

II The Relief of the Poor

from 1781 to 1836

The Parish Chest contains more papers on the relief of the poor than on any other subject of Hagley's past. This is not unexpected because the work of relief was the major part of parochial administration by the mid-eighteenth century. Nevertheless, what enables a detailed study to be made is the preservation by the Overseers, not just of the usual account books, but of almost every scrap of paper that came their way. This preservation is probably the result of the personal concern shown by the Overseers after 1780 and in particular of the meticulous attention given to his duties by Thomas Jackson. He was Constable for 20 years between 1795 and 1819 and an Overseer from 1806 to 1824, excluding the years 1816-18. It seems that he kept every item of paper and never threw any fragment away. Some are used twice and others are no larger than two inches square. Receipts, letters, indentures, official papers, all were kept. In addition to these loose papers the main sources of information are the Account Books (5), which from 1781 to 1837 record the payments made to the poor, the Rate Books (17) which record the collection of the rate and the Order Books (2) which record the meetings of the Vestry and the decisions made. The period covered by these records represents the last fifty years of the Old Poor Law, before the revised system introduced by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 removed the supervision of the poor from Hagley and gave responsibility to the new Poor Law Union based on the Workhouse at Bromsgrove.

The picture that appears is fairly clear. It must be remembered that Hagley was only a small parish, consisting in 1801 of 104 houses and 621 persons. Yet the effort of making the system work and of financing the relief of the poor was remarkable. Three conclusions emerge quite strongly. The care taken to provide for the sick and the old in an age when life could be harsh seems to have been humane, and it must have represented a considerable welfare safety net for the local community. At the same time, in a period of increasing population mobility, the parish as an administrative unit was increasingly unable to meet the demands placed upon it. The third is the cost of relief. While many landowners could take the rate demands in their stride, the less well-off occupiers of land were required to pay disproportionate sums at frequent intervals.

Responsibility for the relief of the poor was placed firmly on the parish by the Elizabethan Poor Laws. The main Act was passed in 1601 but throughout the sixteenth century the parish had been given increasing responsibilities for the poor. The parish at its annual Vestry meeting was obliged to elect Overseers of the Poor, and in most cases these were the Churchwardens. Their duties are made plain by a warrant of 1802 marking the appointment of Thomas Jackson and Thomas Lea. They were 'to provide for the said Poor, by meeting together once every Month, to take Order for their Relief, and to set all the Poor to work that are able'. They were also 'to provide necessary relief for all such Poor as are Lame, Old, Blind, and impotent, and unable to Work'. Here we have the basic distinction between the able-bodied and the impotent poor. On the one hand were those unwilling or unable to work because of a lack of local employment and on the other those who because of old age, illness or frailty could not.

It was a distinction that was clear enough in 1780 but two great changes of the fifty year period under study continued to blur it. The steady process of industrialisation began to produce an economy different from that characterised by the stability of early eighteenth century rural England. In addition, the long period of almost continuous war from 1793 to 1815 placed new strains on both economy and society. With war came a demand for labour, not only to fight but also to provide weapons and equipment. With war, too, came its old ally inflation, and it was this that put the greatest pressure on British society in the years about the turn of the century.

FORMS OF RELIEF

Between 1781 and 1836 a total of 184 persons received regular relief for themselves or their dependants. This regular relief took the form of a weekly cash payment. Their names were all recorded in the Overseers' Accounts Book and these people we can legitimately call 'the poor'. Some received relief for a fairly short time, often in periods of illness, but others received payments over long periods. Fortyfour persons received relief continuously for over ten years and one for no fewer than 36 years. The long-term poor were usually the elderly, since 63 of the 184 continued to receive relief until death. Some of them reached a considerable old age: Jane Avery 98, William Hubball 94, Widow Randall and George Bartle 89.

Another group in regular long-term relief were mothers with young children. In some cases they had been deserted by their husbands, in others husbands had died. Some of the children were bastards and in this case the Overseers were responsible for the upbringing of the child. Usually they were apprenticed at the age of 7 or 8. The Overseers could insist on payments from the father and usually made great efforts to obtain payment. The families of men selected for militia service were also entitled to upkeep by the parish.

In many parishes it was the practice to supplement the income of the poorer families with a cash allowance (following the Speenhamland magistrates after 1795). There is no evidence that this system was followed in Hagley, but this kind of rural parish may have been able to withstand the higher bread prices more effectively than those elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the Overseers had discretion to make casual payments for a wide variety of purposes, and it is these payments sometimes in cash and sometimes in kind that helped to cushion the impact of hard times for many families. The recipients of 'casual pay' were those on the fringe of poverty, those for whom sickness or unemployment, though temporary, had stopped the regular family income.

Casual (or 'By') Pay in the form of cash payments was sometimes given to men unemployed because of shortage of work. For example, in 1795 1s 0d was given to 'Old Lewis as being out of work'. During the recession years of 1816-1818 there were many such instances:

1816	May 28th	Samual Cadwalader being out of work	2s 0d
	June	Richard Timmins being short of work	5s 0d

Other entries show that Casual Pay as cash could be awarded to a man when ill himself, or when his wife or a child was ill, or in cases of accident, as: 1793 November 14th, £1 4s 6d to Samual Beasley 'Breaking his Arm' - presumably because he would be unable to carry out his normal work.

Casual Pay could also be in the form of bread or other food. For several months in the latter part of 1797 Frank Brown received amounts varying from 6d to 1s 6d per week for 'Bread'.



County of

Worcester

WE two of his MAJESTY's Justices of the Peace for the County of *Worcester* do hereby nominate and appoint you *Thomas Jackson and Thomas Lea*

being substantial Householdors of the *Parish* of *Hagley* to be Overseers of the Poor of the said *Parish* of *Hagley* for one whole Year next ensuing the Date hereof; commanding you, together with the Church-wardens, to provide for the said Poor, by meeting together once every Month, to take Order for their Relief, and to set all the Poor to Work that are able, by providing a convenient Stock of some Ware or Stuff, in your *Parish* for that Purpose: And that you place out as Apprentices all such Children as are fit to place out, and whose Parents are unable to maintain them: And that you provide necessary Relief for all such Poor as are Lame, Old, Blind, and impotent, and unable to Work; but that you relieve no Poor Person whatsoever, not wearing your Parish Badge. Hereof fail not at your Perils. Given under our Hands and Seals this *23* Day of *April* in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and *Two*.

