

DURSLEY CHARITIES

By Constance Cuff

For over five hundred years money has been given for the relief of the poor and needy in Dursley. There were twenty-two charities in 1894. Fourteen of them were combined into Dursley United Charities in 1907.

The earliest known is *Mr Spillman's Charity*, dated 1450. He belonged to a family of clothiers who lived at Rodborough and owned Lodgemoor Mill in the fifteenth century. The bequest was an estate called Oxleaze in Standish which produced £50 per year for the poor, but was reduced by a law suit to £4 p.a. in 1624. In 1839 this was given for clothing. In 1900 the property was described as Oxwych - part of Standish Park Estate which belonged to Lord Sherborne of Northleach.

Spillman's Charity was extinguished in 1971 and the sum of £52 invested with the other United Charities.

In 1637 *Hugh Smith* of Dursley (a mason) gave the rents of three tenements, part of Broadwell House, for the poor at the discretion of the churchwardens and overseers.

By 1898 the charity was worth £4. 5s. 0d. (£4.25) and was given as clothing. Then in 1906 the Trustees resolved to apply this charity to the Widows' Fund.

In 1642 the Lord of the Manor, *Sir Thomas Estcourt*, gave a bequest of rents in Tetbury which amounted to £10 p.a. for the relief of the poor in Dursley. In 1898 this was given as clothing coupons (about £9. 10s. 0d.) (£9.50).

Jacob Stiff (a cardmaker) gave £30 in his Will of 21 November 1769. This was to provide bread for widows and poor people on Christmas Day, to be distributed by the officiating minister. In 1894 this £30 was invested in the Post Office Savings Bank and brought in 15/- (75p.) p.a. In 1901 the money was transferred to 3½% India Stock, and in 1907 £27.13s. 3d. (£27.66) was transferred to the official trustee for Stiff's Charity.

The Stiffe family, spelt variously, lived in the Wotton-under-Edge district for some 200 years, and Abraham Stiffe, a cardmaker, lived in Dursley at the latter half of the seventeenth century. He had a son, Jacob, and his son, also Jacob built Eagle House (now Lloyds Bank), and was bailiff in 1740. This Jacob Stiff died on



The Steps c. 1900, believed to have been built about 1530 as the farm house to once extensive lands. The dole bread was distributed from the kitchen window reached via the steps visible here. Reproduced by courtesy of David Evans, Dursley & Cam, 1981.

26 December 1769, aged 56, and his memorial is in the Parish Church.

Mrs Ann Purnell died on 11 May 1760 and left a will which was later implemented by her son, John Purnell of Newhouse. The will was dated 21 December 1759.

By a deed of 5 May 1781 he conveyed to trustees a close of pasture ground called "New Invention" in Leathern Bottle, Cam, some six acres in extent. A yearly rent of £3. 4s. 6d. (£3.23) had to be paid to himself and his heirs.

Under the Deed of 5 May 1781 ten shillings (50p.) was to be paid to the officiating minister for preaching a sermon on the morning of New Year's Day, and another ten shillings for preaching on the afternoon of Good Friday.

One pound and ten shillings (£1.50) was to be divided between

forty widows or other poor women on New Year's Day. The rest of the money was to be used to buy books to teach poor children to read English (and is dealt with in the Educational Section).

In 1821 the Turnpike Road Commissioners bought some of the land. The price, (£131.47), was invested in the City of Gloucester Bank (Dursley), then in the Post Office Savings Bank, then in 1901 in 3½% India Stock (£119).

Under the Enclosure Act some of the land was enclosed in Cam and let out as allotments. Ann Pumell's Charity received 7/11 p.a. (40p.) in compensation from Cam Parish Council (1905).

In the Account Book of 1898 the rent was given as £15. 15s. 0d. (£15.75), and the outgoings as -

£3. 4s. 6d. (£3.23) to Miss Purnell of Stancombe Park;
£1 to the Rector of Dursley; £7 to forty widows; and
about £8 to Dursley National Schools.

