

SUSSEX
POOR LAW RECORDS

A CATALOGUE

edited, with an introduction,

by

JANE M. COLEMAN, B.A.

Assistant Archivist, West Sussex Record Office

Issued by
THE WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
CHICHESTER
1960

TABLE OF CONTENTS

To find the Union to which any particular parish belonged, reference should be made not to the index, but to the folding maps facing pp. 2, 18 and 34.

	<i>page</i>
LIST OF PLATES	v
INTRODUCTION: THE POOR LAW IN ENGLAND	
EARLY HISTORY	vii
GILBERT'S ACT AND AFTER	ix
BEFORE THE PASSING OF THE POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1834	x
THE COMMISSION OF 1832-4	xi
ABSTRACT OF THE POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1834	xi
CHANGES IN THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION	xiii
DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE GUARDIANS	xiv
DUTIES OF THE CLERK TO THE GUARDIANS	xiv
DUTIES OF THE TREASURER TO THE GUARDIANS	xv
DUTIES OF THE RELIEVING OFFICER	xv
DUTIES OF THE CHURCHWARDENS AND OVERSEERS OF THE POOR	xvi
DUTIES OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER	xvi
DUTIES OF THE COLLECTOR	xvi
WORKHOUSE OFFICERS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES	xvii
THE CARE OF CHILDREN	xviii
THE CARE OF THE SICK POOR	xviii
THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF 1906-9	xix
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1929	xix
THE POOR LAW IN SUSSEX	xix
CLASSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE RECORDS	xxii
CATALOGUE	1
APPENDIX 1 Records of the Emergency Sub-Committees of West Sussex County Council, responsible for Institutional management during the second world war	62
APPENDIX 2 Horsham Base Hospital Records	62
APPENDIX 3 Poor Law Records not in the custody of the County Councils of East and West Sussex	63
APPENDIX 4 Documents relating to Poor Law Unions among the Sussex Quarter Sessions Records	65
APPENDIX 5 Parochial Overseers' Records before 1834	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	69
INDEX	70

LIST OF PLATES

Sutton Gilbert Union Workhouse		Frontispiece
Steyning Parish Workhouse	}	Plate I
Cowfold Parish Workhouse		
Petworth Parish and Union Workhouse		Plate II
West Firle Union Workhouse		Plate III
Sutton Gilbert Union, advertisement for a surgeon, 1843	}	Plate IV
Midhurst Union Workhouse Diet Sheet, 1843		
Chailey (later Lewes) Union Workhouse, c. 1895	}	Plate V
Chailey Union, Master's Ceremonial Baton		
Battle Hospital (formerly Battle Union Workhouse)		Plate VI
North View, East Preston (formerly East Preston Union Workhouse): Centre Block, dated 1873		Plate VII
East Preston Union Workhouse: ground plan of the Centre Block		Plate VIII

MAPS

		<i>folding to face page</i>
Sussex Unions formed 1835-6		2
Sussex Unions, 1900		18
Sussex Gilbert Unions		34

THE ENGLISH POOR LAW

EARLY HISTORY

The decay of medieval society led to a problem which the feudal system in its heyday had not had to face. The lord of the manor, though in many ways a despot, had the ultimate responsibility and interest in keeping his villeins healthy, and the church was always ready to give alms to the destitute, though it seems true to say that as time went on the presence of a great abbey in any vicinity gave rise to a collection of beggars, those "rogues and vagabonds" against whom the early statutes were mainly directed. The earliest statute aimed at dealing with the problem was that of 1388 (12 Ric. II, c. 7) which forbade vagrancy and ordered all impotent beggars to remain where they were at the passing of the Act or, if they could not be maintained there, to return to the place of their birth. This was purely a police regulation, and involved no consideration of the relief of distress. Later legislation provided various increasingly severe penalties for those who disobeyed the law of 1388, but within one hundred years the situation began to get out of hand. The end of the Wars of the Roses, and the release of thousands of soldiers and hangers-on of the armies for other occupations, the changes in rural economy in many areas from arable to sheep-farming and finally the dissolution of the monasteries threw a vast band of landless and workless vagrants upon the resources of the almsgivers, and the existing arrangements were no longer adequate.

The Statute of 1531 (22 Hen. VIII, c. 12) introduced a new type of provision, the licensing by magistrates of beggars who were incapable of work, but the first statute which placed poor relief in the hands of the parish authorities was 27 Hen. VIII, c. 25 (1536). The clergy and churchwardens were to provide a special alms-box for voluntary contributions to be distributed to the impotent poor; private alms-giving was forbidden under pain of a large fine. The parishioners were to be exhorted to give alms, and various moral and civil sanctions were laid upon them by later Acts if they were tardy in doing so. Vagrancy remained an ever-increasing problem, and a short-lived Act of 1547 (1 Ed. VI, c. 3) provided for branding and slavery for persistent offenders; this barbarous Act was, however, soon removed from the statute book.

An Act of 1572 created the office of overseer, and another of 1597/8 (39 Eliz., c. 3) lays down the rights and duties of these officers and orders their appointment by the justices.

The next important statute was the famous Poor Relief Act of 1601 (43 Eliz., c. 2), at first regarded as a temporary measure and only made permanent in 1640, but on which poor-law administration for the next two hundred years was based.

