

Dover's Charities for the Sick & Poor

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Prior to the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century, any caring for the sick and poor was seen primarily as the task for religious houses. Whilst a series of Poor Laws thereafter provided a last resort for the sick, poor and aged, local benefactors also provided relief and some left bequests to benefit the unfortunate. This article considers how individuals in Dover have done this over the centuries, either by leaving money and investments to the mayor and council and other trustees to administer or to church authorities - sometimes on condition that their graves and memorials were maintained. Not surprisingly for a seaport, the beneficiaries were often poor widows of mariners drowned at sea. The information comes from Hasted's *History of Kent, Caring for Dover's Poor* by Derek Leach, The Dover Society Newsletter 61 and from some copies of St. Mary's Church documents in the possession of the late Joe Harman.

Dover Municipal Charities

The origins of the Dover Almshouse Fund go back to at least the 16th century when the traditional role of the religious houses of giving some help to the sick and poor was removed by the Dissolution. An almshouse was founded administered by the Mayor and others.

Various benefactors over the centuries ensured its continuance and expansion. The Dover Almshouse Fund and a number of old Dover charities were merged into the Dover Municipal Charities during the 19th century. Included were the Gorely Almshouses, the James Neild Charity, the Jonathan Osborn Charity, the Coronation Pensions Charity, the Ann Booth and Mark Wills for Poor Widows Charity, the Gilham Gift, the Henry Matson Charity, the Hugesson's Charity, the George Crowhurst Rubie Pension Charity, the Needle Charity and the William Burchfield Charity. Dover's Battle of Britain Memorial Fund was added after the Second World War and the Grigg Christmas Boot Gift Charity in 1998. Details of some are given below.

Hugesson's Charity

By deed dated 20th September 1633, James Hugesson gave £150 to the corporation, the interest to be applied at Michaelmas in every year, to 'placing forth two or three good male children' as apprentices. From 1701 £3 every year was distributed equally among six poor widows of Freemen. Each received this for life. The amount was paid for some years out of the Borough Fund to the Almshouse Charity Trustees. The reason for the alteration in the charity is unknown.

Ann Booth & Mark Wills Charity

Ann Booth in her will of 1664 gave £100 which was invested in land and the income of £13. 5s divided amongst six poor widows. Mark Wills in 1721 left certain lands with the profit going to six poor widows each of whom received £2 a year. The charity was at one time administered by 'Messrs. Fector, Gunman and others'.

James Neild Charity

Under a trust deed in 1810, James Neild transferred £800 of stock. The dividends were to be distributed in bread amongst debtors in Dover Castle Prison and in procuring their discharge. When this prison was abolished the charity was merged with the Almshouse Charity.

Jonathan Osborn Charity

Jonathan Osborn, mayor in 1816, in his will of 1819, directed the Corporation to invest £100 in stock and to divide the dividends among paupers of St. Mary's Parish poorhouse - six men and six women. When the new Dover Union Workhouse opened in 1836 and St. Mary's Poorhouse closed the income was transferred to the Dover Almshouse Fund.

Gorely Homes

In 1877 Mrs Susan Gorely paid for ten almshouses to be built just below Cowgate Cemetery. The tenants were also given 3s. 6d a week. She was the wife of Charles Gorely who had a farm in Ladywell. Park Street was laid out on part of the land in 1861. He died in 1874 and she in 1880. Dr. Astley who died, aged 95, in 1907 left £14,000 to the Gorely Almshouses. Henry Hobday of

Buckland Paper Mill provided further funds to extend the homes in 1921.

William Burchfield Charity

William Burchfield gave £2,000 of stock in 1883 with the income to be paid to six 'decayed' i.e. impoverished tradesmen of Dover, elected by the corporation for life.

Battle of Britain Homes

The Battle of Britain Homes, off York Street, were funded from money originally raised to provide a new hospital for Dover possibly at Castlemount, but this never materialised with the arrival of the National Health Service in 1948. In 1955 the High Court ruled that the £34,000 collected could be used for some charitable purpose. Eventually it was decided to build almshouses to replace those which were to be demolished in York Street. The Battle of Britain Homes were built and the tenants of the York Street almshouses moved into them in 1964.

Today, the Municipal Charities of Dover own a substantial number of properties in the town, which produce income to maintain their modern 'almshouses' - not those of yore, most of which were destroyed during the Second World War - but the Battle of Britain Homes, Albany House built in 1993 and the original Gorely Homes.