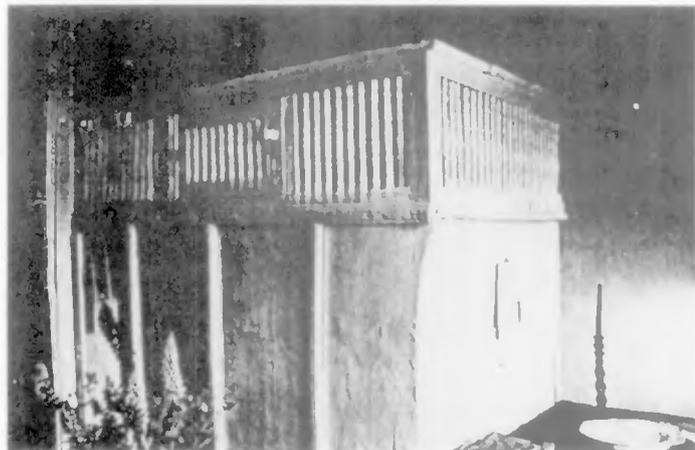
Also a small tithe rent charge had to be paid to the representatives of the late A. H. Estcourt.

In 1952 part of the Leathern Bottle land was sold to the Ministry of Transport for road-widening.

The India Stock was transferred to the official trustees for Pumell's Charity. From correspondence between the rector (Canon Bartleet) and the Charity Commissioners in 1905/6 it was suggested that the educational part of the charity should be 5/8th of net receipts less 10/6 (50p.).

John Purnell was the executor of the will of *Nathaniel Lawson* of Dursley, a clothier, who was bailiff in 1748. He inrolled a deed dated 5 May 1781 conveying a piece of pasture ground called "Martha Nelmes Leaze" of about two acres in Cam to trustees. (This land was near "New Invention"). The profits were to be used to buy bread to be distributed to poor people at the church door on Christmas Day.

This charity was worth £6 p.a.



The dole bread cupboard in The Steps where the charity loaves were stored. The structure beneath gives head room to steps descending to a cellar which contains a well. Reproduced by courtesy of David Evans, Dursley & Cam, 1981.

BUYING HOSPITAL PLACES

Samuel Adey Esq. of Dursley died on 22 January 1794, and is commemorated in a memorial in the Parish Church. By his will dated February 1791 he left £100 to be invested to buy bread four times a year to be given to poor people who regularly attended divine service in the Parish Church or some other place of worship.

Also he gave £100 to Gloucester Infirmary on condition that two Dursley people would be admitted as inpatients annually.

In 1839 the Adey Bequest amounted to £230 in the Post Office Bank. In March 1900 this money was taken out and invested in 3½% India Stock (£248. 17s. 10d.) (£248.90); the income was about £7 per annum.

In December 1907 £212.13s.5d. (£212.67) of stock was transferred to the official trustee for Adey's Charity.

In 1798 *Samuel Phillimore* (who owned Corriett's Mill, Cam) left £250 to trustees to buy property and to give one third of the income to provide bread for the poor.

In 1898 £230.15s.4d. (£230.77) was in the hands of the official trustees, and the income was about £2 p.a.

By his Will dated 31 May 1811, *Richard Joes*, Gentleman,

left £2,250 in 3% Consols for charitable purposes in the parish.

£250 of stock was given to Gloucester Infirmary so that one inpatient and two outpatients would be admitted from Dursley annually, and £250 of stock was given to Bath Hospital for the admission of three inpatients.

£450 of stock was given to pay for the re-pewing of the Parish Church (which was done in 1825), while dividends from £600 of stock were given for the support of the Church Sunday Schools; £300 for the boys, and £300 for the girls.

Dividends from £700 of stock were given for the benefit of four friendly societies in the parish.

In 1894, £1305 in Consols remained of the Jones Charity. The income was divided equally between the Infant School and two friendly societies (The Men's Bull Club and the Women's Bull Club - both based on the Bull Inn, Woodmancote).

19TH CENTURY GENEROSITY

Lieut. Col. John Harvey Olney of Cheltenham left £300 to be invested, and the income from this to be used to buy coals and blankets for the deserving poor. (3 January 1836). Later this charity was given as clothing.

