

# ACCOUNTS OF EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY OVERSEERS OF THE POOR OF CHALFONT ST. PETER

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OVERSEERS Accounts have long been recognised as valuable sources of information upon many matters. They throw light upon food and clothing, wages and prices, conditions of employment, the law and its application, the incidence of disease, and the advances of medicine. And since the Poor Rate often had to cover other needs as well, the Accounts of the Overseers may give glimpses of roads and buildings, and of the activities of other parish and county officers. They also, to the eye of imagination, unfold many a moving picture of poor persons of past days, and of the towns and villages in which they lived. As a contribution to this wider study of social conditions in eighteenth-century England, some description of the Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor of Chalfont St. Peter between 1721 and 1765 may be of service.<sup>1</sup>

The Parish Chest at Chalfont St. Peter contains also the Poor Rate book for 1688-1766, numerous Settlement papers, and a few apprentices' indentures: and some reference to these will be found below. I will give in full the first two entries in the Overseers' Accounts, and the first annual summary: add some general notes and comments: and then give illustrations under several headings.

(1721) May the 6th. Given as Need Requiars

	£	s	d
ffor Ritin paper	00	00	06
ffor Sinin the rate	00	02	00
ffor parchment for poors rate	00	02	06
Rachill Perkins	00	02	00
ffarmers Childe	00	08	00
Ed Ives juner & Nursin him	00	03	00
Ives is garll & mendin hur Cloaths	00	04	00
Ives is boy	00	08	00
Mary Copland	00	02	00
ffor Ritin Ed Ives is order & Sinin	} 00	08	00
it at the Justice & Caring him to Denham			
Ann Dito	00	02	00
ffor a New parish Book	00	11	00
	02	14	00

(1721) The Accounts of Richard Hunt & William  
Courtney over Seears of the poore of the Parish  
of Chalfont St Peters of what money they have  
Collected & Desburst by them in the yeare 1721

May the 6 pd the Pensonhrs	£	s	d
Narth Pears	00	07	06
Thomas Elexsander	00	02	00
Robert Hulls	00	14	00
Widdow Munk	00	06	00
Widdow Howard	00	07	06
Mary Copland	00	05	00
Widdow Grimsdell	00	05	00
Widdow Gifford	00	08	00
Ann Dito	00	06	00
Widdow Dell	00	04	00
Ann Milles	00	07	06
Joseph Dagger	00	06	00
Widdow Jeffry	00	02	00
Peter Street end	00	08	00
Widdow Prowd	00	12	00
Widdow Perkins	00	02	00
Burrows children	00	10	00
Ann Saunders	00	04	00
Widdow Smith	00	04	00
Peter Smiths Widdow	00	16	00
Widdow Weatherly	00	04	00
Birds Children	00	18	00
Widdow Burnitt	00	06	00
John Brown	00	08	00
Widdow Bryant	00	06	00
Elizabeth Russill	00	04	00
Widdow Rogers	00	10	00
Widdow Cawdry	00	04	00
Widdow Stringall	00	10	00
fillip franklin	00	04	00
John Munk	00	06	00
	11	03	00

(apparently March 27, 1722)

	£	s	d
Collected three rates & a half	169	05	09 $\frac{3}{4}$
Disburs'd	163	00	01 $\frac{1}{2}$
due to the parish	006	04	08 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bad Debts 0:7:3 qt. money 15s 2d			
John Burrows Bill 0:9:6	001	11	03
Due to the parish	004	13	05 $\frac{1}{4}$

Allowed by us  
Tho. Eyre

Allowed by us  
Mos. Wiles Vicar  
Ric. Whitchurch  
Jno. Wilkins  
Tobias Goodridge

John Hatch  
George Cawdry  
Richard Skidmore

## THE VESTRY AND ITS OFFICERS

Dr. Moses Wiles was vicar from 1718 to 1724. The signature of the vicar or curate sometimes heads the list, but frequently neither appears to have been present. The next signatures are generally those of the churchwardens: in the example above, Mr. Richard Whitchurch (Lord of the Manor of Chalfont St. Peter) and Mr. John Wilkins (of Chalfont House) were churchwardens that year. The vestry meeting was never very large; usually about 9 signatures are appended, though on occasion the number rises to 16.

In some years, the appointment of the two churchwardens is recorded: every year, the two Overseers chosen by the vestry. Evidently only a limited number of men were able or willing to hold this office; members of the Hunt family recur most frequently. In one year, a woman was appointed—Widow Ball, of Stampwell Farm. In 1748 it is recorded that henceforth four names must be submitted: but they are generally the two Churchwardens *plus* the two Overseers.

The Overseers also paid the bills of the Surveyors of Highways, e.g.

“1737 Ap. pd. Jo. Goodridge & Hen. Hill their surveyors bill for ye year 1736	2-8-9
1747 Severs bill	3-5-6
1748 Ap. Paid Charles Harress Severs Bill	3-14-9”

The Overseers also met the expenses of the Constables. At this time the Whitchurch Lords of the Manor kept up their Manor Court with some state, and appointed each year (among other officers) two Constables<sup>2</sup>; apparently these were accepted by the Parish. In the Sessions Records, one is called “Town” and the other “Parish”. Each received 2s. 6d. when he had to attend a High Constable’s meeting, and his out-of-pocket expenses.

Who wrote these accounts does not appear: it does not seem to have been the parish clerk (Henry Dell), to whom there are several references. A new hand appears in 1743.

### *Receipts and Expenditure*

The writer generally makes up each year a tidy statement of income and disbursements: but then other items are remembered, or the Vestry makes some late decision, and some remarkable last-minute sums are worked out before the accounts are finally submitted to the Justices for their approval. In such a fashion, for example, is slipped in this extra-ordinary payment from the Poor Fund:

“1764 April pd. Churchwardens Bill for new led in ye Church £53-13-3”

Nor (one would gather) were these accounts always obtained or agreed without difficulty:

“Septr. 23, 1723. At a Vestry held this day it was order’d that the Present Overseers wait upon the Justice of the Peace for a Warrant to oblige the last overseers to account”  
 “1747 April. A Greed that these a Counts shall be Rectedified if Rong by Seshons”

The accounts were submitted to the Vestry twice a year (occasionally more often) and were approved by two Justices every April. Here appear the signatures of Henry Gould, Roger Hill, Edmund and Henry Waller and others: but most frequently of Thomas Eyre of East Burnham, John Perriman of Farnham Royal, and Charles Churchill of Chalfont St. Peter (builder of the eighteenth-century portion of Chalfont Park).