This provided for the yearly nomination, under the hand and seal of two or more justices, of two, three or four substantial householders (according to the size of the parish) as overseers of the poor. The duties of these overseers were to set the children and able-bodied poor to work, to raise a tax from the inhabitants of the parish to buy stock and tools for this purpose, and to relieve those paupers who were unable to work.

The overseers were to keep an account of the sums collected and spent, which was to be delivered to the justices annually for audit. The Act provided penalties for inhabitants who refused to be taxed and overseers who failed to carry out their task properly. If a single parish should be unable to raise enough money to support its own poor, then the justices were empowered to levy a rate upon other wealthier neighbouring parishes. Poor children were to be apprenticed, and houses for the aged and disabled poor were to be erected on the parish waste.

An Act of 1609/10 (7 James I, c. 4) orders the building of houses of correction to which all vagrants should be committed by the constables, but the next really important statute was the Poor Relief Act of 1662 (14 Chas. II, c. 12) which laid the foundation of the law of settlement. This Act specified that any stranger coming to reside in a parish who could neither rent a tenement of £10 annual value or find a security to indemnify the parish if he became chargeable, could be summarily sent back whence he came. Anyone settling temporarily in a neighbourhood had to bring a certificate signed by the officers of his own parish agreeing to his return there.

Later statutes of 1685 (1 James II, c. 17) and 1691 (3 Wm. & Mary, c. 11) developed the 1662 Act. The former stipulated that to gain a settlement, a poor person must have stayed in a parish for 40 days after giving notice of his arrival to the parish officers; the latter ordered that the notice should be registered in a parish book, and read out to the congregation in church on Sundays. Service as a parish officer, payment of parish rates, residence in a parish, or being bound apprentice to or in service with a parishioner for a year, gave settlement even if no written notice had been presented. An Act of 1697 (8 & 9 Wm. III, c. 30) provides for the settlement certificate, by means of which a poor person could settle in any parish as long as he had a document from his old parish accepting responsibility for him if he became chargeable. A less sensible provision of the same Act was that every pauper in receipt of relief should be required to wear a badge, thus partially reviving the inhumane mark of distinction of the earlier Tudor Act. It seems unlikely, however, that this order was strictly enforced.

This legislation did very little to improve matters, and the problem of poor relief continued to grow. The proper working of the law relied very much on the honesty and humanity of the overseers, and though the cost of relief was growing, the money paid in rates was often not used for the benefit of the poor.

An Act of 1743-4 (17 Geo. II, c. 38) was aimed at remedying certain defects, and increasing the control of the justices over parish overseers. Detailed accounts of relief given, stock bought and money received were to be drawn up and verified on oath before the justices. The accounts were to be open to inspection by any ratepayer. Any overseer who neglected his duty or embezzled the funds in his care was liable to a gaol sentence. Ratepayers were enabled to appeal to the justices against an alleged wrong assessment.

The administration of parish workhouses varied considerably. These did not become general until the eighteenth century, and at first appeared mainly in the larger towns. A general Act (9 Geo. I, c. 7) was passed in 1722 permitting the parish officers to buy or rent houses in which to

lodge or employ the poor. This Act also allowed for the union of two or more parishes where one was too small to support the cost of a workhouse alone. The parish officers could contract with private persons to maintain the poor in exchange for their labour. The Act of 1722 also introduced the "workhouse test", whereby persons refusing to go into the workhouse were to be denied relief. After 1722 the overall cost of poor relief in the country lessened considerably, but it is doubtful whether the lot of the poor was improved. The accent was on economy rather than humanity.

GILBERT'S ACT AND AFTER

A series of Acts throughout the eighteenth century was aimed at making the administration of the Poor Law more efficient; the most important of these Statutes was Gilbert's Act of 1782 (22 Geo. III, c. 83). This Act repealed that part of 9 Geo. I, c. 7 which allowed the maintenance and hiring of the labour of the poor by contract, and considerably tightened up the administration of relief. Single parishes or groups of parishes were to be incorporated for poor-law purposes.

A guardian to adjudicate upon applications for relief, was to be appointed by the justices for each parish and township, and the task of the parish officers was to be reduced, except in case of emergency, to collecting the poor rates. A suitable house for the reception of the impotent poor was to be purchased by the guardians, and a governor appointed by the justices to supervise it. This governor was to be responsible to a "visitor", again appointed by the justices, from a list of three suitable persons nominated by the guardians. The visitor's duties were regularly to inspect the poorhouse and to correct any faults or abuses therein.

The guardians were to meet monthly, and to appoint one of their number as treasurer. The latter would keep the union accounts, allocate the cost of the upkeep of the poorhouse equally among the parishes concerned, and pay the bills incurred in its administration.

The poorhouses were to be strictly for those poor people who were unable to work. Provision was made for the boarding-out of orphan children, but no child under seven was to be separated from its parents without their consent. It was to be the responsibility of the guardians to find work for the able-bodied unemployed, to make up any deficiency in their pay to a living wage and to prosecute those who refused to work. Anyone who considered that he was unjustly deprived of relief could complain to the justices. The Act also forbade the forcible removal of sick poor or pregnant women without a legal order of removal; it had been a common practice in some parishes for poor people who seemed likely to become a liability to be harried beyond the parish boundary by the constable and overseers.