Wm. W. W.

Appointment of Overseers of the Poor, 1802

This appointment sets out clearly the duties of the Overseers

Wm. W. W.

Occasionally corn or flour is mentioned:

1800	Oct 4	Bushel corn to Heathcotes	5s 0d
	20	1 Bushel corn for Pemberton	5s 0d
1819	Oct 16	William Smith of The Brake out of work to pay for Half Strike of flower	5s 6d

Apart from bread or meat the other main consumable provided for was alcoholic drink - wine or ale. This was presumably intended to be medicinal. In December 1794 there is an entry 'Price's Wife Pint Ale 2d' but no indication of the reason why it was given. However, in January 1803 the entry 'To a Bottle of Red Port Wine for S. Hall family Being ill with the fever 3s 6d' clearly shows the medicinal intent. Perhaps the wine was sometimes used as a painkiller! When Richard Walters' wife was ill during pregnancy in December 1816 she was allowed 2s 6d for a pint of Wine and 2s 1d for 'Meat for Broth'. Around the same time a woman who had given birth to a bastard child was also given money to buy 'Meat for Broth 2s 6d'.

Another form of relief was the supply of coal. This does not appear to have been given regularly and was perhaps provided only in times of illness or special hardship in severe weather:

1785	December 13	Mr. Holden for Coles for Betty James	10s 6d
	24	Sarah Roberts for Coles	2s 6d

Shoes, articles of clothing or material to be made up into clothing were given quite frequently to children who were the responsibility of the parish. Items which occur often are 'linsey Petticoats', 'apron and frock', 'a shift', 'a shirt', 'a new bedgown'. In October 1802 Richard Geary was given a 'smock frock' which with 'Making' cost 4s 11d. Often clothing was made up by a pauper on Weekly Pay, who then earned additional money, for example:

1786	June 29	Priss James for making Young Thomason's Shift and Petticoat	0s 6d
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A Mrs. Cresswell was paid 5s 6d in November 1803 for 'mending & Making Clothes for Young Field'. Later in the same month he was fitted out with 'a Coat Waistcoat & Briches & Stockings', also at a cost of 5s 6d. In December 1803 he was apprenticed, at the age of 7, to William Lea. On June 11th 1822 an entry records 'Pair of New shoes for Wm Smith Daughter to go to Service at Cradley 5s 0d'.

Not all the incidents refer to children going into service. The grandfather of the two boys in the following extract was looking after them whilst their father was in the Militia:

1804	January 5	Pd John Haywood for Making 2 Sutes of Cloes for Thos Capewell Junr 2 boys	10s 8d
	27	towards buying Tom Capewell Pr of Shoes	1s 0d

Clothing was also given to adults for specific purposes, for example:

1800	October 23	shoes 6/6, stockings 1/2, waistcoat & a pair of breeches 5/-, a shirt 4/6 To Thos Foxall to go into the Hospital	17s 2d in all
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An unexpected provision by the Parish was in the 'schooling' of certain pauper children, though this only occurs in the two earliest Account Books.

Priss James was paid for this service at intervals from 31st October 1784 shown under 'Bye' (Casual) Pay. Her pupils were Edward Thomas's children, and other entries suggest that for a time at least one of them lived with her. In addition, in January 1785 she received several payments of 1s 0d for nursing them 'in the small pox'. The last recording of 'schooling for young Thomas' was in June 1785. The Apprenticeship Indentures show that in the same month a Thomas Thomas was apprenticed in husbandry to Lord Westcote - probably the same boy that Priss James 'schooled'. Not until 1788 does 'schooling' reappear. Then it is for 'Young Wassell' and is rated at 2d per week. The name of the 'teacher' is not given. However, an entry for July 1791 shows a payment to 'Fitzpatrick' for 7 Weeks Schooling for Young Wassell 1s 2d. In March 1791 William Wassall was apprenticed in husbandry to William Johnson, miller, probably the boy who had been schooled for over three years.

<u>First Months Pay Pay to April 20th 1788.</u>	
March 26, A Meeting at the Taphouse	3 5 0
M ^{rs} J ⁿ : Read 14 th Rent due this Day	0 6 0
4 Weeks Pay to Foxall to the 23 rd Inst.	1 6 0
Cloaths for D ^o	0 6 0
4 Weeks Schooling for Young Wassell	0 1 6
M ^{rs} Sea for Foot-Masjeps &c	0 1 0
Apr ^l 9 th Wine for Ann Wassell	0 0 7
12 th Coales for D ^o	0 0 6
To a Poor Woman w th a Pys.	0 0 2
Overseers Warrant	0 2 6
	<u>2 9 0</u>

An example of one month's Casual or By Pay from the earliest Overseer's Account Book in Hagley Parish Records

There are several examples of tools being supplied, usually for the purpose of carrying on the manufacture of nails. The reasons for such aid vary, but were usually designed to keep the able-bodied in work. A certain Richard Walters, who features in the Account Books over a long period, was 'lent' 10s 6d in February 1807 to buy tools for nailing. His father promised to be accountable if Richard did not repay the half-guinea. Nine years later, in June 1816, Walters received from the Parish:

Cast iron block 18/-, Steady 4/-	£1 2s 0d
Horsenail Hammer Hardy and Tongs	4s 0d
A load of coals	17s 6d

A further 'bundle of iron' (for making nails) and 15s 0d was given to him in December 1816.

James Heath received a bundle of rod iron and 2s 0d cash in June 1821. In November of that year the Parish even redeemed a 'Nailor Block' for John Beard which he had pawned to pay a debt but 'could not work for want of'. This cost 10s 0d.

In the nailmaking districts women and girls as well as men commonly worked at the trade. One of the Order Books includes a note in June 1836 that 'Mary Hodgkiss receive 5/- to enable her to learn the art of making nails and that the Overseer pay her another 5/- in one month from this time'. Mary was probably the daughter of James Hodgkiss removed with his family from Bromsgrove in April 1833 when Mary was eight years old.

Although Hagley was not part of the Black Country, it was obviously near enough to participate in the nail trade. Nailing was the standby of the poor in the Bromsgrove area. The tools were simple, and relatively cheap, the work light and needing no great skill, and all the family could lend a hand. It was one obvious solution to finding work for the able-bodied unemployed in order to lessen the burden of poor relief.