The usual poor rate was 6d. in the £, which produced about £50.<sup>3</sup> The record of payments is generally headed: “for the relief of the poor for three months ensuing”—i.e. four rates were generally collected each year. After 1750, this becomes: “for the relief of the poor for one month”. But still only four, or occasionally five rates were gathered each year. In the table below, 1741–2 was an exceptional year, because of a smallpox epidemic. But the general level of expenditure rises after 1755. £280 was a considerable sum for a parish of about 200 families, who had also other rates and taxes to pay.

Year	Number of rates collected	Receipts £	Expenditure £
1721–2	3½	169	164
1726–7	3	165	169
1731–2	4	202	185
1736–7	3	162	161
1741–2	6	314	305
1746–7	3	165	169
1751–2	3	179	151
1756–7	5	280	243
1761–2	6	320	308
1764–5	5	278	263

### THE PENSIONERS

In 1721, out of a population of about 800, 32 are receiving regular monthly relief: the number rarely rises much above this. The pensions vary in amount, but the average throughout the period 1721–65 remains about 7s. per month. This was not very much, when a loaf of bread cost 10d. and a labourer’s wage was 8d. a day.

In the Parish Register in 1700–2 there are several references to “poor housekeepers”,

e.g.: “James Oakley, a shoemaker and poor housekeeper.  
 Edward Ives, a day labourer and poor housekeeper.  
 John Ingram, a glover and poor housekeep”

Presumably this refers to those who were in receipt of pensions for the poor.

By an Act of 1697, those receiving pensions were required to wear a badge, bearing the letter P, followed by the first letter of the name of the parish.<sup>4</sup> The following entries refer to this:

“1721/2 Jan. Mem<sup>dom</sup>. It was ordered at this vestry that the Overseers relieve not any Person, but those who constantly wear the Badge, after the next Pay Day.”

1722 Jan. ffor the Brass Bodgis	15-0
ffor Cloath	2-6
ffor Soin them on	2-0
1729 May Widow Dell no bodge this month no pay	
Ann Saunders no bodge this month no pay	
Eliz. Burrows no bodge this month no pay	
1746 Dec. Paid Robt. Bennetts Bill for Bleeding ye	
poor and making of Bogges & fixen on	13-0”

It would not appear that this odious regulation was consistently enforced.

In the list of pensioners above, 16 are described as “widows”, the others are evidently old people or orphan children. “Peter Street end” was no doubt a foundling, who had been found at “Street End” (near the Pheasant): the parish supported him until he was apprenticed; e.g.

“1721/2 March. a frock, a shurt, & stokens for Peter Streete end	5-4
1722 July peter Streete end for Shows & brechis & Shurts	10-6
Nov. Given with Peter Streete end to Thomas Guyit & other charges	5-15-0”

According to the indenture, Thomas Guyit lived at Iver, and Peter was bound to him, until the age of 21, to learn the trade or mystery of “Matt making”.

There is an Order, dated 3rd May, 1718, to remove from Ealing to Chalfont St. Peter, Mary Smith, widow of Peter Smith, and her children, Elizabeth (aged 7), Mary (4), Gibson (3) and Peter (1): so that “Peter Smith’s Widow” (in the list above) must have needed all her 16s. a month.

#### SALE OF GOODS

When a pauper died, the parish might sell his goods in order to recover some of its money. With this in view, an occasional check of their possessions was made; e.g.

“1730 Sep. Taken ye inmetry of all ye Poors Goods	4-6”
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(This interesting inventory is still in the Parish Chest.)

James Burrows receives an occasional 4d. or 6d. for ‘crying a sale’. Of the pensioners named above, some died in the years 1722-4:

“Sale of Birds Childrens Goods	
One porig pot	4-0
One ffrying pan	2-6
Daggers wife has the Bed & Bedins & the rest at William Newmans . . .	
Sale of Widdow Burnetts Goods	
Putor & own Tabil	7-0
Sale of Robert Hurles Goods	
one coat and one Waskcoat	1-6
one ffrock & one Parr of Brechis	1-0
one Brass Kittel	5-0
one Brass Skilit	6
one wash Ciur & one wort tub & 1 fork	2-0

one Spad	1-0
one flutt	10
Sale of Elexsanders Goods	
one bed	2-0
one Gridgoyorn	1-0
ffor 2 puter dishes & one wort tub	2-0
	—
	1-10-4"

### OTHER PAYMENTS

The column above headed "Given as Need Requiars" is more frequently headed "Extrornerys". It includes a great variety of payments. From the "extraordinaries" the Overseers paid the rents of some poor people: e.g.

"1738 April Joan Garmans $\frac{1}{2}$ years rent	17-6
Widow Rogers rent	15-0
Widow Egletons rent	10-0
Adams wives rent	10-0
Widow Dods rent	15-0"

(These are all rents for the half-year.)

For the rest, the payments include official dues, doctors' and lawyers' fees, the care of the poor in birth, marriage and death, in sickness and in health, in work and out of work, the binding of apprentices, the provision of food, firing and clothing, and many other miscellaneous items.

### BIRTH

"1721 Sep. ffor sendin a great belid woman away with a gide	1-6"
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There are many other entries like this: if the child were born in the parish, he might become a charge upon the parish.

"1723/4 Feb. a travill in Woman lying in hear	13-9
1724 Jun. old Addams wife in Iyin inn & Midwif & Nursin	1-18-0
1734 Oct. The charge of a woman lying Inn at the Swan	2-8-6
1740 May pd. for Nash is Child Crising & her Churching	1-6
1763 Mar paid Bety Stringall for Layin a woman in keag	5-0"

The expression "a chance child" occurs several times, meaning an illegitimate child.