This Act had many valuable provisions, and in districts where parishes were united the poorhouses were run more efficiently than when each parish had its own. However, the Act was not compulsory and in any case it had several unsatisfactory clauses, especially one which allowed for monetary compensation of able-bodied paupers whose wages were low and whose families were large. It led to the "Speenhamland System" whereby a table was set out showing the income necessary to a poor family according to the price of bread. Labourers began to consider that they had a right to relief to make their wages up to the amount tabled

irrespective of the amount or value of the work they had done, and the hardworking independent labourer who managed to keep his head above water was penalised while the idle man was encouraged. A general Act of 1795 (36 Geo. III, c. 23) extended out-relief of the able-bodied to the whole country and naturally enough, the poor rate continued to rise.

Where Gilbert Unions had not been formed the corruption of the system grew worse. The more well-to-do people avoided the unpaid and arduous parish offices by paying others to take their turn. Consequently overseers were mainly ignorant people, many of whom could not read or write. When a more responsible person, for example, a tradesman, took office, he was liable to the importunities of his friends or customers. The fact that no officer served for longer than a year made the task even more difficult, as the overseers had no time to estimate the character and habits of those who applied for relief. As overseers frequently did all the work of their brother officers for part of a year instead of sharing the duties for the whole period, this unsatisfactory position was aggravated.

The Act of 1819 (59 Geo. III, c. 12) improved matters slightly in this direction, by permitting the appointment of salaried overseers, and by putting the administration of relief into the hands of a select vestry specially elected for this purpose, and not to be confused with the "Select Vestries of Four and Twenty". This Act, however, was, like Gilbert's Act, permissive, and did not reach the greater part of the country; it was in any case deficient in not defining the relative powers of the vestry and the overseers, and of course the term "select vestry" was already suspect because of its associations with corruption in general parochial administration.

BEFORE THE PASSING OF THE POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1834

The preliminary *Report* of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1834 gives an illuminating account of the state of affairs before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, and it is obvious that matters were completely out of hand.

Outdoor relief was given to the able-bodied pauper in a variety of ways. Very often his rent was paid for him, and the house in which he lived was always exempted from poor-rates. Frequently this led to the raising of rents beyond all proportion by the landlord, who knew that the parish must either pay up or find other accommodation for the pauper. Very seldom was relief in kind given in the way of food or clothing.

Often relief was given in money, sometimes for odd days missed from private employment, but more frequently to save the parish from having to find work for the increasing numbers of able-bodied poor. The "Speenhamland" system of augmenting starvation wages by relief from the rates was very prevalent; the amount of relief given varied considerably, but was regulated by the number of the family, and consequently encouraged early and improvident marriage. The "roundsman" system, whereby occupiers of property were obliged to employ paupers at a rate of wages fixed by the parish and depending not on the skill of the workman, but on the size of his family was another source of abuse; the employer was repaid out of the poor-rate all that he advanced in wages above a certain sum. When the parish itself provided work for the paupers,

there was often not enough for the number of able-bodied men available and consequently the independent labourer had to work harder to obtain the same pay as the man on the parish.

The parish workhouses are criticised in the report with equal vigour, mainly for the extravagance with which they were run, though this criticism was probably more justified in large towns than in small rural communities.

In spite of this worsening state of affairs there were many who did not favour a change of system. The lazy labourers were afraid that the responsibility for their families would come to rest entirely on them, while the employers were unwilling to pay a decent wage after having been subsidized for so long by the rates. The fact that rates would automatically be lowered was not admitted by the employers as an argument, as they found that while high rates were a ground for paying less rent, high wages were not. The landlord of slum properties, which were rate free, and whose tenants' rents were mainly paid by the parish, was another who was favoured by the old system.

THE COMMISSION OF 1832-1834

An earlier commission of 1817, whose findings had led to the passing of the Act of 1819, had reported at length on the bad state of the administration of the poor laws at that date, but the political climate was not then such as would favour the institution of far-reaching changes.

After the passing of the Reform Act of 1832, the government was in a stronger position to introduce legislation in the more representative House of Commons. In February, 1832, a Royal Commission on the Poor Law was appointed; the commissioners named were nine in number, and included Sturges Bourne, the chairman of the 1817 Commission, and Nassau Senior and Edwin Chadwick who were to prove the guiding geniuses of this one.

The commissioners sent out a series of questionnaires, which were followed up by the researches of a group of assistant commissioners. The final report published in 1834 makes depressing reading.

The Poor Law Amendment Bill, framed mainly by Nassau Senior, was introduced in the House of Commons in 1834, soon after the publication of the Commissioners' Report. It was the subject of a great deal of controversy, but after a stormy passage eventually received the Royal Assent in August of the same year.

ABSTRACT OF THE POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT 1834

Sections 1-14 Provide for the appointment of three commissioners as a central authority for the Poor Law, who are to report yearly to the Secretary of State; the commissioners to have powers to appoint a secretary and assistant commissioners, and to summon persons before them to give evidence.

15-18 The commissioners to make general rules for poor-law administration, which are to be submitted to the Secretary of State and laid before parliament; when ratified, copies to be sent to all interested local authorities, who are to publicise them.