From time to time there is evidence from the Accounts of disabled persons being supplied with surgical aids:

1785	June 13	Pigford a pair of Crutches	1s 6d
1794	April 15	To Thos Beard for a Wooden Leg for his Daughter	14s 6d
1814	January 18	Paid Jo Nock By the order of a Parish Meeting towards a pair of Iron leg instruments for his son as per Bill	£5 0s 0d
1815	February 4	Paid for a leg Frame for Rich. Lea child as per Bill & receipt	£1 4s 6d

Such attention to lame or crippled people is perhaps surprising. It extended also to the provision of special footwear - an instance being a pair of shoes ordered for Thomas Wassell's 'lame child' in October 1831.

Other cases are recorded of cash payments, perhaps for short term disabilities. Several entries in 1803 'Stephen Griffin Being Lame 5s 0d' were probably for a temporary disability which prevented him from working. This kind of entry is fairly frequent.

Medical treatment was also given. Exactly what was carried out is evident from the chemist's bills that remain. The bills come mainly from a Stourbridge chemist, who presented an annual account. As it was not always paid some bills include the previous year's statement!

The oldest bill is from 1795. 167 items are listed and the total bill at the year's end was £21 12s 4d, a substantial sum for that period. Yet only eight people had received treatments and almost all of the items were prescribed for Elizabeth Lewis; only 25 items were shared between the other seven.

Closer examination of items for Elizabeth Lewis reveal a sad little medical story. Elizabeth had brown cerate (ointment) on 2nd January 1795, and a box of anodyne pills (pain-killers) three days later at a cost of 8d and 3s 0d respectively. She had a repeat of both on the 15th, and then eight repeats of pain-killer pills at four to ten-day intervals.

On March 10th she had a home visit (2s 6d) for 'opening an abscess in the leg' (5s 0d). It seems that the chemist was also the surgeon. The anodyne pills were repeated next day and four times more, with ointment twice and digestives once. Then, on April 6th, opening an abscess in the thigh was charged 5s 0d, and this is repeated on April 10th, when more painkillers were prescribed and a journey was charged for. The infection or disease must have been creeping up the leg.

From this time the painkilling pills are repeated at four to seven-day intervals, sometimes digestives or ointment as well, until the middle of September. On May 29th Oil of Roses had been prescribed, perhaps to cover the smell. On 16th September there were listed, besides the usual pills, Turner's cerate, Spirits of Hartshorne (ammonia solution) and 'Tripharmic ointment'. The pills were repeated on 21st, and also Diachylon Plaister (a lead plaster).

On 23rd September visits were made morning and evening and Elizabeth's leg was amputated at the thigh. Daily visits were made for three weeks and a bark mixture (quinine) and laudanum (opium) given, or lead plaster or more dressings. In November she was on laudanum and ointment. On December 4th she had a box of nervous pills, a bottle of nervous drops (which act on the nervous system) and a volatile liniment.

At this point the account had reached £21 12s 4d. There is now an odd pause, as the next bill we have among the parish papers is for 1796, starting March 29th. But the bill is headed 'To a Bill Delivered £21.12.4.' - so nothing was prescribed in January and February.

Elizabeth Lewis does not appear on the bill until April 23rd, when she had a box of diuretic pills and a diuretic mixture, followed five days later by an astringent mixture. On May 2nd 1796 she had a stomatic mixture (for her mouth) and a box of anodyne pills. Her name does not appear again, but the Parish Register of Hagley shows an entry on May 8th, 'Buried Elizabeth Lewis'.

Elizabeth Lewis first appeared on the Poor Relief list on March 6th 1795 when she was on Casual Pay for the month to April 5th 1795. She was paid 2s 0d a week for five weeks. Then she was transferred to the list of regular payments at 2s 0d a week. On May 7th 1796 her coffin and funeral expenses were 16s 0d.

1795		Parish of Hagley		To Causer, Dixon & Hauser.			
Jan ²	Brown Cerate 2 ^{oz}		Eliz. Lewis.	£	2	0	0
5	A Box of Anodyne Pills				3	—	—

		Bro. & forw.	£	s	d
1795			5	13	11
May 22	The Pills ref.	Eliz. Lewis.	-	3	-
25	D. & Digestives ref.		-	3	6
26	A Bottle of Antirheumatic Drops	Ann Bartley	-	1	4
29	The Pills ref.	Eliz. Lewis.	-	3	-
	Oil of Roses		-	-	4
June 1	The Cerate & Pills ref.		-	3	9
	Journey	Ann Bartley	-	2	6
	The Powders & Liniments ref.		-	3	2
6	The Pills ref.	Eliz. Lewis.	-	3	-
10	D. ref.		-	3	-
12	A Box of Various Pills	Ann Bartley	-	2	-
	A Bottle of Nervous Drops		-	1	0
17	The Cerate & Digestives ref.	Eliz. Lewis.	-	1	3
20	The Pills ref.		-	3	-
27	A Nervous Mixture	Ann Bartley	-	2	-
28	Journey		-	2	6
	A Box of Opening Pills		-	1	0
	The Nervous Drops ref.		-	1	0
30	Cerate 2 & Digestive 2	Eliz. Lewis	-	1	6
	A Box of Anodyne Pills		-	3	-

Part of the Doctor's Bill for attending Hagley Parish paupers 1795

When a pauper died, the Parish paid the burial expenses. What is perhaps unexpected is that the Parish also felt liable to provide refreshments for the mourners. A typical small drama of the poor in which this occurs is recorded in the following sequence:

1798	May 3	Paid for Laying out Ed Lewes	7s 0d
	4	Paid for a Shroud for Ed Lewes	1s 0d
	5	Mary Lewes Being ill	1s 0d
		To ale & Bread and Cheese for Ed Lewes funeral	1s 0d
		To a coffin for "	10s 0d
		Pd Wm Hart his fees for the Burial of Ed Lewes	2s 6d
	10	Paid for Mutton for Mary Lewes	1s 4d
	19	Mary Lewes being ill	1s 0d

Mary Lewes, in fact, herself died in October 1798, leaving a daughter. The whole family had been in receipt of Weekly Pay of 2s 6d per week. Amongst the last recorded funeral expenses are:

1834	November 16	Bread Cheese Ale and Expenses for Wm Cox funeral	12s 0d
1835	March	Paid Younge Beard for his child's Funeral and towards a coffin for the child	13s 0d

However, the Account Books reveal that during the lifetime of the poor a great deal of attention was given to the problem of housing them. In addition to Weekly Pay some parish paupers received assistance by having their rent, or part of it, paid by the Overseers, or by being housed in special 'parish' or 'poor' houses rented by the Overseers for the purpose. In 1805 two cottages were specially built as 'poor' houses. These were occupied by poor of the parish until sold in 1836. The financial transactions were all recorded under 'Casual Pay' although the provisions might be long-term.

