

composed of Mr. Brice (representing Bridge), Mr. Maynard, Mr. Lathe, Mr. Peckham, and Mr. Denne.

Administrative arrangements were finalised at subsequent meetings, Mr. D. Denne was appointed Treasurer to the Union and Richard Pilcher was appointed Auditor (11). £150 per annum was offered to the local doctor for caring for the sick poor. In July 1835 the Guardians accepted Sir Francis Head's request that the Parish of Chartham should join the Bridge Poor Law Union, which was thereby extended to twenty-two parishes, surrounding Canterbury as shown by the parallel lines on the attached map, which has been taken from G. H. Garrad, A Survey of the Agriculture of Kent (1954).

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF THE WORKHOUSE: THE BUILDING.

The Bridge Union Board of Guardians, who resolved almost immediately to build a workhouse, set up a committee to find a suitable site within one mile of Bridge which contained an acre of ground (12). The site selected adjoined the turnpike road from Bridge to Canterbury. The necessary land, which belonged to the Marchioness of Conyngham (13), was bought for £237. 10s. from Lord Albert Conyngham (14). Having located and purchased a site, the Guardians through the medium of the Canterbury newspapers invited builders to tender for constructing the Workhouse. A surveyor was appointed and the tender of Mr. T. F. Cozens, a Canterbury builder, was accepted for £4,376 (15). The construction of a Union Workhouse at Bridge was financed by a £5,000 loan from the Exchequer (16).

#### STAFF APPOINTMENTS

Within nine months of accepting Mr. Cozens's tender the Workhouse was ready to admit its first inmates by February 1836. Already a Master for the Workhouse had been appointed. An advertisement which appeared in the newspapers during August 1835 offered a salary of £80 per annum (17). Applicants whose names were short-listed were interviewed at the White Horse, together with their wives (18). John Weeks and his wife were appointed as the first Master and Matron of the Bridge Union Workhouse at a salary of £80 per annum, exclusive of rent, candles and living (19). Mr. and Mrs. Weeks resigned their appointments towards the end of December 1835 (20) before the workhouse officially opened, thereby forcing the Guardians to find a new Master and Matron. Early in 1836 Thomas and Maria Cobb were appointed Master and Matron of the Bridge Union Workhouse at annual salaries of respectively £80 and £20 (21).

A schoolmistress was appointed at a salary of £32 per annum, while John Adams as the first porter received wages of 10/- a week (22). Spiritual needs were provided by a Workhouse Chaplain (23), while a medical officer was paid £50 per annum to attend on the sick in the Workhouse.

By the time the Workhouse opened its doors the following domestic staff had been engaged (24).

Laurance, Sarah, aged 35	-	Cook
Morgan, Mary, aged 32	-	Cook
Breasley, Mary, aged 37	-	Cook
Brice, Sarah, aged 48	-	Nurse for Wards No. 7 to No. 15
Spain, Mrs., aged 29	-	To give her attendance to the Boys.
Holness, Ann, aged 23	-	To give her attendance to the Girls.



Thus the Workhouse began its life with a minimum staff of twelve persons, eight of whom were women, and over half of whom were domestic staff.

### THE INMATES

The Workhouse as constructed initially was intended to house 200 inmates, though it contained fewer than that number in its early stages. To start with only one hundred iron bedsteads were required. Inmates arrived from already established Workhouses, such as the Littlebourne Poorhouse (25). On 25 February 1836 the Bridge Guardians decided to seek authority to sell the Littlebourne Workhouse (26), which was the same Thursday when paupers from Barham and Bishopsbourne in Elham Workhouse moved into the Bridge Workhouse (27).

### THE LAYOUT OF THE WORKHOUSE (28)

Probationary and waiting wards were situated below and next to the Committee Room. The Workhouse on its south and north sides contained upper and lower wards, viz:

#### On the South Side of the Workhouse:

Upper Wards	}	To No. 7 inclusive = Girls under 16 years of age.
		To No. 15 inclusive = Old Women and Bedridden Women.
Lower Wards	}	To No. 22 inclusive = Boys under 13 years of age.
		To No. 30 inclusive = Able-bodied Women.