- 19 Ensures the religious freedom of paupers.
- 20 All orders of the assistant commissioners must be ratified by the commissioners.
- 21-25 Give certain powers to the commissioners for attending local board or vestry meetings, and for ordering, with consent of local authorities, the hiring, building or enlarging of workhouses.
- 26 The commissioners may order the union of groups of parishes as they think fit, but each parish is to remain responsible for its own poor.
- 27 Justices may order out-relief for the aged and impotent poor.
- 28-30 The commissioners to assess union expenses, and returns to be made to parliament.
- 31 Repeals such parts of 22 Geo. III, c. 83, and 56 Geo. III, c. 129, as are no longer applicable.
- 32 Gives commissioners powers to dissolve or alter unions, and to make such rules as are necessary to their altered state, provided that the rights of single parishes are maintained.
- 33-36 United parishes may be regarded as one for the purposes of rating and settlement.
- 37 No union to be formed under the provision of Gilbert's Act without the consent of the commissioners.
- 38-41 Rules for the election of guardians.
- 42-51 Commissioners to make rules for the government of workhouses and the purchasing of supplies, and to direct the appointment of various paid union officers.
- 52-54 Deal with the curtailing of out-relief, and repeal the power of the magistrates and overseers to give relief except in cases of urgent necessity.
- 55 Orders the keeping of records by overseers and workhouse masters.
- 56-62 Deal with out-relief, relief to militia men's families, apprenticeship and emigration.
- 63 Authorises unions to apply to the commissioners for Exchequer Bills for loans for the purposes of the Act.
- 64-68 Revise the law of settlement.
- 69-76 Deal with bastardy and the liability of putative fathers.

- 77 Forbids any person employed in any way in the administration of the Poor Laws to benefit from any trade transactions involved in the providing of relief.
- 78-84 Deal with removal.
- 85 Gives the commissioners power to call for, and publish, the accounts of parish charity trusts, etc.
- 86-88 Deal with freedom from stamp duty and postage of official documents.
- 89 Disallows all payments relating to poor-relief contrary to the terms of the Act.
- 90 Deals with summonses under the Act.
- 91-94 The introduction of spirituous liquors into the workhouse is forbidden. Penalties are given for the workhouse master who infringes this rule and who ill-treats the paupers or otherwise misbehaves. These clauses to be published in each workhouse.
- 95-97 Deal with penalties which officers disobeying the orders of the guardians or otherwise misbehaving may incur. Illegal orders may be disregarded.
- 98-104 The application of penalties for contravening the statute or the regulations of the commissioners, and appeals against alleged wrongful conviction.
- 105-108 Provide that orders, rules and regulations may be removed by a writ of certiorari in the King's Bench.
- 109 Defines terms used in the Act.

CHANGES IN THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

After the passing of the Act, the exertions of the assistant commissioners led to the quick formation of unions in many parts of the country. The commissioners made their will known by a flood of orders, rules and regulations, workhouses were built and extended and the old parish poorhouses closed.

The form of central administration came under fire very soon. The Commission of three and their secretary became most unpopular; mainly because of the arbitrary jurisdiction allowed them by the 1834 Act, and they were replaced (under the Poor Law Board Act of 1847 (10 & 11 Vic., c. 109) by a Board consisting of the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Privy Seal, the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. A president, with a casting vote, was to be nominated by the Queen, and two secretaries appointed, one of whom, with the President, was to be responsible to Parliament. This board acted as the central authority for the poor law until the Local Government Act of 1871 (34 & 35 Vic., c. 70) when it gave way to the Local Government Board, which

in its turn was replaced by the Ministry of Health under the Act 9 & 10 Geo. V, c. 21 of 1919.

The unions were abolished by the Local Government Act of 1929, and the guardians' functions taken over by Public Assistance Committees with guardians' or relief sub-committees set up by County and Borough Councils under the provisions of the Act. The Public Assistance Committees were replaced in 1948 by the National Assistance Board and the County and Borough Council Welfare and Children's Committees.

DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE GUARDIANS

The duties of the guardians were set out in an order of the Poor Law Commissioners sent to each union on its formation. Briefly summarised, they were as follows:

1. To supervise all relief to the poor, the building, hiring, and providing of a workhouse for the maintenance of paupers and the regulation of its management. These duties were to be exclusive to the guardians, subject to the powers of the commissioners and excepting the powers granted to justices of the peace and the overseers of the poor.
2. To appoint a clerk, treasurer, relieving officer and medical officer.
3. To purchase supplies for use in the workhouse and for the relief of the outdoor poor.
4. To hear and determine all applications for relief, which they could grant either absolutely or on loan.
5. To appoint an auditor to allow or disallow their accounts.

In addition to the care of the poor, the Boards of Guardians were from time to time made responsible for other administrative duties. The assessment and valuation of rateable property was transferred to union assessment committees by 25 & 26 Vic., c. 103 (1862) and these committees in their turn were superseded by the county councils under the Rating and Valuation Act of 1925. Guardians (or borough councils) were required to appoint school attendance committees to enforce elementary schooling under 39 & 40 Vic., c. 79 (1876) where there was no school board to perform this office; these functions were taken over by the county authority under the Elementary Education Act of 1902.

Unions were also found to be convenient units for the registration of births, marriages and deaths (until 1929), for providing vaccination facilities (until 1929) and for sanitary purposes (until 1894).