Examples of payment or partial payment of rent occur throughout the period but become more numerous from about 1813 onwards when payments specifically for rent were made outside Hagley as well as within:

1813	April 23	Pd Jos Beard Oldswinford to enable him to Pay is Rent	10s 0d
		John Heywood Extra Pay for -do-	2s 0d

Rent payments such as this were probably temporary during unemployment or sickness although it cannot be assumed that all cases of hardship were met. On other occasions rent seems to form part of 'wages' for some service performed. Thus -

1824	September 29	Pd Nany Smith 14 Weeks Lodging for M Field	14s 0d
		-do- towards her Rent	5s 0d
	February 23	Nancy Smith 13 weeks pay for Washing & Mending for Mary Field	13s 0d
		-do- -do- towards her quarter Rent due LD(Lady Day)	5s 0d

When rent is mentioned in a lump sum it is often paid to the owners of a house let to a pauper on a long-term basis through the Parish; for example:

1781	December 7th	Pd Mr Read one year & half Rent for Jane Avery	£1 2s 6d
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As well as rent assistance lodging allowances were financed from Casual Pay and could be temporary or long-term. Short-term examples occur over the whole

period: for instance, in July 1816 it was ordered that Widow James should be paid 1s 6d for 12 weeks' lodging of Richard Walters' wife and family. At a time of high unemployment in 1817 there was an increase in the number of lodgings paid for.

The Overseers gave extra information under 'Weekly Pay' in the early 1820's which reveals that some paupers (perhaps with particular disabilities) were long-term lodgers. These sums were paid weekly to the pauper:

Mary Field under the care of Nancy Smith	3s 0d per week
Thos Foxall at Widow Yates 3s 6d, and lodging and washing 1s 6d	5s 0d per week

There is no evidence of any large communal poor house but it is clear that individual cottages were rented especially to house some of the Hagley poor. A series of memoranda in one Account Book illustrates this well:

1788 Feb 5 I put the late Wm Wassell's Bedstead, Bed, Pillow, 1 Blanket & 1 Sheet, up in the Tenement rented by the Parish of Hagley of Mr Jno Read. Delivered one sheet to Cath Pigford.
Sam Harris Overseer

Aug 4 The above Articles are removed to the House Rented by the Parish of Thos Field.
P. Mathews Overseer

1790 April 6 Notice given this Day to Wm Lewis to Quit the Parish House or Otherways pay 1s per Week for being there.

From time to time repairs were carried out to the poor houses, such as in 1794 'Repairing the alms House Windows 17s 11d' or 1801 July 13th 'Pitch for the Use of the poor's House 6d'. In April 1796 there was a bill paid for 'Digging the Garden of the Parish House 4s 0d'.

Perhaps by 1805 these rented houses were insufficient because in February of that year it was decided to build two houses. The Order reads that 'with the approbation of Lord Lyttelton Two Houses shall be built adjoining an Estate called Damas Hall in this Parish for the Poor'. These houses have been identified from the Tithe Map and Enclosure Map for Harborough Common as being in Stakenbridge Lane.

In March 1805 John Timmings was employed in 'Banking' the garden. In August it was decided to build a 'Nail Shop at the New houses at the Common'. A John Cox was to have one of the houses free if he took care of his daughter. Cox continued 'at the Parish House' until his death in 1825.

For some years these two purpose-built cottages and those already recorded as rented from Read and Field seem to have been adequate. From time to time different people were sent to the 'Poors House' and payments for rent, expenses and repairs occur at intervals.

From 1817 a house in 'the Brake' was rented from Mr Thomas Lea and a payment made to John Read for 'the use of his Well of Water for the 2 Houses at the Brake 5s 9d'. By 1825, however, evidence appears of some other houses rented for the poor. The rents ranged from £3 0s 0d to £4 10s 0d per year but, strangely, the occupiers were not on Weekly Pay - that is, they had not been accepted as on the 'pension' roll. Yet one of these, 'Old Beard', was still having rent paid for him in 1828 and so was a William Smith.

Finally there were payments made to vagrants and itinerants, an expense which may have aroused some dissatisfaction with ratepayers. That itinerants could cause considerable expense is shown by the following case of Mary Merry. She was sadly mis-named.

1804	April 29th	To taking a Wooman to the Office att Stourbridge for Examination & Bringing her Back in my Cart	2s 6d
	April 15th (back-dated)	the above woman was found upon Blakedown Common & Brought to Hagley Pd to -do- to April 27th 1804	5s 9d
	May 4	Mary Merry A Poor Woman for sope	1s 6d
	7	Mary Merry a Poor Woman funeral Bread & Cheese	1s 6d
		Mary Merry Poor Woman ale att Taphouse	5s 0d
		Pd for a Shroud for -do- from Mr Harris	4s 6d
		to a coffin for -do- from Ed Jackson	10s 0d
		Pd Burial Fees to Wm Hart	2s 6d

More usually itinerants were given a small amount of money and they then went on their way. In the early part of the period there are many records of people with 'passes':

1786	May 18	Poor Woman with a Pass	6d
	Sept 22	A Man and Woman with a Pass	6d
	Nov 25	To 10 Foot Passes	1s 8d

The latter may have been a group of seasonal workers on their way home, but most often the travellers were in ones or twos, or a small family in the course of being 'removed' from one parish to another.

It was the duty of the Constable not the Overseer to supervise travellers and vagabonds. There is a separate set of Constable's Accounts from 1795 to 1836 where relief of vagrants is usually recorded. The total Constable's Bill was paid out of Casual Pay. The most expensive years for itinerants were 1816-1817 (£7 10s 7d) and 1818-1819 (£7 7s 5d), the worst years for unemployment and distress. But the record must surely have been on 21st July 1819 when no less than £2 8s 10d was given in less than two hours to vagrants passing through Hagley from Weymouth to Liverpool.