"1731 July ffor Crising a Chance Child & Nursing it at ffrancis Brandlys & other chargis	10-9
for Laying Brandlys wife & Nursing her	2-4-6
1756 Ap. given theChans Childs mother as goes about Country	2-0
1749 Oct. Paid Amey Bunns for Nusen the Chans Child (Bunce)	10-0"

In this last instance, there is evidence of a Bastardy Bond. An occasional bastard was accepted in the village. There is, for example, the case of "Elizabeth Roff as lived with Will Liberty" (who had the kiln at Horn Hill). Both she and

her child were cared for by the parish, in sickness and in health, for many years. But in such cases endeavours were made to find the father of the child, and to bind him to contribute to its maintenance.

“1744 Nov. 6. I, Samewell Bunce of Chalfont St. Peter promise to pay to the Church wardens of the parish of Chalfont St. Peter one shilling per week towards the maintenance of a bastard child which I acknowledge myself to be the father of . . . . . for which I am now in custody and by mittimus ordered to the County Gaol: but by the constant & due payment of the sum of one shilling a week, the Officers & Church wardens do acquit & let me at liberty.”

This is exceptional in form: in general, a relative or friend is bound with the offender in a sum of £40 to indemnify the parish against any charges that may be involved, e.g.

“1733 Mar. 11. John Hearne the elder, and John Hearne the younger of ‘White Walton’ co. Berks, and ‘After’ Pink, farmer, of Chalfont St. Peter, to Richard Skidmore & Richard Hunt, churchwardens of Chalfont St. Peter, in £40 for the maintenance of a daughter born to Ann Franklin, single woman, of Chalfont St. Peter, of which John Hearne the younger acknowledges himself to be the father. Witnessed by Joseph Goodridge & John Charsley.

1733 Dec.	Ann Franklin Lyin Bred Chese & Beer	3-0
	do. pd. for three weeks keeping	6-0
	do. rent & Nursing	16-6
Jan.	pd. ye Midwife for Ann Franklin	5-0
1763 Sep.	Expenceses of Mr. Harrington & Self Goen to Marten in Sery after Dolt	£1-0-4
1764 Ap.	Recd. from Tho. Dolt for one month for Lidy Biggs Child	6-0”

#### APPRENTICE

There are several examples of poor children being “placed out” by the Overseers. Some appear to have been “arrangements” with local farmers: but most were properly indentured apprenticeships. In general, they sent them out reasonably well clad.

“1735 Ap. for setting John Dell aprentis £7.-12-0”

From the indenture it appears that he was bound, until the age of 24, to William Farnbrough, of Mill End, Rickmansworth, to learn rake-making.

“1736 May. Setting piners gurl a prentis £3-12-6

Sary Piner was apprenticed, until the age of 21 or her marriage, to Richard Piner of Chalfont St. Peter: no trade is mentioned.

In 1742 Chalfont St. Peter was obliged to receive from Hammersmith John Smith, a soldier, Mary his wife, and their three children, Elizabeth (15), John (14) and Mary (11). Work was soon found for Mary.

“1742/3 given John Worley with HamerSmith garl aprentis at  
Rickmansworth £6-15-0”

The indenture, dated 16th February, 1742/3, states that Timothy Hunt and John Hatch, churchwardens, and Thomas Hunt and Edward Weatherly, overseers, apprentice Mary Smith, age 12 on 29th June last, to John Worly

of Rickmansworth, until age 21 or marriage. No trade is mentioned. This is witnessed by Richard Skidmore and Robert Bennett, and approved by D. Parr, J.P., and Geo. Tash, J.P.

“1745 Nov. Given three Gines for Binden the Widow Barton’s son. £3-0-0  
Charges for 2 hrs & men to bind him 15-4”

James Bampton “put himself apprentice” to John Weathered of St. Albans, glazier, for seven years.

“1754 May. Given Mr, Ashbee to take young Hackins for one year £1-1-0”  
and so on till he can shift for himself

(Thomas Ashby was a local farmer.)

“1757 Jun. paid the keep of young Kebble before he was bound 8-0”  
to the Marlow Sweep  
Given for to Bind him £3-3-0”  
Chargeses for making his clothen 5-0  
Chargeses for Endenters & other Expences of Binden  
him & Stockins & Shows & hatt 17-0  
paid Bow Chargeses of Clothen young Kebble to go  
to the Boore & Cassel 14-0”

“1760 July paid Binding of Mary Burges to Mr. Wiz at the £1-14-4”  
White Swan in Witch Street, London.

In the following year, the parish got three boys off its hands. If “young Roff” is the illegitimate child mentioned above, he is now ten years old:

“1761 May. Charges of Gitting young peen & east & Roff £3-7-0”  
boys placeses at London

“1761 Jun. paid for 3 pares of brechis for 3 boys 12-3  
Mary Baldin paid Mr. Allinson for Coach hier  
and 6 shurts for Boys 16-9

July. paid Joseph Monk for making clothes for  
ye Boys 9-2  
paid for Shows to Will Peen for the 3 Boys 7-0

Aug. paid James Hunt for hatts for the 3 boys  
& Buckls, 7-0”

“1762 Ap. Paid for half the Indenters of Aron Penn 13-6”  
to London.

Aaron Penn, son of William Penn of Chalfont St. Peter, labourer, put himself apprentice to Thomas Harris, Citizen and Barber of London, for seven years. (This is a printed form of Indenture of the Barbers Company—“without any Sum of Money or Other Thing given or contracted.”)

“1764 paid for Binding Houses Garl at Kent to her on £3-11-6”

—probably to her uncle. Ann House, daughter of William House of Chalfont St. Peter, wheelwright, deceased, put herself apprentice for seven years to Thomas House of Sydenham, Lewisham, co. Kent, to learn the trade of peruke-maker. This indenture is endorsed with a receipt for the consideration of £5 from Ann House.

## MARRIAGE

A few pauper marriages are mentioned, e.g.:

“1725 Nov. Elizabeth Pears Marig	£4-5-6”
“1728 Dec. ye Charg of ye Marreg of Eliz: Lovet & hur Bed & order for Remove	£6-2-6”
“1741 Sep. ffor Marring Mary Winfeild to Daniel Martin	£4-15-0”

## CLOTHING

A few selections from a large number of entries indicate some of the local tradesmen and some of the materials used and garments provided.