In 1894, £334.6s.6d. (£334.34) was in the hands of the official trustees. The income was about £8 p.a.

Thomas Gregory, an apothecary, left £50 to be invested and the dividends to be used to buy bread for the poor, by his will of 10 May 1837. In 1894 the money was in the Post Office Savings Bank and raised £1.6s.0d. (£1.30). In 1900 this was transferred to 3½% India Stock, and then in 1907 £46.3s.7d. (£47.17) of this stock was transferred to the official trustees for Gregory's Charity.

The latest Dursley charity is that of the *Revd. R. Jermyn Cooper*, Rector of West Chilington, Sussex for twenty-two years, whose memorial is in the Parish Church. His father was Robert Bransby Cooper of Ferney Hill. He died at Piers Court, Stinchcombe.

In his will dated May 1863 he left £100 in 3% Consols for the income to be given to the more deserving poor, in soup in January and February. In 1894 the charity was given as bread. The income was about £2.15s.0d. p.a. (£2.75).

George Vizard, banker, bequeathed £200 upon trust, for the income to be used to buy bedding or clothes for poor people in the winter months. (31 January 1854).

In 1894 the money was invested in Consols and gave an income of £5.7s.3d. a year, (£5.36). This was given as clothing. George Vizard died in April 1854 and has an impressive memorial in the Parish Church. He was bailiff in 1833.

George Vizard's elder brother, *Henry Vizard*, (solicitor), was bailiff in 1818, 1819 and 1820. He bequeathed and gave a great deal to Dursley between 1834 and 1866. He died at Ferney Hill in 1866.

In 1840 he bought the Market House from the Lord of the Manor (Mr. T. G. Bucknell Estcourt) for £400, and gave it upon trust to the bailiff and aldermen of Dursley for the benefit of the inhabitants. He gave money to establish schools (see Educational list below).

In 1856 Henry Vizard gave £500 upon trust to invest and the income to be used to buy bedding or clothes for poor people. The trustees included the churchwardens of St. Mark's Church - not the Parish Church. In 1894 the rector and churchwardens of the Parish Church were given as trustees, and the income was £16.6s.8d. (£16.33) p.a. which was given as clothing. In 1898 the charity was given as £493.4s.0d. (£493.20) in India Stock, with income of £17.5s.0d. (£17.25) p.a.

In his will of 1855 Henry gave £200 to Gloucester Infirmary so that one inpatient and one outpatient from Dursley could be received there every year.

SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

Henry Vizard was instrumental in building St. Mark's Church, for which he gave the land, and in 1853 he built and endowed with £2,000 the six Almshouses next to the church, for three old indigent men and three old indigent widows of good character. The endowment kept the houses in repair, paid all taxes, and gave each occupier 2/6 per week (12½p.), and £1 each year for coal and wood. (In 1958 this had risen to 10/- (50p.) per week). A small chapel was built next to the almshouses.



*The Vizard Almshouses and St. Marks Church c.1900. Both came about through the generosity of Henry Vizard. The almshouses were built in 1853 to house three aged men and three aged widows, members of the Church of England. They were replaced by the present Vizard Close in 1971-2. The church was opened in 1844 for the use particularly of the poor people of the area who were unable to find free seats in St. James's Church at the time when most pews were bought or rented by wealthier families. Reproduced by courtesy of David Evans, **Dursley & Cam**, 1981.*

In 1970 the almshouses were demolished and eighteen sheltered dwellings for old people put up on the site. The old almshouses had such long gardens that there was ample space for the modern flats, which were called Vizard Close. These were built by Dursley District Council and a commemorative plaque was included.

The money realised remains as Henry Vizard Almshouses Fund, and the income is used for the benefit of old people living near, both individually and in group dwellings.

Houses in Silver Street called *the Almshouses* were given to the churchwardens as trustees in 1617, to permit poor, aged, impotent and indigent people to live there. (Blunt records that a chief rent was paid for them as early as 1566). The Almshouses were taken down in 1780 and the stone used to build Church House.

