

Workhouse Master Asked for More!

LAST MONTH'S ARTICLE, devoted to extracts from the first book of Churchwardens' Accounts, showed that skilled men in the 17th century were paid about a shilling a day. By the time the second book was started in the mid-18th century, a certain John Patrick received 9d. for half a day's work. If that does not convince you that inflation had set in, I invite you to consider a problem which faced the Vestry in 1757.

The workhouse master received a fixed salary, out of which he had to maintain the poor, and as food prices were soaring he set a precedent for Oliver Twist by asking for more. Without a word about pegging prices or freezing wages, the Vestry agreed to add £10 to the master's pay for the next three months 'on account of the dearthness of provisions'.

In 1765 a similar request was received from the workhouse master and the Vestry decided to augment his salary by £12 for the following two months, 'by reason of the high price of provisions.' Note the inflationary trend since 1757! The only man who opposed the second grant was Thomas Green, who was probably just as mean to his wife when she complained about higher prices in the shops.

FOURPENCE FOR A POLECAT

Then, as now, it was possible to earn a little extra money by taking on spare-time jobs. Fourpence was given to a woman for the unsavoury task of 'searching the Charity Girl concerning her not being clean.' Begging your pardon as we turn from one form of infestation to another, there were fixed rewards for ridding the parish of polecats and sparrows. A price of 4d. was on the head (or rather the tail) of every polecat, and a farthing was paid for

every dead sparrow. Hence the following payments, dated 1750:

To 20 Polecats, 6s. 8d.

To 442 Sparrows, 9s. 2½d.

Keeping the churchyard tidy was not an expensive matter. John Hill, the sexton, received an extra 2s. for 'weeding the Church Yard and Rails' in 1747. Our old friend the yew tree is mentioned, and for 'cutting' it John Hollis received 2s. 10d. and fourpennyworth of beer in 1747. In the following year he again trimmed the yew tree, but his reward

BY 'BEORCHAM'

was reduced to half-a-crown and no beer. A deflationary phase, it seems.

Nevertheless, a shilling was spent on beer 'when the Bell Ropes were put on,' a shilling was paid for 'expenses at opening the Church Chest and Oyling the locks,' and yet another shilling was given to Mr. Austin, a churchwarden, for 'Horse-hire to go to Hempstead at Easter' in 1748.

The spelling 'oyling' crops up again in this somewhat ambiguous entry dated 1750: 'To ye Sexton for Oyling the Church Buckets and Beer, £00 01s. 02d.' There was no shortage of noughts in those days. The buckets, by the way, were made of leather and required oiling to keep them watertight. Two dozen were bought for the fire brigade at a cost of five guineas, plus 2s. 6d. carriage from London, in 1749.

John Hill, the sexton who weeded the churchyard for 2s., died in 1751, and his successor, George Holly, was ap-

pointed 'to continue so long as he shal Demean and behave himself well in the said Office, or so long as the Parishioners shal think fitt.'

Here are some further extracts:

1757. Expences at Clarkes abt taking a boy Aprentice, 6d.
1758. Expence going to Tring to Treat with a Master abt taking a Charity Boy Aprentice, 1s. 6d. Gave to a sailler by Mr. Johnsons order, 2s. Gave to a Soldiers wife by order of Mr. Noyes, 1s 6d. Gave Eggleton Trott when he offered himself a volantor [volunteer], 1s. 6d.
1761. Paid for Leather Pipes for the [Fire] Engine, £1 1s. Paid for Beer for the ringers when King George the 3rd was proclaimed, 7s. 6d. Pd. for Musick for ye Kings proclamation, 1s. 6d.
1762. To Henry Grover for Beer on the Coronation Day, 6s. 8d.
1763. Pd for White Rods on ye Proccessioning Day, 5s.
1766. Paid for binding Benj. Watrip Aprentice, 7s 6d. Paid for a Pair of Shoes for Benj. Watrip, 5s. 3d.

