette 11th February 1865)

1871 - Mr & Mrs Wm. Smith (1871 Census)

Resigned August 1879 after more than 15 years (Driffield Times, 6th September 1879)

1881 - Mr & Mrs J. Derbyshire (1881 Census)

1893 - Mr & Mrs Derbyshire (Yorkshire Gazette 24th June 1893)

1893 - Mr & Mrs Wm. Copley (Yorkshire Gazette 24th June 1893 - 73 applications for the vacancies)

1901 - Mr & Mrs Wm. Copley (1901 Census)

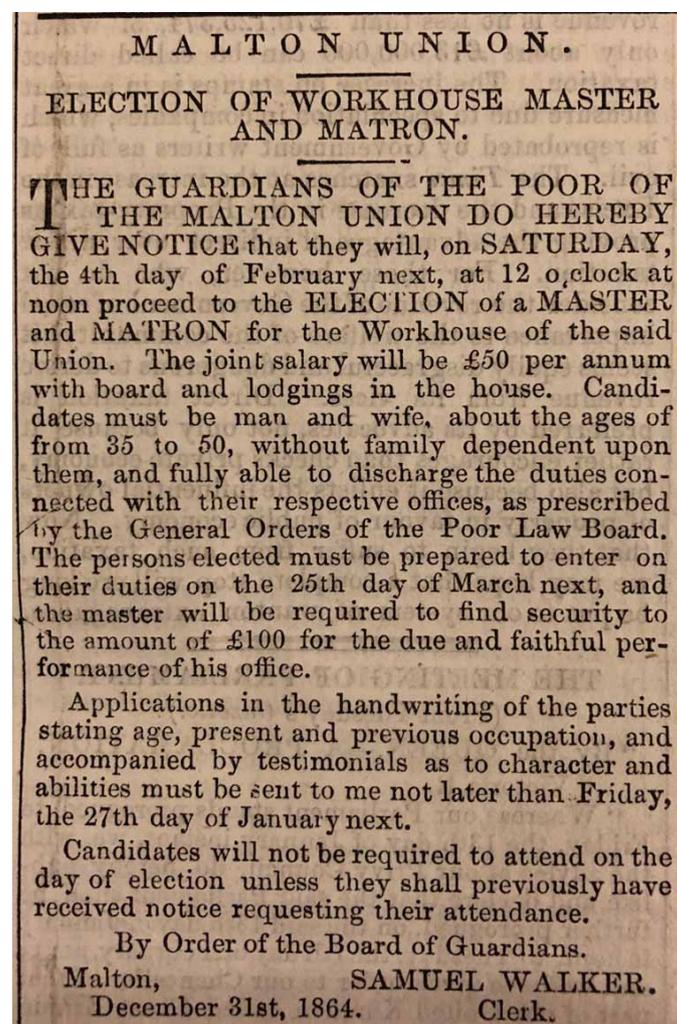
1902 - Mr Frederick Turner (Malton Gazette, 7 June 1902)

1905 - Mrs Sherwood, Matron (Yorkshire Gazette, 25 December 1909)

Life in the Workhouse

Many who were unable to support themselves spent time in the Workhouse. There is an excellent general account of life in the workhouse, [starting](#)

1905 - Mr HR Crewdson Yorkshire Gazette, 25 December 1909)



©British Library NEWS2356, Malton Messenger 14 January 1865

1903 - Sherwood appointed Master 10 October

1903 (Malton Messenger, 16 October 1909)

1911 - Frank Cattle, temporary master (1911 Census)

[with the daily routine](#) as specified by the Poor Law Commissioners in 1835.

Expansion

In 1838, work was begun on an additional 'Outer-hall' building.

MISCELLANEOUS

MALTON UNION WORKHOUSE

To Masons, Joiners, Plumbers and Glaziers, &c. &c. TO BE LET, the Erection of an additional BUILDING, adjoining and to form Part of the WORKHOUSE at MALTON.

Tenders to be delivered to the Guardians (Sealed) at the TOWN HALL, in NEW MALTON at ELEVEN O'Clock on SATURDAY MORNING, the 19th MAY inst.

A Plan and Specification of the Work may be seen at my Office, and where, or on Application to Mr. BUXTON, Surveyor, Malton, any further Information may be obtained.