St. Mary the Virgin Dover Parochial Charities

The various charities of St. Mary's and St. James's churches that benefited the poor (numbered 1 to 31 below) were incorporated into a scheme for their

regulation by the Charity Commissioners in 1956. The scheme was called the St. Mary the Virgin Dover Parochial Charities and the area of benefit was the Borough of Dover. The scheme was managed by trustees - the Vicar of St. Mary's being ex-officio plus a representative of Dover Borough Council and three co-opted trustees. The first co-opted trustees were Beatrice Black, Charles Hawkins and Mabel Egan. The Trustees were allowed to appoint a clerk and to pay him (yes, him) 'such reasonable salary as they think fit'.

The charities numbered 1 to 12 and 21 to 27 were grouped together as Charities for the Poor and those numbered 13 to 20 and 28 to 31 became Charities for Widows.

The Trustees were allowed to spend up to £5 a year toward the upkeep of St. Mary's churchyard and the tombs within the church, whilst the income from the Thomas Beane Charity had to be used for the upkeep of the tomb of Jane Byron and others in Old St. James's Church.

The remainder of the income from the Charities of the Poor could be spent for the benefit of the poor in a number of ways: gifts of bedding, clothing, food, fuel, furniture etc., including aids for the sick; a weekly allowance of not less than 2s. 6d or more than 10s.; money to relieve sickness, infirmity or distress; grants for the sick or infirm in need of rest or change of air to pay for a convalescent holiday or domestic help; travelling expenses for hospital appointments or relatives visiting at hospital; assistance to help any poor

person train to earn their living; subscriptions to almshouses etc., subscriptions to residential homes or hostels for the old, infirm or homeless. In addition up to £28 15s. a year could be spent assisting any female dependant of any seafaring man drowned at sea.

Income from the Charities for Widows could be spent as the Trustees thought fit along the lines of the Charities for the Poor.

In 1949 money, coal and bread were still being distributed. In 1974 £330 was distributed in total including £25 to a housing association and £25 to Age Concern. The balance of £280 went responding to various requests. The annual accounts for 1978 showed payments of £314 including £100 to Dover Old People's Community Centre Trust, £40 to St. Mary's School Welfare Fund and various payments totalling £174.

These ancient charities came to an end in 1998 when the Charity Commissioners approved the winding-up of St. Mary the Virgin Dover Parochial Charities and the disbursement of its assets, valued at £12,000, to other local charities. Age Concern and the Gorely Homes were amongst the beneficiaries.

St. Mary's Parish

1. Thomas Pepper, jurat of Dover and four times mayor, in his will of 1574, gave an annuity of 40s to be distributed equally between the poor of the parishes of our Lady of Dover and Hougham, being income from his manor of Syberston in Hougham.

Originally the money was distributed as sixpenny loaves.

2. Thomas Ellwood, mayor in 1592, in his will of 1605, gave an annuity of 20s. to be paid from the rent of a house in Cannon Street for distribution in bread to the poor of St. Mary's parish on Christmas Eve.

3. Thomas Challice, in his will of 1614, gave an annuity of 10s. to be paid from the rent of The Three Horse Shoes, an inn in Biggin Street, later renamed The Saracen's Head, which was pulled down in 1896 for road widening. It was to be distributed in bread to the poor of the parish on St. James's Day.

4. Jacob Winsor, gentleman of Dover, by his will in 1669, gave his eight tenements, 'in the new buildings in Dover' near the North Pier, to eight poor, aged people of the parish to live in or to be rented out by the Mayor and Jurats, and the rents given to the poor; but, according to Hasted in 1800, 'these tenements having been suffered to fall to ruin, are lost to the poor for ever'. He also gave 24s. a year, being rent from two houses in Bench Street, to be given as bread to the poor of the parish at the door of the church on Christmas Eve. The houses were later demolished by the Corporation which paid 24s. a year to the charity in compensation.

5. Nicholas Cullen, four times mayor, in his will of 1696 gave a cottage with the rent to be distributed in bread; but in 1800 Hasted recorded that 'a poor widow now lives in it rent free'. The cottage became 8 and 9 Mill Lane, which were destroyed by enemy action during the Second World War. The charity received £44 19s. War Damage compensation.

6. William Richards, in his 1701 will, gave £5 a year from the income of Coombe Farm. It was to be given to the poor in bread on Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Lady Day, Easter Day, Whitsun Day, Midsummer Day and on the first Sunday every month. It is amazing how far £5 could stretch in those days!