DUTIES OF THE CLERK TO THE GUARDIANS

1. To take the minutes of the guardians' meetings.
2. To keep the account books, minute books and such other memoranda as the guardians or Poor Law Commissioners might require.
3. To conduct the official correspondence of the guardians and to keep all such correspondence with all other letters and documents belonging to the union.
4. To give due notice of the meetings of the guardians.

The clerk to the guardians was normally a solicitor.

DUTIES OF THE TREASURER TO THE GUARDIANS

1. To receive all money tendered to him on behalf of the guardians.
2. To pay all cheques drawn upon him by the guardians.
3. To keep an account of all money received and paid by him.
4. To report to the commissioners (or their successors) whenever there were no funds belonging to the union in his hands.

The treasurer was usually a member of a firm of bankers.

DUTIES OF THE RELIEVING OFFICER

1. To attend the weekly meetings of the guardians and any other meetings to which he might be summoned.
2. To enquire into all applications for relief and report on their merits to the guardians at their weekly meeting.
3. To give such temporary relief in cases of urgent necessity as each case, whether that of a person resident within the boundaries of the union or not, might require, either by sheltering the pauper in the workhouse or by giving out-relief in kind, not in money.

As a rule, the giving of out relief was not encouraged, but in certain cases, such as the illness or death of one member of a family, the wife and family of a militia-man, a widow with dependent children or a prisoner in gaol or in any other place of custody, relief was given out of the workhouse. Normally, any person or family in need of help was taken into the workhouse.

4. To notify the medical officer of the illness of, or injury to, any pauper resident in the district for which he is appointed, and in the mean time to grant any relief needful; on the certificate of the medical officer, the relieving officer could grant any extras which the doctor should prescribe.
5. To keep a full account of any money received or disbursed by him for the poor of each parish and of all articles received and dispensed by him as out-relief, to balance each account weekly and to present it to the guardians for their inspection.
6. To report weekly to the guardians at their meeting all cases of emergency relief granted by parish officials.
7. To keep, and present weekly to the guardians, a detailed nominal list of out-relief granted.
8. To make out quarterly and exhibit in each parish, a list of persons relieved there.

During the years following 1834 the relieving officer acquired other duties; he had certain statutory functions under the Lunacy Acts and was often appointed collector to the guardians, registrar of births and deaths, vaccination officer, school attendance officer and inspector under the Infant Life Protection Acts.

DUTIES OF CHURCHWARDENS AND OVERSEERS OF THE POOR

1. To make, assess (until the Act of 1862) and collect the poor rate in their separate parishes and to enter the same in an official rate book; to pay over such sums as were required of them by the guardians for the maintenance of their own poor and for general union expenses.
2. To give temporary relief (but not in money) in cases of urgent necessity to poor persons whether settled or not in their parishes, but to report this immediately in writing to the relieving officer.
3. To submit any orders of the justices for out-relief to the relieving officer, so that he may lay them before the guardians at their next meeting.
4. To carry out all lawful instructions of the guardians or of the relieving officer acting for them.

DUTIES OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER

1. To enter into contract with the guardians to attend upon all sick paupers belonging to and resident within the union whether in the workhouse or not, and to provide any necessary medicines; also to treat at a reasonable charge per head, any other non-settled paupers for whom the guardians might be temporarily responsible.
2. To give a medical certificate relating to the illness of any pauper, when required by the guardians, the relieving officer or the pauper himself.
3. To make a return of cases treated to the guardians at each of their weekly meetings.

The 1834 Act left guardians free to contract with one or more medical officers for duties within the union as they thought fit, but an order of 12 March 1842 stipulated that no medical officer should be appointed to serve a district of more than fifteen thousand acres or more than fifteen thousand population. This same order gives the qualifications necessary in, and fees payable to, a medical officer.

DUTIES OF THE COLLECTOR

This office was created under an order of the Poor Law Board dated 7 October 1865. The collector's main duties were to collect, under the directions of the guardians, all sums of money due to them which were not payable to the treasurer. Usually these sums were those due to the guardians in repayment for relief granted; the payment could come from two sources. The pauper himself might be able to contribute as he might possess some income, but not enough to support him completely outside the workhouse, or might come into possession of a capital sum while receiving out-relief from which a limited amount could be claimed. The other source of contributions was from the relatives of a pauper. The amount of these contributions was always governed by the financial circumstances of the relatives and the extent to which the pauper was chargeable.

Usually contributions were made by voluntary agreement, but sometimes legal proceedings were necessary. Any contribution from a pension

was obtainable by agreement only, no legal process being permissible; Old Age Pensions (paid under 8 Edw. VII, c. 40, and succeeding Acts) were discontinued when the recipients entered the workhouse unless they were admitted for medical treatment.

WORKHOUSE OFFICERS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

In an Order of the Poor Law Commissioners dated 5 February 1842, and entitled "Workhouse Rules", detailed regulations were given for the administration of the workhouse and the conduct of its officials (see WG7/27/2, f. 31).

The master and matron were responsible for the organisation and administration of the workhouse, and the food, clothing, and occupations of the inmates. They were obliged to summon the medical officer and the chaplain whenever their services were required, and to report regularly to the House Committee and to the Board of Guardians. The matron was also responsible for nursing the sick in the workhouse, and for all the laundry of the establishment.

The chaplain was to read prayers and preach a sermon to the paupers every Sunday and Holy Day, to visit the sick, to catechize and examine the children once a month at least, and to report on the moral and religious state of the inmates of the workhouse to the Board of Guardians. Those poor people who were not members of the Church of England were entitled to see a minister of religion of their own denomination.