“1722/3 Jan. ffor Shows for Birds children ffor Capps & apporns for Smiths Children & Birds Children	4-0 13-6
1723 Ap. One Hat for Birds Garl	1-2
1724 Jul. Tibballs boy one parr of Lether Brechis	2-6
1724/5 Mar. pd. William Nash for one Bedcord	1-4
1735/6 Jan. Henry Hill for Poor Peppels showes	3-8”

Henry Hill, of “the Red Lion”, made and mended many shoes, and helped many “poor peppel”.

“1737/8 Feb. sent Mr. Hill a presant	5-6”
1736 Oct. Ann Baxters Bill for Cloath for ye Poor Children Thomas Price a pare of Shews	£1-5-4 4-0
1737 Oct. Thomas Price a wesckcoat	4-6
1737/8 Mar. Thomas Price a Coate	12-6
1739 Sep. pd. for 18 Shurts & Shifts for Edlins family	£1-5-6
1741/2 Mar. Winfeilds garl a pare of patterns	1-0
1744/5 Mar. Paid for a Pare of Leading Strings for Bunces Child	8”

Hereafter the Overseers more often buy material to be made up:

“1745 June paid for 3 yards of Lince Wolsee for Elizabeth Aby for a Coat	7-0
1745 Oct. Paid for a Foulwether & Wascott for Young Barns at Mr. Ashbees	12-6
1747/8 Mar. Paid Appecoat for Mary Monk	4-0
Paid for a gound making & body Linnen for hur	2-2
1749 Mar. Paid for making the old cooks Gound	2-0”

“The old cook” is a character who appears many times—never called by any other name—until her death in 1755.

“1749 May. Paid for a pare of Stomecher & Bodies for young Elizabeth Franklin	4-0
Dec. Paid Joseph Monk for Stuff & making of 3 Shutes of Cloathes for Edlins boys.	1-14-0

1752	Jan. paid for 11 pound of tow for the widow Baldin to spin	5-6
	May, Paid for 4 Els of Shiften for Mary Hacken	4-4
1752	Aug. Paid James Burrows for weaven of 17 Els of Cloth	6-6
	Nov. Paid Ann sears for whitenen of 17 Els of Cloth	2-0
1753	July paid for a flanel petey coat for Sarah Friar	3-6
1756	July paid for a pare of Lether bodes for Kebbs garl at Stevens	2-3
1757	Sep. Paid for covering of young Warwicks stays	7-6
1758	Jan. Tho. pond and paid for his Great Coat making	9-10
1759	Feb. paid for 2 yards & $\frac{1}{2}$ of Rushey Drab for Warwick boy	2-6
	Russet drab? O.E.D. gives: "Russet: a coarse homespun cloth or dress".	
"1759	Feb. paid for one pare of Stockins for Warwick boy	8
	paid for butons & making his frock	1-9
1759	Feb. one pare of shows for young Warwick	2-9"

### IN SICKNESS

Several doctors' names appear: between them they received many guineas from the parish. Dr. Kingston of Rickmansworth and Dr. Mellish were most often called upon.

Besides these, "Doctors" Russell and Stevens lived in the village. Dr. Russell, who did a little cobbling, suffered an injury for which the parish felt some responsibility:

"1750	Oct. Spent at a meeten to consult about Doctor Russells broken leg.	4-0
1750/1	Jan. paid for wood for Doctor Russell	6-0
1751	Apr. Dr. Kingston for Dr. Russells leg	£12-12-0
1759	Ap. (et al.) Dr. Russell for tipping Chownns shoes	8"

Old Dr. Stevens for some years received a poor person's pension, and sundry gifts of firewood etc. He and his wife appear to have had in their house, for some time, a maid who was also on poor relief.

Besides regular practitioners, there were three or four "wise women" in the village who dispensed cures—chief among them, Tamar Burrows—and one or two men, like Thomas Sears—with a "gift" in their hands.

"1721	Nov. Elexcander Daniell for quer of Roger Jackson	2-2-0
1726	Nov. Will Turner one Botel of draps	1-0
1728	Sep. pd. Dr. Christians Bill for Gibbet	2-2-0
1730	Aug. Doctors visick for Abeys wife	10-0
1732/3	Mar. pd. Dr. Eatons Bill for Giles Dodson	1-6-6
1735	Oct. Timothy Burrows wife for Surgery	5-0
1736	Ap. Dr. Kingstons (bill) for Smith	13-5-6
1737	Ap. Dr. Redding Bill for poor pepol	16-6
1737	Ap. Dr. Mellishs bill	10-17-0
1741	Sep. Dr. Nolards Bill for Curing young Gilbard of ye Iche	2-6

1743/4	Feb. Paid Doctor Mellsh Bill for Chipses broken leg	3-3-0
1744/5	Jan. Charges with Wellers Dafter to Ospetall	2-1-0
1745	Aug. Paid Balden & his wife & ffamely in St. Tho. Hosptell	1-12-0
1746	Jun. Given Willi Penn when he went to London to be cut for the stone	5-0
	May. Given the Widow Smith when hur Garl had Eager	1-0
1754	Jan. paid Mrs. Worleys Bill for Cuers	1-6-4
1754	Dec. Chargeses of Goen to London to Gitt Henry Franklin Garl in to Batholomes Aspathall	£1-1-0
1756	Jan. Mr. John Kinginstons Bill	£17-14-1
1757	Feb. paid Thos Sears Bill for Richard Webbs leg	3-6
1762	Paid for one high Shoe for Carnall Woods	2-9
	Mr. Mellesh Bill	5-10-6
	Mr. Mandby Bill	4-14-6
1763	Sept. paid Tamar Burrows Bill for Surgonen by Vestery Order	3-14-0
1763	Apr. Given James Goof the Smith when sick (elsewhere "Gauf")	5-0
	Paid Mr. Sneath Bill for Seten Tho. Chownes leg.	5-5-0
1764	Ap. Mr. Kingstons Bill for Cutting of Joseph Peans leg & Curen it	13-19-0"

Nor did the Overseers overlook such little luxuries as meat and drink:

"1732	Sep. half a pint of sack for Tho. Walkup in sickness	7½
1739/40	Jan. Given Dr. Hayes on Siswicks account on Bottle of wine	2-0
1756	Jun. Paid for a point of wine for old Parkens Paid for meat for old Parkens	1-0 11½
	Paid for Bear for him	2-4
1758	Jun. Given Licker to wimen looking after Bety Roff when in fitts	3-6
	paid for onepound & ½ of mutton for Bety Roff	6
	had ½ pointe of wine at same time	6
1758	Aug. Given Warwicks wife to By Mutton for hur Child	1-0"

### SMALLPOX

Smallpox was justly feared: and, because it was feared, it proved very expensive. Even the village women who did the nursing asked more for smallpox cases. There are numerous cases scattered throughout the period; it will be sufficient to quote some of the entries in 1741/2, which was a bad year. In this year a village infirmary or pest-house is first mentioned: it stood on Austen Wood Common.