7. John Dekewer, by his will of 1760, gave the sum of £500 and from the interest 4s. was to be distributed every Sunday after church to the poor of the parish; any surplus was to buy coal for handing out on Christmas Eve. The first priority, however, for the charity was to maintain the tomb of Benjamin Devinke, including painting it every eight years. Dekewer was Devinke's executor and Devinke in his will had given £100 toward a parsonage in 1756 provided his tomb was kept in repair. John Dekewer honoured this condition in his own will.

8. Susannah Hammond, in her will proven in 1770, gave the sum of £60 and the annual income of £2. 8s. was to be distributed as bread to the poor on New Year's Day.

9. Thomas Boykett in his will of 1791, left stock to yield £5 a year for bread for the poor.

10. William Burchfield by his will proven in 1889 bequested investments (£280 stock and £250 Defence Bonds in 1956) to the Vicar and Churchwardens requiring them to use the income each year at their discretion to benefit the poor of the parish.

11. William Coleman in his will proven in 1911 left stock (£415 in 1956) with the income to be used for the relief of the poor and sick at the discretion of

the Vicar and Churchwardens - The Coleman Charity. This is quite separate from the Richard Coleman Charity.

12. Peter Fector, in his will proven in 1814, left £100 stock with the dividends to be given in equal shares at Christmas to 12 old people of the parish, preferably seamen's widows.

13. Thomas White, twice mayor, by his will of 1669, gave an annuity of £2 from house rent to be given to four poor widows of the parish.

14. Nicholas Cullen, by his will of 1696, gave a house and land on Victualling Quay (later Admiralty Yard) with the annual income to be distributed every New Year's Day to 20 poor widows of the parish, amounting to 13s each. Apparently, when the house was demolished for harbour development the income was lost. Philip Papillon, who died in 1719, added to this Cullen Charity by donating the rent of £7 a year from 43 acres of land near Lydd mortgaged by Nicholas Cullen. This mortgage was eventually paid off and became the freehold property of the charity which was then sold and the money invested. With the increase in income from 1781 the 20 poor widows each received £6. 10s. In 1901 the Charity Commissioners reduced the number of widows benefiting to 10.

15. Ann Jell, by her will proven in 1735, gave an annuity of 40s. from house rent for distribution on New Year's Day to eight poor widows of the parish not receiving charity already.

16. Thomas Knott, by his will of 1777, gave an annuity of 20s from the rent of 1 New Bridge, to be distributed to the 40 poorest widows on St. Thomas's day. This was done in the form of a 6d loaf.

17. Rebecca Saure, by her will of 1808, bequeathed £400 stock with the dividends to be spent every two years repairing her husband's tomb and any surplus in the purchase of coals for 10 poor widows.

18. John Hammond, in his will proven in 1824, bequeathed £100 stock with the income to be given to six poor widows on 17 March, subject to a deduction for upkeep of his grave every 12 years.

19. Thomas Pattenden, the Dover diarist, died in 1817 leaving £850 stock with the dividends to be used maintaining the headstones of his family grave and to use the remainder each half year among the most recent six poor widows (not possessing more than £100 in property), whose husbands had been drowned. He kindly included 5s to be paid each half year to the Vicar and Churchwardens for administering the charity. By 1926 there had been no applicants for a long time and the Charity Commissioners decreed that in future income should be distributed first to not more than six widows of drowned sailors, but if there were none then to six daughters of seafaring fathers drowned at sea and, if none, to any widows whose husbands had drowned.

20. Edward Phillips by his will proven in 1844 bequeathed £400 to provide income for coal and warm clothing to be given each year on Christmas Eve to ten poor widows whose husbands had been lost at sea or otherwise to other old widows.

21. George Finch died in 1828, leaving £100 stock with the dividends to be given to the poor in bread.

St James's Parish

22. Thomas Dawke, shipwright, left £50 in 1703 with the interest to be spent on bread distributed annually to the poor of St. James's Parish.

23. Thomas Beane, mayor in 1749, in his will dated 1764, left £200 in government stock and directed part of the dividends be used for repairing the tomb of Jane Byron and Clement Buck at Old St. James' Church and the remainder spent on bread for the poor.

24. Dame Susannah Booth died in 1822 and left her money to the poor of four parishes that she was acquainted with, including St James' which received £477 in bank stock. St. Mary's was another of the parishes that benefited. Dividends were to be distributed to the poor at Christmas. She had visited Dover occasionally and lived here for a time and was buried in Old St. James' Churchyard. The charity was founded in memory of her daughter, Penelope, who had died when six years old.