Cottages must have been built on the site subsequently because in the account book started in 1898 the property is described as the (Fire) Engine house and cottages in Silver Street, and the rent was £8.5s.0d. p.a. (£8.25). The money was given to nine poor people to help pay their rent.

Later the cottages were pulled down and two substantial shops built on the site to produce rents for Dursley United Charities. (1912). The shops have been a great support to the Charities for over eighty years, and are now being modified to include flats to rent.

THE CHARITIES AND THE PARISH COUNCIL

Until 1894 the Charities were administered by the rector and churchwardens, with the aid of the firm of Vizards solicitors.

At the second meeting of Dursley Parish Council Mr T. Trewren Vizard read out the details of the Charities. He pointed out that under the 1894 Act the Council displaced the churchwardens and overseers, and could appoint people to be trustees, but had no control over the ecclesiastical charities. He proposed that the Wesleyan Methodist Minister and the Independent Minister be appointed as trustees with the rector instead of the churchwardens in the case of six of the charities; this was agreed.

In March 1896 the trustees reported -

'... there are six clothing charities and six bread charities, one charity to assist nine poor persons in the payment of rent, and one charity part of which gives annual assistance to forty poor widows. The total amount of the clothing charities distributed amounts to £48.18s.9d. (£48.94). The total bread charities amount to £12.3s.1³/₄d. (£12.16).'

Any person who wished could apply for a clothing ticket, and if the trustees thought the applicant a suitable person - and almost invariably the person was - they gave a ticket varying in value. The sums ranged from 2/6 to 5/- (12¹/₂p. to 25p.) and the tickets could be taken to any shop the recipient chose.

The rector (Revd N. W. Gresley) said . . . 'every single house from which an application for a bread ticket was received obtained it.' The tickets were distributed by a body of ladies - who had for years undertaken their distribution - at the request of the present trustees. Every house where bread was wanted was supplied. The bread charities had been distributed during the last twenty years in exactly the same way, (to householders who had resided in the parish for one year). Bread was distributed two, three, and sometimes four times in winter. The balance in hand in the bread charities was £27.

Mr Wheatly was very concerned about the large balances held; he said 'There are plenty of deserving poor in Dursley who don't know where to get a loaf of bread, and hardly know where to get their next meal; as far as possible the wishes of the donors should be carried out.'

The question of the publication of the names of the recipients of the charities in the Dursley Gazette was discussed but it was found that publication led to fewer applicants as some preferred anonymity.

In December 1898 the trustees made it known that they held themselves at liberty to omit from the list of recipients all persons whom they thought unsuitable for charitable relief. The list was over 250 names and if this were diminished the trustees could give larger sums than hitherto to widows and the aged and deserving people.

In January 1904 the names of recipients were published on the church door, as was usual. The Chairman of the Parish Council reported to a meeting that some men of the town had been to him to complain that they had not been granted money from the charities because the trustees could not put any more names on the list.

Bread and clothing coupons were distributed. In December 1904 a 2lb. loaf of bread cost 2¹/₂d., or 4¹/₂d. for a quarter loaf. (Four bakers would supply the bread). Eight drapers sent in invoices showing that they took clothing coupons, 1912 to 1917. The sums varied between 2/- (10p.) and 5/- (25p.), and some of them gave the names of recipients.

THE UNITED CHARITIES

The fourteen charities - Adey's, Almshouses, Cooper's, Estcourt's, Gregory's, Lawson's, Ollney's, Phillimore's, Ann Purnell's, Hugh Smith's, Spillman's, Stiff's, George Vizard's and Henry Vizard's - were combined to form **Dursley United Charities** by a Charity Commissioner's Scheme dated 22 January 1907.

The land and money were vested in the official trustees. Three local trustees were appointed for four year terms; these were the rector of Dursley and two people appointed by Dursley Parish Council.

In March 1907 the income from these charities was £99.0s.9d. (£99.03p.) and £92.1s.11d. (£92.10p.) was paid out.