"1741	Aug. for Nursing Tho. Millward two weeks with ye smallpock	1-0-0
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Sep. Jone Garman for Keeping & Nursing Hannah Ives in ye smallpock	1-10-0
Oct. for Nursing Burrows ffamily five weeks with ye sm: pock	2-10-0
Urias Roof with ye sm:pock	14-2
Hester Monk & hur children with ye sm: pock	1-1-0
John Roof with ye sm: pock	4-9
Widow Russil ffamily with ye sm: pock	1-2-8
Dec. Josias Copland Bill for removing poor pepol with ye smallpox	1-1-6
Wm. Copland with ye sm. pock	11-0
John Siswick in ye sm: pock	7 1½
Jan. Aldridge family in ye sm: pock	1-5-0
Sam. Bunts in ye sm. pock	16-11½
for Burring Copland in ye sm. pock	18-6
pd. for Beer for ye small pock pepol at Aston Wood house	1-0
Feb. Widow Salters Gurl in ye smallpock	8-9
Mar. Abeys family in ye smallpock	16-2
David keens daughter in ye sm. pock	14-6
1742 Ap. pd for straw for ye sm. pock pepol	3-0
Wm. Penn in sm: pock	5-0
for visicke to clense ye sm: pox	6-2
pd. Ann Bolton for Nursing & keeping Winfields garl with ye sm. pox	£1-10-0"

Let us add:

"1746 July. Given Ann Franklen & bety Abby for Cleanen & aring the things that was of the smallpox	2-0
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#### POOR GEORGE

Perhaps George Monk should have a paragraph to himself, not only because more than 300 entries in the book record payments made to, or on behalf of, himself, his wife and his child. He first appears as a small holder, receiving payment for such minor services as taking in a sick traveller or a parish child. Then comes:

"1739 June. The Charg of George Monk to Bedlam pd, ye Commety at Entring	10-6
& for ye Bonds & ye Clarke	1-1-0
pd ye Steward for Beding	1-14-0
pd. to Mr. Bealy for ye Certificate	4-0
pd. ye porter & other tenders	5-0
pd. for a diner for ye Bondsmen and other expences with hors & man }	£2-15-6"

But Bedlam did not keep him long:

"1739 Oct. Expences to take George Monk from Bedlam with ye locker after and porter	4-0
--	-----

Thereafter he appears to have spent his life in and out of the village cage. For four years his wife Ann receives a monthly pension of 4s. and he has occasional gifts: then in 1744, he and his wife are given separate pensions of 8s. and 4s. respectively. Ann Monk fell ill and died of smallpox in 1746: and now we learn that they had a daughter, Mary. The pensions continue every month, to George Monk (10s.) and to "George Monk's Garl" (8s.), until in 1750 George is in the cage again and Mrs. Gurney of "The Swan" finds a job for young Mary.

The parish seems to have had a kindly feeling for poor George, who receives numerous gifts and attentions, even after he was taken off the roll of regular pensioners, and given money only for his food and drink. One imagines him, between his fits of madness, shambling around the village, armed with a sickle, doing odd jobs, until his last sickness and death in 1755.

A few entries illustrate the story:

"1740 July	George Monk's wife	4-0
	George Monk in ye cage keeping	1-8
	Dec. for a lock & a post in ye Cage for George Monk	2-0
1741 Oct.	pd Ann Monk for nursin Hester Monk and hur ffamily in ye sm. pock	1-0-0
1745 July	Paid for bering of Ann Monk	16-0
	Paid Josias Copland for Draying hur away	3-0
	Oct. Paid George Monk	10-0
	Gorg Monks garl	8-0
1748 Aug	Paid to Conn Hunt for 6 Ells of Doules for George Monk for 2 shurts	5-6
	O.E.D. "dowlas, a coarse linen cloth (from Doulas in Brittany)".	
1748 Aug.	Paid for making a Coate & petecoate for George Monk & buttons & thred & pockiten for ye same	5-6
1749/50 Jan.	Paid Jane Garman for loocking after George Monk in ye keag.	2-0
1750 Ap.	Paid Dame feild for locking after George Monk paid for one truss of straw for George Monk	2-0 6
1750/1 Feb.	Paid for 1 pare of Stockens for George Monk Paid Clothing of Mary Monk at Gurneys	1-0 11-7½
1751 May	Given George Monk upon his walk	6
Dec.	Paid the mending of Mary Monks Shows paid for 2 new shifts for Mary Monk at Mrs. Gurneys	1-3 5-2
	paid for 2 new capps for hur	2-0
	paid for a new apeorn for hur	1-2
1752 Sep.	paid for a wascote & shurt & making & Breches making & 1 new Sickle for George Monk	7-6
	Bought him a new kittle	1-6
Nov.	Paid for a new fowlwether for George Monk	14-2
1753 Ap.	paid making a new gound for Mary Monk	2-0

July	paid Tim Hunt Bill for Georg Monks Rome	12-9
Dec.	paid George Monks eating & drinken	11-8
	paid for 4 truss of straw for him	2-0
	paid nusen him	2-6
1754 Feb.	paid for a shurt for George Monk	3-6
	paid for a tinn quart pott & 2 nives for him	8
Mar	paid for a lock & chaine for George Monk	5-6
1755 Feb.	for one truss of straw	6
Mar	Given George Monk	3-4½
	Paid the Bearing of George Monk	16-0
1759 Sep.	Paid for 2 handkerchiefs for monks garl	7"

## THE LAW

There are periodic payments:

"Spent at ye Vestery making ye rate	5-0
ffor sinin ye rate at ye justices	2-0
ffor Ritin the parish aCounts	15-0
the yearly account of Burials or Registree	5-0
the quartoring Money	15-0"

"The quarterage money", a County rate, was paid quarterly: half-yearly appears another payment to the County which is variously called:

"1740 July paid Chief Constable Vagrant money	3-8-2
1743 Sep. paid to the County Stock	3-8-2
1755 Oct. paid the Bounty money	3-8-2"

There is one entry:

"1763 paid the Millishaw	25-0-0"
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From time to time appears:

"1734 Sep. for Caring a felling to the Gole	1-0-0"
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There are a few Sessions cases of bastardy, robbery, & absconding husbands, e.g.