#### On the North Side of the Workhouse:

Upper Wards	-	Old Men.
Lower Wards	-	Able-bodied men and boys 13 years of age and above.

Permission had to be sought from the Poor Law Commissioners for two old couples to sleep together (29) but this was strictly against the rules of the Poor Law Commission until after 1847 when some concessions were made.

The Guardians' minute books contain few figures relating to numbers of paupers in the Workhouse, but during the first quarter of 1847 there were nineteen paupers from Bridge itself in the Workhouse, whose maintenance cost £27. 8s. 9d. (30). During the same three months fifteen paupers in Bridge had received outdoor relief at a total cost of £16. 17s. 7d. In comparison with the other parishes in the Union Bridge was about average. Chartham, on the other hand, was well above average, having had twenty-eight paupers in the Workhouse during the same period at a total cost of £45. 12s. 6d. In the granting to outdoor relief Chartham was much above average with ninety-seven paupers receiving outdoor relief at a total cost of £58. 15s. 1½d.

### THE INMATES' DIET

At a meeting which was held in 1835, involving all the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the East Kent Unions under the chairmanship of Sir Francis Head, it was agreed to adopt one common diet for all Union Workhouses and Poorhouses throughout East Kent (31):

For the Able-Bodied: Men and Women

Breakfast and Supper. Bread and cheese or butter - 6 oz. of bread for men, 5 oz. for women with 1 oz. of cheese of  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of butter.

Dinner. Two days - Suet Puddings and vegetables - 1 lb. of pudding for men, 10 oz. for women. One day - Meat pudding with vegetables - 1 lb. of pudding for men and 10 oz. for women. Four days - Bread and Cheese - 7 oz. of bread and 1 oz. of cheese.

For Old People

The same as for the able-bodied plus 1 oz. of tea and milk for breakfast and supper.

For Children

Bread and milk for breakfast and supper and such proportions of the dinner diet for the able-bodied as the Board of Guardians shall decide.

For the Sick

Whatsoever be ordered for them by the Medical Officer.

Dietary alterations which were made subsequently included giving male inmates who worked hard a daily pint of beer, while the breakfast diet was changed from bread and cheese to gruel.

EXPENDITURE INCURRED BY THE BOARD OF GUARDIANS AND HOW THEY EXTENDED THEIR FUNCTIONS

It was immediately agreed by the Board of Guardians that the various parishes making up the Bridge Union had to meet the running costs of the union, in "such proportion of the general expenses of the union as is lawfully chargeable to the said parishes" (32). Bridge had to pay £27, as against Barham paying the most at £53 and S odmarsh the least at only £6. Since the average was £22, Bridge paid something over the average.

The Guardians also quickly agreed on the following scales of weekly outdoor relief:

	<u>Amount without earnings</u>
For a married man and wife	5/-
For each child	1/-
For single men	2/6d.

At the 1835 July meeting of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Sir Francis Head expressed the following views on the payment of out-relief (33):

"any fixed scale of relief is directly hostile to the principle of the Poor Law Amendment Act. No pauper should be able to safely calculate the amount of relief he should receive and thus set store by it. Instead it should



fluctuate so much that he could never calculate what he was to receive and therefore come to realise he had no certain support - nothing on which he could safely rely - but his own industry and his own providence".

It was agreed that the eleven unions of East Kent should act as uniformly as possible. Outdoor relief was fixed at sums beyond which it was not to be extended under any circumstances:

	<u>Amount per week</u>
For a man, wife and six children	10/-
For a man and wife	5/-

Outdoor relief was made still less attractive when it was decided that the maximum payment to old people should be 2/6d. per week.