An interesting document which survives is that concerning Mary Willoughby who was sent back to Hagley from London in 1803 after spending seven days in Bridewell House of Correction. Every Constable en route had to see that she was conveyed to the next parish, stamp and sign the order before she was passed on.

Extract from Removal
Order, 1803, for
Mary Willoughby,
Vagrant

County of Worcester
To the Constable of Marksbury
Convey the within named Vagrant
to Hagley in the County of Worcester
Given under my hand this 10th 1803
B. Perney

Tenth Month Casual Pay from Decem^r. 1. to Dec^r. 29. 1816

1816	Amount brought over	7	8	5
Dec ^r . 7	Joseph Beard		3	
	Postage of a Letter from Wigan from Tho. Beard			10
	William Page		4	
	John Cox		2	
	Wm Mosely		3	
	Joseph Bloomans Wife for a Coffin & expence burying in Old		10	
10	Richard Lea Pedmore		3	
12	To Tho. Beard 20 weeks pay at 1/8 for 10 weeks a 2/8 week	2		
13	Mannah Harper		2	6
	Richard Walters his Wife very ill		5	
	Thomas Foxal Harbourn		5	
	Willm Mosely 3/ John Wilkes 3/		6	
	Paid for Tho. Fields Examination & Orders of Removal		4	6
	Do for John Wilkes Examination		1	6
	My Expences attending at Stoubridge on the above business		5	
	Thomas Field 6/- John Cox 2/		8	
	Widow Dillworth 4/- Robert Lucas 5/		9	
14	Received Sam ^r Harris his Wife & 3 Child ^r for order for Stoubr. & Relaid them		5	
	Jonathan Whitehouse		4	
	Signing the 5 th and 6 th Levys		2	
	Expence at a Meeting at the Arms on Fields & Wilkes's business		4	8
16	Thomas Capriwell Birmingham		10	
	William Smith 2/- James Meathcote 2/		4	
	Rich ^d . Wallers's Wife a pint of Wine 2/6 Meat for Broth John 2/1		4	7
20	M. Harper 2/6 Wm Mosely 3/		5	6
	Thomas Field (Corn Land) 6/- Rich ^d . Walters, (Wife 3/11.5/)		11	
	Samuel Harris 5/ John Wilkes 3/		8	
	Paid Dawn for 4 weeks Lodging for Remberton & H. Harper 2w 1/7 Int.		8	
	Robert Lucas 6/- Joseph Beard 2/ Ben ^d . Timmings 1/		8	
	Paid M ^r . Frank Westbromwich 12 weeks pay to Wm ^r . News as 5/2w 22 Int.	3		
	Thomas Foxal Harbourn very ill		8	
22	William Page 5/- John Cox 2/		7	
25	Paid Ann Smith 12 weeks Lodging for G. Field & Daugh ^r due this day		12	
	Expence going to Dudley to inquire respecting Tho. Fields settlement		7	6
	James Meathcote 2/- John Wilkes 3/		5	
	50 Quarter Rates and receipt		4	19. 8 th
	Postage of a Letter from Wigan from Tho. Beard			10
27	Robert Lucas 6/- Mannah Harper 2/6		7	6
	Thomas Field 6/- Richard Walters 5/		11	
	A pint of Wine for R. Walters's Wife		3	4
	Samuel Harris 3/ Wm Mosely 2/		5	
	Postage of a Letter to the Overseer of Wigan			9
28	William Smith Ill		3	
	Joseph Beard same wrist		2	6
	Richard Timmings 4 weeks at 3/6		14	
	John Whitaker 4 8 th 3/		12	
	George Bartle Jun ^r 4 8 th 5/		1	
	Joseph Bloomans Wife 4 8 th 2/6		10	
	Mary Hart 4 8 th 1/6		6	
	Ethel Hall 4 weeks Lodging for Moselys Family 2/6		10	

31. 18. 7th

SETTLEMENT AND REMOVAL

The basic principle of poor relief was that the parish was not responsible for any poor other than its own. To protect itself against unwelcome immigration the parish had at its disposal statutory powers of settlement and removal - powers enshrined in a number of Settlement Acts. Although subject to frequent revision after the first one in 1662, these acts gave parish officials the right to remove any newcomers, especially vagrants, if it was thought that their presence would be likely to place a further burden upon already strained parochial finances.

A Settlement Act of 1691 clearly defined what constituted entitlement to relief. It included residence in, or being bound apprentice to, a parish, paying the parish rate, serving as a parish official, and possessing or renting property of a certain value in a parish. This explains the admission of Hanah Griffis in an examination dated March 1776 that her late husband, William, 'never rented Ten Pound a Year or ever purchased any lands or tenements, never served any Parish office, and never paid any Parish rates'.

In order to isolate the deserving cases, all applicants had to undergo a settlement examination. Documents pertaining to these examinations exist in abundance in the Hagley records, providing virtual autobiographies of a class of people rarely charted in such depth. They afford a history of the examinant over a long period of time, with details of place of birth, apprenticeship, occupation, wages, marriage, children, and any property owned and its value - in all, anything relevant to settlement.

Some selections from these records confirm them as priceless remnants of past Hagley society, and given their context it is not surprising to find that they contain several poignant tales of human misery. For example, John Cox, although a native of Hagley, seemingly tramped much of northern Worcestershire in search of work in the twenty-five years prior to his examination in 1747. During that period he served no fewer than twelve separate masters, as far afield as Pedmore, Broom, Chaddesley Corbett, and Stone, before returning home to claim settlement.

Betty Oldnall applied for settlement in 1779, having been removed from Kinver to Hagley and 'set down in the street at the dusk of evening'. Her husband, Edward, had run away only a few days after their marriage in 1758, and 'she hath not heard of him since'. Unfortunately, it appears that this sad tale did not persuade the Overseers to grant settlement.

Even servants of the lord of the manor could not hope to remain immune from the effects of poverty. Examined in 1795 was Joseph Hinchley, who twenty-six years earlier had come to Hagley as servant of John Davis, keeper to Lord George Lyttelton. On Davis's death Hinchley took over the post and remained keeper until 1795 when he was forced to seek financial assistance from the parish.