"1727 Jan. ffor caring Eliz. Proud to Goal	9-10½
1760 Ap. paid the Expences of Old Ross Canter goen to Aielsbury to prosecute James Ackins as Robed hur at hur house	£4-0-4
1764 Aug. Expences of Bringing Jacob Carter to Justice when left his Famely & haven him to Alsbery by Vestry Order	£5-15-6
for 9 days Hors Hier findin him	1-2-6
1763 May paid Bow for Gowen to Mr. Lowns for his opinion for yong Bowler	5-0"

This was a case of a brother's concern for his sister:

"1763 May. Bond of William Powney the elder of Chalfont St. Peter Schoolmaster.	
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and William Powney the younger, his son, to (the Church-wardens & Overseers) in £40 to maintain the child of which Ann Bowler, sister of Thomas Bowler, shoemaker, is pregnant, of which William Powney the younger acknowledges himself to be the father."

But it is plain, from the Sessions Records in the B.R.O., that most of the Sessions cases mentioned are Settlement cases; and they illustrate how hardly the law fell upon such persons (especially where there were young children) and how much such cases cost the Parish in trouble and in money. An Act of 1697 ordered that poor persons might enter any parish upon bringing from their parish of settlement a Certificate undertaking to maintain them or to receive them back again, if they should become chargeable: those who had no such certificate were to be removed to their parish of settlement. An Act of 1722 supplemented these regulations.<sup>5</sup>

In that year, the Overseers Book has the note:

"1722 Nov. At a meeting held this day it was Determined that John Newman of Masson End & John Fountaine (of Roberts) the present Overseers of the poore of the Prsh. of Chalfont St Peters shall give notice to all persons inhabiting in the sd. parish to bring certificates from the severall Respective parishes to which they belong or the said Overseers shall remove them as the law Directs and this we doe agree to be a Standing Order of vestry."

Of course, the majority of such cases were determined without going to the Sessions e.g.

1731 Oct. John Brown, gardener, about 35, examined before Charles Bere J.P., stated that he was born at lower Winchendon, Co. Bucks, and lived there until he was about 18, working in the gardens of the late Earl of Wharton. About 1715 he moved to Chiswick, and became a yearly servant to Daniel How Esq. of that parish at £10 per annum, and remained with him 7 years. There he married Susannah Spragg, rented a house, paid scot & lot more than 4 years, and buried his wife and two of his children. After his wife's death, he moved to Chalfont St Peter, where he worked as a jobbing gardener. But he had plainly had no legal settlement since Chiswick; and in due course Chiswick sent to Chalfont St Peter a certificate on his behalf.

In 1727 Chesham obtained an order for the removal from their parish to Chalfont St. Peter of Francis Brown, son of Alice Grainger (by a former husband), Francis being "above seven years of age". Chalfont St. Peter appealed at the Midsummer Sessions: the case was deferred, but at the Michaelmas Sessions the order was quashed.

Ambrose Eldridge was a High Wycombe Attorney.

1727 Aug.	paid Mr. Edrig another fee	5-0
	pd. the Layers Clerk	5-0
	pd. Mr. Murwin two fees	10-0
	pd. for Sepenys	14-0
	my hors to London & to Chesham & to Wickham	7-6
Oct.	pd Mr. Eldrig fees	10-0
	pd. Mr. Murwin fees	10-0
	a sepeny for Allis Grainger	4-6

The Clarke of the peace	9-0
Chesham Laylor	10-0
Chargis of Allis Grainger	8-6
A hors & man to Chesham for Allis Grainger	10-6"

Ten years later the case of William Gilbert and his wife proved even more troublesome. Chalfont St. Peter had obtained an order for their removal to Iver;

"1737 May Young Gilbard a warrant orders & charges to Iver 11-4"

But Iver appealed, and again the case was respited until the next sessions:

"1737 Jun. pd. Mr. Franklin for young Gilberts detaining the Laylor. 5-0  
 For Resping the Court on Gilberts account 3-6  
 a hors to Wickham & expences about Gilberts affair 4-0  
 ye plann of ye Lodge House & Council 6-8"

The Examination shows why a plan of Chalfont Lodge was wanted. John Hatch was tenant of that farm at the time, and William Gilbert had worked for him more than the statutory year, and received his wages. "But the house where he lodged is in two parishes—namely, Chalfont St. Peter and Iver—and he lodged always in the parish of Iver." At the Midsummer Sessions, Chalfont St. Peter won its appeal, and the order of removal was confirmed.

"Aug. The Charges at Aylesbery with me & horses 3-9-8  
 pd. Mr. Geary his fee 10-6  
 pd. Mr. Eldrig his fee 10-6  
 pd. for the suppenys & Charg of laying them out 19-2  
 pd. for Wm. Gilberts confirm order 3-6  
 pd. Mr. Kilingworth for himself & hors 10-6  
 pd. Mr. Butler for himself & hors 10-6  
 Mr. Ball twis down to Aylesbury & hors 1-2-0  
 The Clerk of the peace & Crier of the Court 6-2  
 pd. Wm. Gilbert down to Aylesbury 3-0  
 Expences for filling up the supenis 1-0"

Having been successful in the case of William Gilbert (or Gilbert), Chalfont St. Peter tried again, in the case of Joseph Savage, who worked for the same master and lived in the same house and in the same part of it: and again were successful in transferring responsibility for Joseph Savage and his wife and child to Iver.