A variation of the scheme, dated 10 January 1911, shows an interesting list of benefactions :-

1. The assets to be vested in the official trustees;
2. 10/- (50p.) to be paid for a Good Friday sermon;
3. The charities to be used for the general benefit of the Poor (either the poor generally or named persons);

This may include -

- subscriptions and donations to hospitals, and travelling expenses of patients;
- provision of nurses etc., holidays for the sick in convalescence, to provide special care and change of air;
- subscriptions to Provident Clubs, coal, clothing etc.;
- tools, books, fees, travelling expenses, etc. for young people under 21 entering a trade or profession;
- food, clothes, medical aid, fuel;
- weekly allowances (between 1/6 and 3/- per week) for people over 60 years of age, (7¹/₂p. and 15p.).

A variation dated 10 August 1956 allowed subscriptions to almshouses and homes for the old, infirm and homeless, and weekly allowances of between 2/6 and 10/- (12¹/₂p. and 50p.).

In the 1920s subscriptions were paid to the Royal Gloucestershire Infirmary and Convalescent Homes in Clevedon and Weston-super-mare, and also to Dursley Nursing Association, and for patients' travelling expenses and charges.

In 1935/6 Bristol Royal and Bristol General Hospitals were added to the list, and in 1937/8 Dursley Red Cross. The hospital grants were last mentioned in 1948/9.

Grants of money, and coal at Christmas-time to individuals, continued as usual.

Allowances given between the wars are recorded in the account books. The number of widows receiving benefit decreased, but grants to old people increased.

In 1943/4 twenty-six people received grants during sickness, totalling £13.11s.0d. (£13.55p.).

In 1960 seventeen people received 3 cwt of coal each, but numbers on the coal list decreased as people changed to other forms of heating; then they were put on the list for cash grants. These rose to £50 p.a. in 1986 when forty-five people were receiving this benefit. Also Dursley United Charities gave grants to five homes for the elderly and six other organisations (mainly for the benefit of the sick and elderly).

In January 1963 the Dursley United Charities investments were transferred to the Charities Official Investment Fund (similar to a Unit Trust) to maintain their value.

DURSLEY ECCLESIASTICAL CHARITIES

The Church House and Torchacre Charity is recorded on the Charity Boards in the Church as being given by *Richard Yate* and *Thomas Withyford*. This charity for the benefit of all the parishioners of Dursley (1581), was changed to be used for the repair of the Parish Church (1654).

The Revd. J. H. Blunt dates this benefaction from 1495, but Revd B. H. Blackler suggests that it is older than 1495 and that Yate and Withyford were trustees.

A chief rent had to be paid to the Lord of the Manor. The charity produced £23.16s.3d. in 1868 (£23.81).

Church House was "a burgage or tenement with gardens and grounds" on the south side of the Parish Church.

There were a large number of poor people in the parish, so in 1779 the Parish Vestry decided to rent Church House (at £21 p.a.) and to repair it for use as a workhouse, with 82 inmates. Materials from the old almshouses in Silver Street were used for the repairs.

Church House was taken down in 1836, and replaced by houses on either side of a path leading up to the south porch of the Parish Church. Later, these buildings were replaced by shops, which continued to produce rents for the charity. Then in the 1960s the properties on the west side of the path were taken down in a road widening programme. Two shops on the east side remain in the hands of the charity; one is being modified to include a flat to rent.

The Torchacre is six acres of land at the top of Boulton Lane, and in 1836 this became the site of the Union Workhouse.

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act phased out parish systems of poor relief and Dursley Parish Vestry had to find a site for a large workhouse which would serve surrounding parishes as well. Several sites were looked at but eventually they decided on the Torchacre.

The workhouse buildings were later removed and were replaced by Dursley Infants School (1966 - 1982). Since then these buildings have been used by Dursley Social Services.

Throgmorton Trotman, a London merchant, gave £2,000 to the Haberdashery Company in his will dated 30 October 1663. £15 per annum was to be paid for the preaching of a lecture on market days in Dursley.

By her will dated 29 December 1759 *Mrs Ann Purnell* gave £1 to the officiating minister in Dursley to preach two sermons; one in the Parish Church on the morning of New Year's Day, and the other on the afternoon of Good Friday, every year.