ANCIENT INDENTURES

The many references to apprentices remind me that the church chest contains over 50 indentures dated 1601 to 1794, the earliest of which tells us that John Stanborowe was apprenticed to Thomas Person, a 'musicioner' (musician). Trades to which the boys were apprenticed included those of shoemaker, tailor, brewer, currier, glover, cooper, weaver, cloth-worker, silk-thrower, cordwainer, barber, butcher, turner. Girls were apprenticed to bone-lace making, spinning and weaving. Of rare interest is an indenture of 1674, apprenticing Mary Gould to Robert Bennitt, of Uxbridge, bricklayer.

A girl bricklayer? Surely not. But the fact that some Berkhamsted boys and girls were apprenticed to masters in other parishes makes me wonder why the Vestry, in 1766, caused this entry to be made: 'It appears that Jos. Grover has fraudulently brought Jos. Harrod into the parish as an Aprentice, and it is resolved that the officers shall apply to two of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace to remove him to his proper place of Settlement'.

Strangers were blamed for causing small-pox epidemics, and at the same time small-pox was blamed for causing buyers and sellers to give Berkhamsted market a wide berth. At a vestry meeting in 1779 it was decided to take proceedings against John Fowler, apothecary, for causing 'Severall Persons to be Brought into this Parish from the Parish of Aldbury in the Small Pox which, if Continued, the Lives of the Inhabitants may be greatly Endangered and May Also be Considerable Sufferers by Losing their Trade.'

WORKHOUSE AND PESTHOUSE

We find two references to small-pox in the following accounts of the overseers of the poor, dated 1757. The purchase of 'a bottle of reason [raisin] Wine for ye Smalpox' is especially interesting:

	£	s.	d.
To Sussannah Morris for Cleaning the Pest House	2	2	
To 2 pitchers for the Workhouse	10		
To a Bedsted for the Pesthouse	4	0	
Charges for putting up the Bedstead	1	0	
A Lantorn for ye Bellman	2	0	
Pd towards Cloathing Castle's Boy to go prentice	1	1	0
Pd for Cloaths to Shift Rolph's daughter after the Smalpox	3	0	
Pd for a Bottle reason Wine for ye Smalpox	1	0	
Pd for a pr of Breeches for Wiggins Son	5	0	
Gave a Soldiers wife	3	0	
To a Horse and Cart to bury Thos. Pope	1	6	
Paid for a Tubb for the Workhouse	5	0	
Paid the Doctors annal Bill	4	8	0
Relieved a Malitiaman	1	0	
Paid Rent for the Pesthouse	1	5	0

LEARN TO SWIM? TO MAKE A POT? SPANISH?

A wide variety of recreational classes is offered by the Dacorum College of Further Education in its prospectus for the year 1966-67, now available from the College Annexe at 179 High Street, Berkhamsted. 'There is something for everyone in the prospectus,' says Mr. E. G. A. Bartlett, chairman of the governors, 'and I hope that parents as well as employers will read it and see whether there is a course or activity of interest to them or their family.' Copies may also be seen in the Library, Kings Road.

At the Annexe will be held day classes in art, dressmaking, English for overseas students, floral arrangement, lampshades, pewter work, and millinery. There will be evening classes in art, dressmaking, English for overseas students, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Enrolments may be made on 12th, 13th and 14th September from 7 p.m.—9 p.m. at the Annexe.

In All Saints' Hall there will be kept fit classes for women on Thursday mornings. Enrolments as above.

At Westfield School there will be evening classes in folk dancing, and keep fit classes for women. Enrolments at the school on 8th September from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., or as above at the Annexe.

At Ashlyns School there will be evening classes in judo, keep fit for women, pottery, learning to swim, life saving, swimming for women, and swimming improvement. Enrolments at the school on 9th September from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., or as above at the Annexe.

Fees are low—thirty, fifty, or sixty shillings for one, two or three terms.

GOLDEN WEDDING in sunny South Africa

Spending their golden wedding anniversary in South Africa are Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Dell of Potten End. Formerly works manager at Cooper, McDougall & Robertson Ltd., Mr. Dell left Berkhamsted to take up a position in South Africa, but eventually retired to Potten End.

Mr. and Mrs. Dell are staying at the fruit farm home—Swing Gate Farm—of their daughter, Mrs. Harr at the Transvaal.

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