"1737 Oct. a hors to Wycomb to detain Mr. Eldrig 4-0  
 Nov. Went to Wycomb to speke to Mr. Eldrig about Jos. Savage  
 ye order confirmed 15-6"

Similar "border-line" cases arose in respect of men working at farms at Horn Hill, where most of the houses stand in the parish of Rickmansworth. Others were more straightforward: e.g.

"1744 Nov. 6 Thomas Lane Husbandman (a Quaker) examined by William Basil & Francis Fuller, on affirmation, stated that, about 1733, he served as Overseer of the Poor of Harvile, otherwise Harefield, co. Middlesex: for 3 or 4 years paid all parochial taxes there". It was plain that Harefield was the parish of his legal settlement and in due course that parish acknowledged to Chalfont St Peter its responsibility for Thomas Lane & his wife Ann.

"1746 Nov. 13 Ann Kingham, examined before the Earl of Inchiquin & Thos. Eyre Esq., stated that on Lady Day 1745 she was hired by William Wilson, who lives at & keeps the house known by the name of the sign of the Bull Inn on Gerrards Crosse, Common in the parish of Fulmer for a year."

A month later, Fulmer sent to the Overseers of Chalfont St. Peter a certificate acknowledging Ann-Kingham "late servant to Mr. Willson at Gerrards Cross, with the child or children she now goeth with or is pregnant of".

Sometimes a wholesale effort was made to clear the matter, e.g.

"Apr. 1752	Paid for the Summons for to Cary the uninhabeted to Seshons	3-0
	Expences at Seshons	18-6
	Paid at ye Seshons to examen the people	8-0"

A bigger "border-line" case occurred in 1758: Thomas Saunders Esq. of Newland, near the County boundary, had evidently been taking on labourers without due care of their settlement.

"1758 Mar.	paid one Constables meeting to Hen <sup>y</sup> Bennett	2-6
	paid him for taking up the men at Newland & goen to Rickmansworth with them	1-6
	paid for a warrant for 7 popell to be examined at the Seshons to their Setelments & a summons for Mr. Sanders & warning them all in at Seshons	6-0
	paid for our Selves & men & a woman at Seshans	12-6
	paid for 5 examinations	10-0

"1758 Jan Robert Furman, labourer, now living in Chalfont St. Peter, examined before Richard Grape, John Baker, & Thomas Eyre, stated that in 1939 he was hired at Watford Statute, which is about a month before Michaelmas, to serve Samuel Smith of Watford, mealman & served him for more than a year." But he had had no legal settlement since, and the Justices ordered the removal of Robert Furman, Ann his wife, & their son John, aged 7½, to Watford.

On the same day, and before the same Justices, John Clifton said that "8 or 9 years ago he had been hired at Hampstead Statute, which is about 3 weeks before Michaelmas, to serve John Wingfield of Rickmansworth, husbandman, and had served him more than two years." The Justices ordered him and his wife Jane, and their two children, William (aged 4½) and Jane (ten months), to be removed to Rickmansworth.

## WORK

There are a few instances of men out-of-work receiving relief from the "Extraordinaries", e.g.

"Dec 1741	Henry Barns out of work	14-6
	Urias Roff out of work	2-6
	Henry ffranklin out of work	3-0"

There are similar cases in Jan.–Feb. 1744/5 and 1751.

There are few explicit references to the poor being set to work:

“1740 Nov.	pd. for a whele for Ann franklin	3-0
	pd. Jn. Newman for picking of stones	1-0-0
	Mr. North for stones	6-0
	Mr. Goodridge for stones	1-7-0
	Mr. Baxter for stones	3-8
1741 Oct.	given old adams for to trade with a ginn	1-2-0
1751 Sep.	paid for Eadlens children for Stuf & Larning to work	1-6
1756 Jun.	Given Wellens Dafter to by Lacemaking meterals	5-0
1757 Jun.	Paid Phillip Franklin for Picking of Stones	3-0
	Paid Tho. Marteen for Picking of Stones	4-0
July	paid peen for tile pinns	7-6
Aug	paid for peens tile pinns	5-0
1760 Ap.	rec <sup>d</sup> for the pinns	2-2-0”

## DEATH

There are many references to paupers’ deaths and burials of which a few are noted below. An Act of 1678 required that an affidavit (“after davey”) be made that the body had been buried in woollen.<sup>6</sup>

“1721 Sep.	Stripin Narth Pears his wife & the Afterdavid	1-6”
“1723 Ap.	Dr. Wiles two burials	2-0
	Will. Dell two burials	7-0”

i.e. a shilling each for the parson, and 3s. 6d. each for the parish clerk.

“1728 Ap.	Geo. Cawdry’s Bill for Douers Wifes Cofin & Childs	9-6
1741/2 Mar	for Burring three poor parish children	1-13-9
1743 Ap.	for Burring a woman y <sup>t</sup> was found dead in Chalfont Heath & ye charges of ye Crowner	1-12-0
1745/6 Jan	Paid for Buring of the Sogers child	13-0
1750 Oct.	Expences with a poor woman in keeag as died	16-9”

In the same year Silvester Proude, who had once held “The Five Bells” and other property in the village, came to a sad end. Shrouds were generally made by Joseph Monk, weaver at a shilling apiece.

“1750/1	Paid for Stripen of Sill Proud	1-0
	Paid the Crowner for ditto	1-1-0
	Paid Silvester Proud Coffin	7-6
	Paid for 4£ of wool for old Parkens & Duffins wife & Silvester Proud & Stevens	4-0
1758 June	Given the women for Laying out Hen. Bartlett’s wife in gin and bear	1-6”

## LOCAL PLACES AND OBJECTS

Several of the many passing references to local places and objects have already been mentioned. Here are some others:

*THE CHURCH HOUSE.* There had been a dispute in 1665–6 concerning

the ownership and use of the Church House: but a Terrier of 1707 includes "two houses called Church house to be let per annum".<sup>7</sup> It was apparently used in part to house poor people:

"1756 Feb. Charges with Mary Willson when lien in at ye Church hous 2-16-0"  
 "1725/6 Jan. pd. Mr. Goodridge the rent for the Church  
 Housin ffor the year 1724 five pounds the year 5-0-0"

The Overseers pay £5 rent per annum to the Churchwardens, until in 1739 this increases to £10 (to cover re-building?) and so continues throughout the remainder of the period.