DURSLEY EDUCATIONAL CHARITIES

In 1759 *Mrs Ann Purnell* also left money to buy books to teach poor children to read. About £8 was available in 1898. In 1902 the Parish Council resolved that this part of Purnell's Charity should be divided between the Victoria, National and Infant Schools according to the Government Grant earned by each school.

John Arundell (clothier) who was bailiff in 1668, also left a bequest to buy books to teach poor children to read. In his will of 19 May 1703 he left the rents of 'an acre of pasture ground lying upon Breakneck in the parish of Cam' for this purpose.

In 1892 the land was sold to Mrs Phelps of Chestal and the

proceeds (£268.16s.6d. (£268.82)) used to buy £280 of 2½% Stock by the Charity Commissioners. New trustees were appointed and grants (not over 10/- (50p.) in any one case) could be given to children who had attended a school in the town for not less than two years, for good attendance, good conduct, and progress in learning.

In 1894 the income was £5 a year which was divided - one third to the National Schools, one third to the Church Infant School and one third to the Boulton Lane School.

In 1956 the trustees (Revd George Hutchins, Mr P. W. Baston and Mr R. H. Penley) applied for a new scheme.

The Arundell and Purnell Educational Foundation was formed from the two above charities from 28 March 1957. Trustees were enabled to give exhibitions to young people under 25 years of age to any school, college or university, and to help buy tools, books or clothes. The income was about £25 per year.

In 1678 *Henry Stubbs* gave ten shillings yearly (50p.) charged on land at Horsley called the Testament Ground, to buy books to teach poor children of Dursley to read. In 1757 fourteen testaments were distributed, by 1877 the benefaction was lost.

Richard Jones Charity (1811) included £600 in 3% stock with the income to be given to the Church Sunday Schools. In 1894 the income was divided equally between the Infant School and two friendly societies.

Henry Vizard did a great deal for education in Dursley. In 1834 he provided the premises of the National Schools for boys and for girls, and a house for the master. By a deed dated 22 June 1843 he conveyed a building used as a schoolroom and four cottages in Bowers Court to establish a school for poor infant children of the parish; and later he endowed the school with the sum of £1,000 for its upkeep, by a covenant dated 1 August 1853, to come into force at his death (1866).

The first National Schoolmaster's house was demolished to make way for new classrooms and a new house was built in 1881. This was sold in 1976.

On 16 July 1979 the above bequests were combined to form *Henry Vizard's Charity for educational purposes*. The income (about £600 p.a.) is to be used to provide such special benefits of any kind not normally provided by the Local Education Authority for Dursley Church of England Junior School; and to promote Religious Education in accordance with the principles of the Church of England of children and young people under 25 years resident in Dursley by means of Sunday School or any other way.

The Agricultural and Commercial Grammar School in Woodmancote was given by Henry Vizard for the education of boys in the principles of the Church of England. Its foundation was proposed by the Revd George Madan, then Vicar of Cam, and Sir George Prevost, Vicar of Stinchcombe. It was a boarding school built with the headmaster's house on one side and the assistant master's house on the other. The school closed in 1932 and the properties let (later sold). The money received was used to provide Vizard Exhibitions for boys in primary or secondary education.

THE VIZARD EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

In 1958 the scheme was brought up to date. Grants are given to boys or young men up to 25 years of age from the parishes of Dursley, Cam and Stinchcombe (failing these, the adjoining parishes of Slimbridge, Coaley and Uley), for a wide range of activities with an educational basis. The boys must be members of the Church of England.

The 1894 report included *Twemlow's Charity* for the education of Protestant dissenters, and for money to be paid to Boulton Lane School.

The Revd Joseph Twemlow of Cam Meeting lived in Dursley and started a school in his own house in 1715, later transferring it to the school building in Water Street, Dursley. The school was endowed with land so the rents paid for the schoolmaster and general expenses. In 1740 it had forty pupils. It closed in 1887.

The Trust was reorganised in 1947 to provide grants to children of Free Church parents attending further education establishments.

Thus we may see that benefactors from Dursley and elsewhere have been generous to a wide range of recipients. Visitors to Dursley parish church will be interested to see for themselves the

list of charities in the church which gives details of this generosity.

SOURCES

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