The result of such examinations was a positive decision on the part of the parish either to grant a settlement certificate or to implement a removal order. The following extract reflects the former decision, recognising as it does the acceptance of William Hemming's settlement in 1757:

'We do hereby own and acknowledge William Hemming of the Town of Kidderminster to be an inhabitant legally settled in the Parish of Hagley.'

The opposite, by means of a removal order is typified in the case of the previously mentioned Hanah Griffis. She and her four children were returned to Kingswinford:

'not having gained a legal Settlement nor produced any Certificate owning them to be settled elsewhere.'

As parochial interest in settlement and removal was fundamentally financial, the connected problem of illegitimacy could not be ignored, purely because of the extra monetary strain that it threatened to impose upon the parish. By the end of the eighteenth century it had become a serious problem in Hagley and from March 1818 it warranted a special section in the Overseers' Accounts, headed 'Weekly Pay for Bastards'.

It is interesting to discover, however, that contemporary attitudes to illegitimacy were not as inflexible as one might readily believe. Although an act passed in 1743 allowed mothers of bastard children to be punished by public whipping, more often than not one finds that parish officials chose not to hold single mothers to public ridicule. Instead, they sought a satisfactory financial conclusion through tracing responsibility to the rightful father.

The first step, therefore, was to establish paternal identity, with a view to forcing him to provide for the child's upkeep. By an act of 1732, a woman pregnant with a bastard child was to declare herself so and name the father. This explains the wording of an examination of Sarah Hill in 1743, who had been delivered of a girl over a year earlier:

'Thomas Stanley, of the Parish of Bushbury, Staffs., Yeoman, begot the said Bastard child on her Body and is the one and only Father of the same, and that no person whatsoever other than the said Thomas Stanley had ever any Carnal Knowledge of her Body.'

Having established who the father was, there would then follow a filiation order, as represented here in the case of Ann New. On 24th March 1807, she had given birth to a male bastard child who subsequently became chargeable to the parish. The father was found to be Josiah Briscoe, shoemaker, of Hagley, and he was duly ordered to pay costs for the 'lying-in of the said Ann New.' These pre-natal expenses are recorded in the Casual Pay section of the Overseers' Accounts of 1807:

March 29th	being ill	2s 0d
April 26th	lying-in	2s 0d

Briscoe was subsequently required to pay 2s 0d weekly for the 'keeping, sustentation and Maintenance of the said bastard child, for and during so long time as the said bastard child shall be chargeable to the said Parish of Hagley'. The legal recognition of this undertaking was a Bond to Indemnify, contracting him to pay 'until he shall be ordered according to law to forbear the said allowance'.

From 15th May 1807 (the date of the Filiation Order), regular payments of 2s 0d to Ann New appear in the Weekly Pay column of the accounts, continuing until the last recorded payment on March 20th 1814. This last payment was made some months prior to the apprenticeship by indenture of her child Thomas, to Thomas Blaines, wheelwright. At the age of eight the boy was apprenticed for thirteen years. In the intervening period, Ann New herself had featured once again in the records, being subject to a removal order in January 1811:

'Ann New, singlewoman, being pregnant, lately came and intruded into the Parish of Hartlebury.'



Worcestershire

To the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the
 Parish of *Hagley* in the
 said County of *Worcester* and to the Churchwardens and Over-
 seers of the Poor of the Parish of *Kingswinford* in the County of
Stafford and to each and every of them.

UPON the Complaint of the Churchwardens and Overseers of the
 Poor of the Parish of *Hagley* aforesaid
 in the said County of *Worcester* unto us whose Names
 are hereunto set and Seals affixed, being two of his Majesty's Justices
 of the Peace in and for the said County of *Worcester*
 and one of us of the Quorum, that *Hannah Griffis* (Widow of
William Griffis deceased) Edward their Son aged about 7 Years
Joseph their Son aged about 4 Years their daughter aged ab-
 out 3 Years; and *William their Son aged Seven Months*
 have come to inhabit in the said Parish of *Hagley*
 not having gained a legal Settlement there, nor
 produced any Certificate owning them to be settled else-
 where, and that the said *Hannah Griffis* Edward *Joseph Ann*
 and *William her 4 Children* likely to be chargeable to the said
 Parish of *Hagley* We the said
 Justices, upon due Proof made thereof, as well upon the Examination
 of the said *Hannah Griffis* upon Oath,
 as otherwise, and likewise upon due Consideration had of the Pre-
 mises, do adjudge the same to be true; and we do likewise adjudge,
 that the lawful Settlement of them the said *Hannah Griffis*
an Edward Joseph Ann and William her 4 Children
 is in the said Parish of *Kingswinford* in the said
 County of *Stafford*: We do therefore
 require you the said Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the
 said Parish of *Hagley* or some, or
 one of you, to convey the said *Hannah Griffis* & her 4 Children
 from and out of your said Parish of *Hagley*
 to the said Parish of *Kingswinford* and them
 to deliver to the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor there, or
 to some, or one of them, together with this our Order, or a true Copy
 thereof; And we do also hereby require you the said Churchwardens
 and Overseers of the Poor of the said Parish of *Kingswinford*
 to receive and provide for them as Inhabitants of your
 Parish Given under our Hands and Seals the
 Day of _____ in the year of our Lord 1776

In other cases, payments required of fathers were rather heavier. Jonathon Hadley had a filiation order served upon him in February 1817. He was charged 16s for 'reasonable costs of apprehending and securing him', £1 for 'expenses incidental to the birth', 7s for legal costs, and 2s 6d weekly towards the keep of his bastard child.

Again, much of this correspondence is tinged with its stories of sadness. This is typified by the examination of Hannah Parkes. In 1740 she married Isaac Parkes of Clent, only to see her husband transported for seven years in 1753. Soon afterwards it seems that she found comfort in the arms of another, for on or about 24th July 1756 she was delivered of a male bastard child in Bicknall Field, Hagley.

On January 24th 1819, Thomas Jackson received a complaint from William Wagstaff of Henley-in-Arden. On May 15th 1818 he had been persuaded to marry a pregnant singlewoman who gave birth to a son on 17th October. Much to his disgust, Wagstaff later extracted the admission from his wife that the child was fathered 'by some other person unknown to me'. He wrote hopefully to the Overseer:

'I think it is very hard case that I should keep that child which is not my own and when we was with you you said that you would give us something and now I hope you will be so kind as to give us something as I am in great want of it at this time.'