*ALMSHOUSE.* In the course of the dispute mentioned above, there is reference to an old woman being moved from the Church house to an Alms-house, of which nothing is otherwise known:

"1735/6 Mar. Tim Burrows for repairing ye Armshouse 1-5-11"

*CAGE.* Several references have already been noted to the village cage, which stood behind the church:

"1739 Ap. ffor Building a new cage 11-19-8  
 1740 Dec. for a lock & a post in ye cage 2-0  
 1751 Ap. paid for Straw in the keag 3-6  
 1757 Oct. Charges with a travlin woman in kage 6-0"

### STOCKS

"1726 Ap. ffor a new pare of stocks & oyorn work & Cullering them 1-9-0"

### PESTHOUSE

Reference has already been made to the establishment of a "Pest House" on Austen Wood Common in 1741. The house was, in fact, a converted barn: there is, in the Chest, a sketch dated 1741 of Richard Hunt's barn on Austen-wood and of the alterations to be carried out, with an estimate of the cost, and a calculation of an appropriate rent. Each year the Overseers paid to Richard Hunt (or his successors) £4 rent: and there are sundry small items for mending the window and other repairs.

### WINDMILL

The Pesthouse must have been overcrowded in the smallpox epidemic of 1741: and in 1759 when there was another (less virulent) epidemic, some sick people were accommodated in the house belonging to the windmill nearby on Austen Wood Common. From the Rate Book it would appear that the windmill had been built only 4 or 5 years earlier, but had now come into the hands of Henry Worley, who had the water-mill in the village.

"1759 Oct. paid moven Baxters family to winmill hous 2-6  
 1759 Nov. Given Isaac Baxter for waiten on the smallpox people at ye  
 pest house & winmill house for wood & water 10-6  
 Baxters family at Winmill Hous 1-4-0"

### LEWINS FIELD

"1759 June Charges with the woman as Lay in with a Child in Lewins field & was nursed at Godfrees 1-3-5"

### BRIDGE

"1765 Feb. paid the Sevears Bill for New Bridge & Rodes 7-1-8"

### INNS

References to "The Swan", "The Red Lion" and "The Bull" have already been noted.

"1740 May Spent at ye Packhorse when Mr. Wilkins was strained. 3-0"

John Wilkins, Esq., of Chalfont House, who, no doubt, was often at his Town House in Pall Mall, was very dilatory in paying his local rates.

"1745 Jun Given a great beled woman at the White Hart 1-0

1748/9 Jan Paid for eaten & drinken & Lodging & Charges of Pegg Hutchens at ye George 3-9

1759 Dec. paid for wood for Widow Cowdry at the french horne 10-0

1760 Ap. Given Widow Cawdrey at ye horspond 2-0

Oct. Charges with Henry Fellers from Deen as Broak his thigh behind Mrs. Huses by the french horn 4-19-0"

*TOLLGATE.* In 1752 the Wendover-Oakend road became a Turnpike road.

"1752 May. Paid to towl Gate a goen to colect ye Ratte 1-0"

*OLD JOBS.* A cottage in the village known as "Old Jobs" is said to have been the home of a village baker in the eighteenth century. Evidently he fell upon hard times in his latter days and there are several payments made to him for clothes and maintenance and in sickness, e.g.

"1756 May. Given Job Pross when lame 3-0

1759 Ap. paid Clothing old Job 10-6

1760 Sep. Burring old Job Pross 16-6"

### "EXTRAORDINARIES"

A few other miscellaneous items:

"1735 July pd. for Iron & Cols for widow Russill 1-17-3

1742 Ap. pd Tim Burrows for whitewashing Hest<sup>r</sup> Monks house 8

1744 Sep. paid for half a hundred of faggotts & fetchin it 7-0

1745 Jun. Alowed by Vestery that we shold pay Tho. Hunts Men for ketchen of 6 foxes 15-0

1748/9 Mar. Given Tho. Spicer by vestry order  
½ a bushl of Coors flour 2-6

& alowed James Eadlen to have meet and the Bill is 9-2

1753 Apr. Paid for Bear for the new Bell Ropes 1-6

1756 Dec. Given with a pass to a poor Solger & his wife & children 1-6

1757 May Chargeses with a disaster 2-6

1759 Oct. Given the Ringers 5-0"

This is the only reference I have found to the bell-ringers—not inappropriately, “to add something more to that Wonderful Year”.

1760 May	paid for a letter from yong Baldin	7
1763 Aug.	Given widow Adams a tin saspan & 2 earthen-pans & a handkerchief	2-0
	paid Dagger for 6 weeks Shaven Jos. Peen	1-0
1764 Jan.	paid for a Lof of Bread for Richard Crockett	10
1765 Jan.	Given Every poor man with his new Great Coat by Vestry order, one pint of beer	3-6”

Two comments may be added:

(i) How many poor travellers there are! Notwithstanding all the restrictions placed upon the movement of the poor, not a month passes without some poor people on the road—labourers, soldiers, pregnant women, sick folk, whole families—some with passes, some without—being helped on their way.

(ii) How well, on the whole, the Parish looked after its own poor! Passing travellers received, at best, a few pence; but for their own poor villagers, they would often go to much trouble and expense. Granted that the scale of giving was far from lavish—it was a small country parish, and the times were hard times for all labouring folk;—granted that there were years when the Vestry’s care flagged, and that the relief was often unevenly distributed, yet, by and large, these eighteenth-century village Overseers did the job well, and did it thoroughly.

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the Vicar, the Rev. F. J. Evans, M.A., for permission to examine these Accounts.

<sup>2</sup> The Manor records of the period are in the County Archives: CSP 18-20, 26.

<sup>3</sup> A notable rate of 7s. 6d. in the £ in 1718 raised £764 towards the rebuilding of the Church.

<sup>4</sup> 8 & 9 W. & M. c. 30.

<sup>5</sup> 8 & 9 W. & M. c. 30: 9 Geo. I. c. 7.

<sup>6</sup> 30 Car. II c. 3.

<sup>7</sup> See my “History of Chalfont St. Peter & Gerrards Cross”, pp. 31 ff. The terrier is in the B.R.O: D/A/GT/2.