25. Alfred Joseph Bushell by his will proven in 1902 gave £100 to be invested for the poor subject to maintenance of his grave and those of his children.

26. Martha Mansfield by her will proven in 1903 gave £20 for the poor of the parish subject to upkeep of her grave.

27. Peter Fector, the banker who died in 1814, bequeathed £200 of shares plus and £100 for the relief of needy seamen with the interest to be divided among 12 old people preferably seamen's widows.

28. George Atherden, in his will of 1875 made in Australia, bequeathed £1,000 to provide money once a year for five poor widows. These payments were

to be made for life unless they misbehaved or left St. James's Parish.

29. Annie Fariah O'Brien, in her will proven in 1927, left £100 for the Rector to invest and to give away as much income 'as he thinks proper during the life of King George V and his issue then living and the survivors of them plus 21 years after the death of such survivors keeping the grave of her husband, herself and her parents in order and putting a cross of flowers on it twice a year'. Any balance was to be given to poor widows at Christmas.

30. Edward Phillips, by his will proven in 1844, bequeathed £400 to provide income for coal and warm clothing to be given each year on Christmas Eve to ten poor widows of St. James' parish whose husbands had been lost at sea or otherwise to other old widows.

31. Elizabeth Newman Igglesden in her will proven in 1875 left £650 stock with income to be given on 1 January each year to six poor widows aged over 65, preferably seamen's widows.

Other bequests for the benefit of the poor

There were many other bequests for the benefit of the poor not included in the Dover Municipal Charities or St. Mary's Parochial Charities schemes, including:

George Bing, (or Bynge) mayor of Dover four times, by his will dated 1604, gave to the churchwardens and overseers of St. Mary's parish an annuity of 20s. to be paid out of his house in the town and to be distributed on Christmas Day to the poorest people of the parish.

John Hewson, by will in 1692, gave £20, the interest to be yearly given to poor widows of this parish; which interest amounting to the sum of 20s per annum, is vested in the parishioners;

Thomas Papillon was a contractor for the navy who bought Acrise Place. He was a Puritan and essayist who contested one of Dover's two parliamentary seats when his religious views were out of favour. Thomas won, but the Mayor declared his opponent the winner on a technicality. Thomas appealed, but his opponent was killed in a naval action and Thomas was appointed MP in 1673, serving the town for 22 years. In his will of 1701 he left £400 'the profits from which were to be used to assist Freeman's sons under 25 to pay for their apprenticeship or setting up their own trade.' Any spare money could be used for the relief of the poor and aged in Dover.

Anthony Church, by his will of 1709, gave £20 to produce income of 20s. a year to be distributed in bread to the poor on Christmas Eve.

Philip Papillon, by deed in 1742, gave land, the income of £17 a year was to be distributed to poor widows every Sunday in the year. Two jurats of the town were required to administer it.

Elisabeth Roalfe, in her will dated 1777, left £400 stock with the income of £12 a year to be distributed to ten poor families not receiving 'constant assistance from the parish'. The charity was administered by six trustees.

Sarah Rice left £700 stock in 1841 with the dividends to be paid to the Mayor and Senior Magistrate of Dover and

spent on the purchase of coals for distribution at Christmas amongst 10 poor widows of Dover seamen.

Richard Vincent Coleman was born in 1831 in the old farmhouse at Priory Farm (now Dover College). The family later moved to The Shrubbery, an old mansion on Crabble Hill. Richard died in 1909 and his will established the R.V. Coleman Convalescent and Nursing Home Trust, using rental income from the building that now occupies The Shrubbery site and investments. The Trust in 2006 spent £43,889 assisting 87 people who were sick, convalescent, disabled or infirm in Dover and the surrounding villages.

PS To complete the picture of St. Mary's and St. James' charities there were others not involved with relieving the poor.

Thomas Toke in 1484 left five acres at Whinless Down and 2 acres at Hougham (1-97 Clarendon Place occupy the site) with the income for church repairs. The Gutter House Charity, predating 1532, gave property for church repairs (4 Biggin Street and 10-14 Biggin Street). The Old Vicarage Charity in existence by 1656 referred to premises opposite St. Mary's Church, possibly an old vicarage, which produced income for church purposes. The property was sold for road widening in the 19th century.

Sophia Charlotte Green-Thompson in 1927 left £100 to St. James' Church provided her sister's grave was maintained and Elizabeth Anne Jazzard left a large gift in 1942 for general church repairs.