As is borne out in the story of Mary Butler, it was not always possible to find the father. In June 1772 Mary gave birth in Plymouth to a boy, Thomas. Responsibility was traced to John Pitt, nailer, of Dudley, and once apprenticed in the parish of Hagley. Unfortunately Pitt was beyond the immediate reach of the law since he was serving as a soldier in 'His Majesty's Twentieth Regiment of Foot'.

An unexpected feature of the Accounts is that an increasing number of 'Hagley' pensioners on Weekly Pay lived outside Hagley. Overseers did not always record addresses and a complete assessment is not possible. However, such facts as are given demonstrate the extent to which the Old Poor Law system had broken down. Technically, all people chargeable to Hagley should have been removed to Hagley. An increasing number were not.

The first two Account Books (1781 to 1802) only occasionally mention a place name and therefore cannot be used in any analysis. Book 3 gives more details from April 1810 to June 1816. Books 4 and 5 (1817 to 1838) are complete with place names from 1818 to 1836 except for the years 1824 to 1826 inclusive.

The number of non-resident pensioners varies considerably. The average number was 7 from 1810 to 1816, fewer than 'resident' pensioners. Information was not recorded for 1817 but when the place names resumed in March 1818 the number of non-resident pensioners had jumped to 12. The most significant increases, however, are from 1827 onwards, numbers rising from 14 in that year to 19 by March 1830 (at a time when 'resident' numbers were falling), and reaching an average of 20/21 right up to early 1836. In the final year of the old system there were at least three or four times as many non-residents as residents receiving Weekly Pay. It is these non-resident pensioners who must have contributed most to the increase in costs to Hagley rate-payers over the period under review.

Apart from helping to assess costs involved, the place names are interesting evidence of population movement, albeit only of the poorer members of that population. Several were neighbouring parishes: Broom, Churchill, Clent, Holy Cross, Hackman's Gate, Kidderminster, Pedmore, Lutley.

Some were only a little way beyond: Oldswinford, Stourbridge, Belbroughton, Hunnington. Halesowen occurs because one pauper was an inmate of Halesowen Workhouse for some time, but places such as Cradley, Lye and Brierley Hill were (and are) in the nearer section of the Black Country. Places further into that region were also represented: Dudley, Tipton, West Bromwich, Bilston, as well as Wolverhampton and Birmingham. Possibly people had been attracted to the Black Country in the early nineteenth century by the prospect of employment in the then expanding iron trades. The remaining places mentioned are in more rural areas: Chaddesley, Wolverley, Cofton (Hackett?), Ombersley, and Kinver. Generally, these place names suggest that migration was fairly local.

Distant pensioners could produce distinct problems as is shown by the Overseers' correspondence concerning the Beard family. Thomas Beard was born in Hagley and about 1800 he married Mary, who was then aged about 30 years, at Hindley near Wigan in Lancashire. Thomas and Mary had three children, Anne born in 1804, Phoebe in 1806 and Alice in 1808. Thomas then joined, or was drafted into, the 17th Regiment of Light Dragoons and went abroad. At this time Mary lived with her father-in-law in Oldswinford but once in receipt of poor relief the family were removed to Hagley from Oldswinford in 1808. The order concerning this removal is the first time that Mary's story appears in the papers in the Hagley Parish Chest.

Within less than a month of arriving in Hagley it appears that Mary and her children, with the permission of the Overseer in Hagley, moved to Wigan. It seems likely that Mary was returning to her home town. On April 29th Mary left Hagley for Wigan with her children, taking with her a letter sent from the Overseer in Hagley to the Overseer in Wigan asking him to pay the bearer - Mary and her three children - 4s 0d per week. 'I will take care you are repaid.' However, Mary had difficulties in supporting her family in Wigan. In February 1809 the Wigan Overseer was requested by Mary to write to Hagley. She says 'she cannot exist upon the allowance she has at present - unless you will allow her more she must be removed with her children. I should think she might do with 1s 8d or 2s 0d per week more for a little time until she can get work. At present she cannot as we have in this town more than 500 hands idle as the cotton manufacture is at a stand.' The reply was that she might be paid 1s 6d per week extra 'but I hope you will not pay her longer (than a few weeks) then she can get into work'.

The return of Thomas from the Army does not appear to have helped the family. One of Thomas's hands was 'lame' from a wound that he had received. There follows a series of negotiations between the Wigan and Hagley Overseers as to the level of support to be given to the Beard family. Mary then had two further children, born in 1812 and 1815. Although the eldest child, Anne, had begun to work in a factory when she was 10 years old, the family was still in difficulties with insufficient money to pay for rent, clothing and food.

Payment to the Beard family appeared to have been stopped completely in 1814. In June 1814 the Wigan Overseer wrote 'Thomas Beard's wife has repeatedly applied to me for relief, her husband is lame as you well know, he is a nailor but cannot follow his business by reason of lameness. He has 4 children under 10 years. The eldest I believe earns about 1s 6d a week. The other 3 are too young to earn anything. It appears to me that something must be done. I am told that you promised them a cart and a horse about 12 months ago, but for my part I think a moderate weekly relief would do them more service P.S. I believe he manages to earn from 2s 0d to 3s 0d a week making sparrow tiles, but no more.'

The reply from Hagley was sent on 18th June. 'The reason Thomas Beard's pay was stopped was that we know that Thomas Beard has a pension and (is) a stout young man. Though lame with one hand he may be capable of doing a great

many things towards maintaining his family - and if he can make sparrow tiles he can make better work - and as for saying that I promised to buy him a cart and a horse is very false as I never promised him anything. When I saw him at Hagley some years ago when he was discharged he told me that he was going down to his wife (in Wigan) and he should be able to do without the pay.' Relief nevertheless evidently resumed at 2s per week.

The year of 1816 was a particularly difficult year for the Beard family, but they appear reluctant to return to Hagley. The Wigan Overseer was not on the best of terms with his opposite number in Hagley and was clearly under great pressure when he wrote requesting £8 (80 weeks' pay at 2s) and added, 'We are ill pinched when remittances are not promptly made seeing we are making advances for about 80 townships.'