Sir Francis Head further ruled that parishes within the Bridge Union had to allocate five per cent of their average yearly poor law expenditure towards the administrative costs of the Union, for which purpose a report was compiled showing the annual average expenditure on poor relief by each parish over the previous three years after deducting expenses for emigration (34):

	£
Adisham	288
Barham	660
Bekesbourne	122
Bishopsbourne	365
Bridge	175
Chartham	884
Fordwich	109
Upper Hardres	258
Lower Hardres	261
Ickham	594
Kingston	180
Littlebourne	528
Harbledown	496
Nackington	302
Petham	483
Patricxbourne	259
Stodmarsh	120
Thanington	404
Waltham	731
Westgate	458
Wickham	714
Womenswold	101

Total                      8,492

Bridge's share of administrative costs was £8. 15s. Compared with several other parishes, Bridge's poor law expenditure had been very low.

Due to the establishment of the Workhouse there was a higher expenditure on poor relief during the first quarter of 1836 (35):

1. Total cost of in-relief in the first quarter of ...  
... £275. 15s. 3d.

CONCLUSION

Even from this brief study of the early years of the administration of the Bridge Poor Law Union, it is possible to advance several conclusions. The Guardians were very conscientious in executing their duties. They were not particularly hard or unkind in their administration of poor relief, yet this is a charge which is commonly thrown at Victorian Boards of Guardians. Although they were careful over financial matters, they were not always tight-fisted and did help those in genuine need. Costs of poor relief were not always reduced at least in the short-term. Despite condemnation of outdoor relief such payments to the able-bodied poor continued within the Bridge Union, alongside other types of out-relief such as funeral expenses, clothing grants and medical aid. Within the Bridge Union the parish of Bridge appears as a village having but a small number of paupers and an average poor-relief expenditure.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) M. E. Rose, The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914 (1972), 8.
- (2) Ibid., 8.
- (3) Ibid., 11.
- (4) Ibid., 11.
- (5) M. Bruce, The Coming of the Welfare State (1961), 103.
- (6) I. Anstruther, The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse (1973), 133.
- (7) Bruce, op. cit., 117.
- (8) Rose, op. cit., 42.
- (9) Minutes of Bridge Board of Guardians, 22 April 1835.
- (10) Ibid., 22 April 1835.
- (11) Ibid., 28 April 1835.
- (12) Ibid., 28 April 1835.
- (13) Ibid., 7th May 1835.
- (14) Ibid., 6 August 1835.
- (15) Ibid., 27 May 1835.
- (16) Ibid., 25 February 1836.
- (17) Ibid., 20 August 1835.
- (18) Ibid., 10 September 1835.
- (19) Ibid., 17 September 1835.
- (20) Ibid., 27 December 1835.
- (21) Ibid., 7 January 1836.
- (22) Ibid., 28 January 1836.
- (23) Ibid., 17 November 1836.
- (24) Ibid., 10 December 1836.
- (25) Ibid., 28 January 1836.
- (26) Ibid., 25 February 1836.
- (27) Ibid., 18 February 1836.
- (28) Ibid., 10 December 1836.
- (29) Ibid., 11 February 1836.
- (30) Ibid., 1 April 1847.
- (31) Ibid., 9 July 1835.
- (32) Ibid., 21 May 1835.
- (33) Ibid., 9 July 1835.
- (34) Ibid., 21 November 1835.
- (35) Ibid., 25 February 1836.
- (36) Ibid., 14 July 1836.
- (37) Ibid., 3 November 1836.
- (38) Ibid., 3 November 1836.
- (39) Ibid., 27 February 1840.
- (40) Ibid., 27 February 1840.
- (41) Ibid., 5 March 1841.
- (42) Ibid., 12 March 1847.
- (43) Ibid., 9 April 1847.
- (44) Ibid., 27 February 1840.
- (45) Ibid., 11 September 1840.
- (46) Ibid., 1 December 1836.
- (47) Ibid., 2 January 1840.
- (48) Ibid., 11 September 1840.
- (49) Ibid., 5 March 1840.
- (50) Ibid., 14 March 1842.
- (51) Ibid., 29 April 1847.