The schoolmaster and schoolmistress were responsible for the education and moral welfare of the pauper children, and were required to "assist the master and matron respectively in maintaining due subordination in the workhouse".

The workhouse medical officer made regular visits and reported on treatment given and needful for sick paupers; the supervising of the drainage, ventilation and heating of the house were also his responsibility, and he could advise the guardians on general matters affecting the health and physical welfare of inmates.

The workhouse porter kept an account of all persons entering or leaving the workhouse and all goods delivered and sent out, and acted as assistant to the master and matron in most matters of order and security.

Strict rules were drawn up by the commissioners for the administration of union workhouses, and every hour of the paupers' day was organised for work, meals and recreation; punishments were specified for those who did not conform. There were seven classes of inmates divided according to age and sex, and ideally there was no communication between any of the classes except, at specified times, for mothers with children under seven. A filling but not particularly nourishing diet which varied slightly from union to union was prescribed for the paupers (for Midhurst Union see Plate IV), but the medical officer could order extras for anyone whom he thought in need of them. The work provided for the paupers varied from union to union, but able-bodied males were, during the early years, employed in picking oakum, and grinding bones and wheat by hand. The women undertook sewing and cleaning, and sometimes were given the same tasks as the men.

Provision was made for complaints which could be made either to the guardians at their weekly meeting or to the Visiting Committee who came to the workhouse at least once a week, and who had a prescribed list of subjects on which they had to report to the guardians.

THE CARE OF CHILDREN

From the very beginning of the new poor law, the central authority had enjoined the separation of children from adult paupers, and though the funds available made thorough schooling for the most part impossible, an attempt was generally made to give the pauper children some kind of education, though the quality of this depended very much on the type of guardians responsible for it.

Large unions had their own schools, and others joined together into school districts and shared the expense of one establishment. The passing of the Elementary Education Act in 1870 increased school facilities, and quite often children were sent out to public elementary schools.

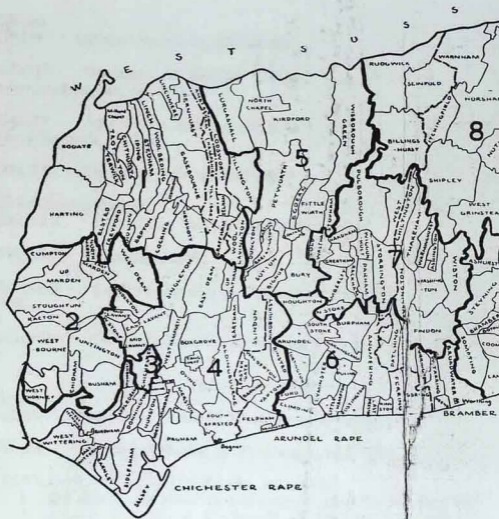
A report by Mrs. Nassau Senior on poor-law schools, which appeared in 1874, advocated the breaking down of large schools into smaller groups, and the system of "cottage homes" and boarding-out was introduced.

When schooling was ended, care was taken that the children were sent to good posts, and various philanthropic societies interested themselves in caring for the young workers. Out-relief was given to widows with children, but quite often this was very little, and children of large families whose mothers were working were in many cases, hopelessly inadequately clothed, fed and cared for. The Royal Commission of 1909 stressed the necessity for supervision of all children in receipt of out-relief.

THE CARE OF THE SICK POOR

In the early days of the unions, sick poor were usually cared for in the same building as other classes of pauper; qualified nurses were rare, and more often than not female paupers were in charge of the wards. When paid nurses were employed, they were usually untrained and the General Consolidated Order of 1847 required only that the paid nurse should be able to read written instructions upon medicines. By 1878, the Local Government Board were able to report that the employment of pauper nurses had been entirely superseded; as far as possible properly qualified nurses supervised the sick wards, and girls were taken on as probationers for training.

By the time of the report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1909 the majority of unions had their own separate infirmaries for the sick, either independently or in conjunction with other neighbouring authorities. This was a great improvement, as many poor and respectable people were unwilling to go to the workhouse sick wards for treatment, even when suffering from illnesses which could not be treated properly at home.



1. Midhurst
2. Westbourne
3. Chichester
4. Westhampnett
5. Petworth
6. East Preston

1. Mar. 1835–Aug. 1836; 2a. Aug. 1836–Dec. 1837; 2b. Jan. 1837–June 1838; 3. Dec. 1837–Apr. 1839; 4. Apr. 1839–Dec. 1840; 5. Dec. 1840–Sept. 1842; 6. Sept. 1842–June 1844; 7. June 1844–Aug. 1846; 8. Aug. 1846–Oct. 1848; 9. Oct. 1848–Mar. 1851;
10. Mar. 1851–Oct. 1853; 11. Nov. 1853–Apr. 1856; 12. Apr. 1856–June 1858; 13. July 1858–Apr. 1860; 14. Apr. 1860–Nov. 1862; 15. Nov. 1862–Nov. 1865; 16. Dec. 1865–June 1868;
17. July 1868–Sept. 1870; 18. Oct. 1870–June 1873; 19. June 1873–June 1876; 20. June 1876–June 1879; 21. July 1879–Apr. 1883; 23. Nov. 1886–Mar. 1890; 24. Mar. 1890–Sept. 1893;
25. Sept. 1893–Sept. 1896; 26. Sept. 1896–Apr. 1900; 27. Apr. 1900–Dec. 1903; 28. Dec. 1903–Feb. 1907; 29. Mar. 1907–Feb. 1910; 30. Feb. 1910–Nov. 1912; 31. Nov. 1912–Sept. 1915;
32. Oct. 1915–Nov. 1919; 33. Dec. 1919–Nov. 1922; 34. Nov. 1922–May 1926; 35. June 1926–Mar. 1930.