Parties Contracting will be required to furnish Security for the due performance of their respective Contracts – The Guardians do not Pledge themselves to accept the lowest Tenders.

By Order of the Board,
ALFRED SIMPSON, Clerk
Malton 1st May, 1838

North Yorkshire County Record Office have a plan of the workhouse in 1895 reference: Malton Union Workhouse: plan 1895 (MIC 3070) (BG/ML)

The Malton Board of Guardians decided to purchase from the Earl Fitzwilliam the leasehold land and buildings at the Workhouse held from his lordship, the lease of which expires in eight years. The sum agreed upon was £700. [10]

It Happened at the Workhouse ...

In 1899, an inmate of the Malton Workhouse, named Edward Medd, 72 years of age, has just had £200 left him by a deceased sister. On hearing the good news Medd forthwith discharged himself from the house, and the guardians have resolved to claim from him the cost of his maintenance therein [11].

'At the Malton Board of Guardians' Meeting on Saturday, an application was received on behalf of a woman aged 86 years of age to be admitted to the Workhouse as a paying guest. She is a native of Malton and her daughter wrote that she wanted a room to herself. The Clerk said the Workhouse was not a lodging-house, and there was no accommodation. The application was refused.' [12]

'There are at present in the Malton workhouse four persons, viz., one male, and three females, whose united ages amount to the great number of 337 years, averaging above eighty-four years each, and one of the above individuals has been an inmate in the house for the last sixty years. Another remarkable fact is that the medical attendant, is that Mr. William Rymer, surgeon, has visited the workhouse above forty years, and for that space of time it has never had a case of fever in it. There are at present in the workhouse 133 pauper inmates' [13]

The Workhouse

In 1909 the nurses at the Workhouse declined to carry children through the streets to be baptised at the church because they felt it was degrading. The Board of Guardians passed a resolution that all children born in the Workhouse should be baptised there, unless their parents wished otherwise. The Rev. Barclay felt that the children should be baptised at the church and wrote to the Local Government Board to this effect. The Local Government Board felt that baptism should take place in the parish church. Mr Plowman, one of the Guardians, thought it did not matter much if such children were not baptised at all (to which a number of Guardians objected). It was resolved to adhere to the original resolution of baptising in the Workhouse [14]

In July 1876 the Board of Guardians were asked by the Master whether children in the house could learn to swim at the new bathing place in the Derwent. There was apprehension among the members as if there was an accident they would be accountable. [15]

It was customary to provide the male inmates with a pint of beer at Christmas. In December 1887, Henry Taylor, chairman of the committee of the Malton Total Abstinence Society wrote to the Board

of Guardians requesting 'prohibiting the use of intoxicating liquors in your Union Workhouse.' The Board resolved to take no notice of the letter. [16]

In April 1910 the Board of Guardians discussed the future of a boy inmate who had expressed an

One of Yours in the Workhouse?

If you suspect one of your ancestors was in the Malton Union Workhouse then you can try looking in the censuses. Of course, residence would have had to have been in one of the census years. See the

References

- [1] York Herald, 28 January 1837
- [2] Yorkshire Gazette, 14 January 1837
- [3] Yorkshire Gazette, 21 January 1837
- [4] Yorkshire Gazette, 22 August 1840
- [5] Yorkshire Gazette, 19 December 1840
- [6] York Herald 30 December 1837
- [7] Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 21 October 1901
- [8] Yorkshire Evening Post, 28 November 1901
- [9] Dundee Courier, 16 October 1909

interest in becoming a millionaire. After some laughter, one of the Guardians responded saying "He evidently wants to be apprenticed to Carnegie." [17]

Malton and Norton Heritage Centre Research Notebook for a list of those buried in Malton Cemetery who died in the Workhouse and for a list of names reported in the newspapers

- [10] Yorkshire Gazette, 5 September 1896
- [11] Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 21 October 1901
- [12] The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 21 June 1920
- [13] York Herald, 22nd January 1842.
- [14] Driffield Times, 4 September 1909
- [15] Driffield Times, 29 July 1876
- [16] Driffield Times, 24 December 1887
- [17] Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 25 April 1910