WG11/2/1-3 Minute Books of the House Committee, 1914–23.

1. Apr. 1914–Oct. 1918; 2. Nov. 1918–Mar. 1923; 3. Apr. 1923–Oct. 1925.

WG11/2 and WG11/3 see alternative
CORRESPONDENCE

WG11/11/1, 2 Letter Books of the Clerk to the Guardians, 1835–52.

1. Apr. 1835–Apr. 1844; 2. Apr. 1844–May 1852. (The last three letters in this book are loose drafts which have not been copied.)

OFFICERS

WG11/13/1, 2 Superannuation Service Registers, 1896–1930.

1. Oct. 1896–Mar. 1930 (refers to officers appointed 1886–1917);
2. Apr. 1914–Mar. 1930 (refers to officers appointed 1914–1928).

The entries in this register are mostly incomplete. (Very little information mainly blank pages)

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

WG11/20 Collector's Ledger, Oct. 1925–Mar. 1930.

WG11/23

Register of Children chargeable to the Guardians Nov 1910 - July 1930

WG11/30 Matrix of Westbourne Union Seal.

DUTIES OF THE GUARDIANS NOT CONNECTED WITH POOR RELIEF

School Attendance

WG11/58/1, 2 Minute Books of the School Attendance Committee,

1877–1903.

1. May 1877–Oct. 1895; 2. Nov. 1895–Sept. 1903.

WESTHAMPNETT UNION

(WG12)

Westhampnett Union as reformed in 1835 consisted of Aldingbourne, Appledram, Barnham, Binderton, Binsted, Birdham, Boxgrove, East Dean, Donnington, Earnley, Eastergate, Felpham, New Fishbourne, Graffham, Hunston, West Itchenor, East and Mid Lavant, Madehurst, Merston, Middleton, North Mundham, Oving, Pagham, Rumboldswyke, Selsey,

WESTBOURNE UNION

ACCOUNTS

- WG11/6/1-3 General Ledgers, 1887-1894.
 - 1. Apr. 1887 - Sept. 1889; 2. Sept. 1889 - Apr. 1892; 3. Apr. 1892 - Sept. 1894.
- WG11/7c/1-3 Parochial Ledgers, 1886-1912.
 - 1. Sept. 1886 - Apr. 1895; 2. Apr. 1895 - Apr. 1904; 3. Apr. 1904 - Sept. 1912.

MISCELLANEA

WG11/27 Copy order of the Poor Law Board that a collect^{or} of poor rates be appointed for Bosham, 1847.
 DUTIES OF THE GUARDIANS NOT CONNECTED WITH POOR RELIEF
Assessment

WG11/57 Minute Book of the Assessment Committee, Feb. 1897 - Sept. 1908.

Rural Sanitary Authority

- WG11/59a/1-3 Minute Books of the Rural Sanitary Authority, 1872-1894.
 - 1. Aug. 1872 - Dec. 1883; 2. Dec. 1883 - July 1892; 3. July 1892 - Dec. 1894 [including the minutes of the R.D.C., Jan. 1895 - Aug. 1897]
- WG11/59b/1-3 Rural Sanitary Authority Parochial Ledgers, 1873-1894.
 - 1. Apr. 1873 - Apr. 1882; 2. Apr. 1882 - Apr. 1891; 3. Apr. 1891 - Dec. 1894 [including accounts of the R.D.C., Jan. 1895 - Apr. 1899]
- WG11/59b/4,5 Rural Sanitary Authority General Ledgers, 1873-1894.
 - 4. Apr. 1873 - Sept. 1893; 5. Sept. 1893 - Dec. 1894 [including accounts of the R.D.C., Jan. 1895 - Sept. 1896]

* See also MP 3706: S. Bersted paupers at
Sutton Poorhouse, up to 1840

(WG12)

Westhampnett

Sidlesham, Singleton, West Stoke, Tangmere, Upwaltham, Walberton, Westhampnett, East and West Wittering, and Yapton. In 1869 South Bersted joined the Union from Sutton and Graffham was detached.*

Westhampnett Place, the union workhouse, was burnt down accidentally in 1899. It was a building which dated partly from the sixteenth century, and was leased to the Guardians by the Duke of Richmond. It was on the south side of the Chichester-Westhampnett road, just east of the present roundabout. One wing can still be seen among the buildings now on the site.

Other records relating to Westhampnett Union deposited in the West Sussex Record Office are as follows:

Misc. Papers 165: Newspaper account of the destruction of the workhouse in 1899.

C.C.11: Return of Rateable Values, 1911.

QDO/1/W3: Order of the Poor Law Commissioners for the election of a guardian for Aldingbourne parish, 1835.

QDO/1/W9: Order for addition of parishes to the Union, 1869.

Add. MS. 2077: Map of Westhampnett Union, 1869.

MINUTES

(Westhampnett)

WG12/1/1-61 Minute Books of the Board of Guardians, 1835-1930. The first of these volumes is the rough minute book used for the first year of the Union's existence. This is a particularly valuable set of minutes as the earlier volumes give more detail about relief granted to paupers than is usually the case. From about 1880 onwards reports of sub-committees are sometimes included in full. Vols. 3-14 and 31-61 are indexed.

1. Mar. 1835-June 1836; 2. Mar. 1835-Sept. 1835; 3. Oct. 1835-Feb. 1837; 4. Mar. 1837-Apr. 1838; 5. Apr. 1838-May 1839;
6. May 1839-Oct. 1840; 7. Oct. 1840-Dec. 1841; 8. Jan. 1842-Feb. 1843; 9. Mar. 1843-Apr. 1844; 10. Apr. 1844-June 1845;
11. June 1845-Dec. 1846; 12. Dec. 1846-Jan. 1848; 13. Jan. 1848-Feb. 1849; 14. Feb. 1849-Apr. 1850; 15. Apr. 1850-July 1851;
16. July 1851-Sept. 1852; 17. Oct. 1852-Dec. 1853; 18. Dec. 1853-Feb. 1855; 19. Mar. 1855-June 1856; 20. June 1856-June 1857;
21. June 1857-June 1858; 22. July 1858-June 1859; 23. June 1859-Dec. 1860; 24. Dec. 1860-Mar. 1863;
25. Mar. 1863-June 1865; 26. June 1865-July 1867; 27. July 1867-Aug. 1869; 28. Aug. 1869-June 1871; 29. July 1871-Nov. 1872;
30. Nov. 1872-May 1874; 31. June 1874-Jan. 1876; 32. Jan. 1876-July 1877; 33. July 1877-Feb. 1879; 34. Feb. 1879-July 1880;
35. Aug. 1880-Jan. 1882; 36. Feb. 1882-Sept. 1883; 37. Oct. 1883-Apr. 1885; 38. Apr. 1885-Oct. 1886;
39. Nov. 1886-Apr. 1888; 40. Apr. 1888-Nov. 1889; 41. Nov. 1889-Apr. 1891;
42. May 1891-Nov. 1892; 43. Nov. 1892-Mar. 1894; 44. Mar. 1894-June 1895; 45. June 1895-Jan. 1897;
46. Feb. 1897-Sept. 1898; 47. Sept. 1898-Dec. 1899; 48. Jan. 1900-Oct. 1901;
49. Oct. 1901-Nov. 1903; 50. Nov. 1903-Nov. 1905; 51. Nov. 1905-Aug. 1907; 52. Sept. 1907-Apr. 1909;
53. Apr. 1909-Jan. 1911; 54. Feb. 1911-Nov. 1912; 55. Dec. 1912-Oct. 1914;
56. Oct. 1914-Oct. 1916; 57. Nov. 1916-May 1919; 58. June 1919-Apr. 1922;
59. Apr. 1922-Jan. 1925; 60. Feb. 1925-Apr. 1927; 61. May 1927-Mar. 1930.

See Also Add. MSS. 50,004 - 50,005 for newspaper reports of meetings and other items connected with Election of Guardians, 1895-1899

* includes names of paupers + details

WG12/4 Minute Book of the Finance Committee, May 1926-Mar. 1930.

WG12/3 Minute and Report Book of the Ladies' Visiting Committee, Feb. 1893-Jan. 1904.

OFFICERS

WG12/13/1 Service Register, Oct. 1896-Mar. 1930 (refers to officers appointed from 1856).

WG12/13/2 Superannuation Service Register, Jan.-Mar. 1897 (refers only to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to the Guardians, and to Medical Officers).

THE WORKHOUSE

WG12/50/1 Workhouse Visitors' Book, Dec. 1835-Aug. 1898. Contains reports of visits to the workhouse by the Guardians' Visiting Committee and others, with certificates signed by various masters on taking over the workhouse and its equipment from their predecessors.

DUTIES OF THE GUARDIANS NOT CONNECTED WITH POOR RELIEF

Assessment

WG12/57 Minute Book of the Assessment Committee, Mar. 1923-Mar. 1927.

School Attendance

WG12/58 Minute Book of the School Attendance Committee, Sept. 1898-Sept. 1903.

continued →

WEST SUSSEX PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECORDS, 1930-48

The County Council took over the administration of the Poor Law from the Boards of Guardians under the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1929. In practice the day-to-day working of the system did not change, but a central Public Assistance Committee supervised the Boards of Guardians which were renamed Guardians' Committees. Further sub-divisions were made in 1933. From the outbreak of war the responsibilities of the various executive sub-committees were taken over by the Emergency Executive Committee of the County Council and its area sub-committees, and for details of public assistance administration for the war period reference should be made to the minutes of these committees (Appendix 1). In 1947 responsibility for children's relief was taken over by the newly-formed Children's Welfare Committee. The National Assistance Act of 1948 abolished the Poor Law and reorganised the whole system.

MINUTES

Central Administration

WPA1/1-8 Public Assistance Committee Minutes, 1929-45. The minutes of the Public Assistance Committee from May 1945 to June 1948 are contained in the first volume of Welfare Committee minutes.