The reply from Hagley enclosing payment was correspondingly sharp. 'I am ordered to say if Beard can't maintain his family he must bring them to Hagley and all above 7 years of age will be put out as parish apprentices. But as the winter is like to be severe please to continue his pay at 2s per week for 10 weeks longer.'

Eventually Thomas had to write to Hagley himself. His letter of 18th August said, '..... please allow me some little assistance for trade being so bad and my hand so weak with the wound I received and my family so very large.' He wrote again on 25th August. He has received £1 '.... but, sir, I think 1s per week is but very little towards assisting 7 of a family ... I have spoke to my landlord and he is willing to give me any allowance your goodness pleases to allow me ... if you please to allow me 2s a week.'

On 2nd December he was writing again. 'I hope you will excuse me but the times being so very bad and I am out of work which makes me to apply to you again hoping you will take it in consideration if you please as I am out of work and nothing coming in and my children are all most naked and has nothing to there backs... we are in a state of starvation and there is no work to be got hear... if you will allow me something more weekly than 2s per week.'

This drew a response from Hagley and on 22nd December he wrote, 'I received your letter which contained 2 bank bills £1 each, but... I have nothing to buy clothes for my children... my children is almost naked... I can't stop here and see me and my children starving both with hunger and cold... I have only one child working in the factory out of 7.'

The Overseer in Hagley has written a memorandum on the bottom of his letter saying 'I have wrote to Overseer at Wigan to enquire particulars about Beard's case.' On 8th January 1817 the Wigan Overseer wrote to the Hagley Overseer. 'I have made all necessary enquiries after Thomas Beard and family and they are certainly in distress. I strongly recommend that you give me an order by return of post to pay them 3s a week from 12th December 1816. The family consists of himself, his wife and 5 children aged 14 (earns 5s a week), 12, 9, 5 and 1½. Only the oldest is earning anything and Thomas himself is not earning more than 6s a week. In addition to the above allowance I think you ought to advance a little money for clothing as they are in a wretched plight. I ought to have written sooner but have been so exceedingly busy that your letter escaped my notice.' A reply was sent on January 11th agreeing to pay 3s a week from December 12th last but not sending extra for clothing. Perhaps the lot of the Beard family improved after 1817 for that is the last year for any correspondence about them.

However, as late as 1847 we again hear of Mary Beard. She appears in the Examinations as to Settlement. At the age of 75 she was removed from Wigan where as a widow she could no longer support herself, brought to Hagley and then probably sent to Bromsgrove Workhouse.

The Borough of Wigan, }
in Lancashire, to wit. }

THE Information and Complaint of *Samuel Angleton*

one of the Overseers of the Poor of the said Borough,
taken upon Oath before us, two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace, in
and for the said Borough, this *first* Day of *March*
in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty *seven*
Who saith that

Mary Beard hath

come to inhabit in the said Borough, not having gained a legal Settlement
there, nor produced any Certificate owning *her* to be settled elsewhere
and that *she is* Poor and *is now living in and*

— actually chargeable to the said Borough. And that he is
informed and believes *her* last legal Settlement is in the
Township of *Hagley*
in the *County of Worcester*
to which Place he desires an Order to remove *her*

Sworn before us

Geo. Morris

John Smith

Samuel Angleton

Complaint against Mary Beard, requesting removal from Wigan
to Hagley, 1847



THIS Indenture, made the *ninth* — — Day of *February* — in the *thirtieth* Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord *George the second* — by the Grace of God, of Great-Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth; and in the Year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and *fifty seven* — Witnesseth, That *Henry Siddon* —

Hagley — in the County of *Worcester* — And *William Wronford* — Church-Warden of the Parish of — Overseers of the Poor of the said

Parish, by and with the Consent of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said County — whose Names are hereunto subscribed, have put and placed, and by these Presents do put and place *Phoebe* —

Cox — a poor Child of the said Parish, Apprentice to *Thomas Lea* — of the said Parish of *Hagley* — with him — to dwell and serve from the Day of

the Date of these Presents, until the said Apprentice shall accomplish her — full Age of *twenty one years, or the time of her marriage, which shall first happen* — according to the Statute in that Case made and provided. During all which Term

the said Apprentice her said Master faithfully shall serve in all lawful Business, according to her Power, Wit, and Ability; and honestly, orderly and obediently, in all Things demean and behave herself towards her said Master and all his during the said Term. And the said *Thomas Lea* — for him self, his Executors and Administrators doth Covenant and Grant to and

with the said Church-Warden and Overseers, and every of them, their and every of their Executors and Administrators, and their every of their Successors, for the Time being, by these Presents, That the said *Thomas Lea* — the said Apprentice in the

Art or Mystery of *Good Housewifery* shall and will teach instruct and inform or cause to be taught instructed and informed in the best way and manner that he can — And shall and will, during all

the Term aforesaid, find, provide and allow, unto the said Apprentice, meet, competent, and sufficient Meat, Drink and Apparel, Lodging, Washing, and all other Things necessary and fit for an Apprentice. And also shall and will so provide for the said Apprentice, that he

be not any way a Charge to the said Parish, or Parishioners of the same; but of and from all Charge shall and will save the said Parish and Parishioners harmless and indemnified during the said Term. And at the end of the said Term, shall and will make, provide, allow and deliver unto the said Apprentice double Apparel of all sorts, good and new (that is to say) a good new Suit for the Holy-

Days, and another for the Working-Days. In witness whereof, the Parties aforesaid to these present Indentures interchangeably have put their Hands and Seals the Day and Year above-written.

Seal'd and deliver'd in the Presence of

WE whose Names are subscribed, Justices of the Peace for the County of *Worcester* aforesaid, (as much as in us lies) do consent to the putting forth of the aforesaid *Phoebe Cox* — Apprentice, according to the Intent and Meaning of the above Indenture.

Thomas Lea

J. Durant.

P. Perrotte.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND INDENTURES

An important duty of the Overseers was the supervision of pauper children. Generally what happened was that the Overseers arranged for these children to be apprenticed so that they would cease to be a direct financial charge upon the parish. At the same time the children had the opportunity to learn a trade which would benefit them when they became adults and were discharged from the apprenticeship.

Each apprenticeship had to be arranged legally before the Justices of the Peace and the outcome was an Indenture, a copy of which was kept with the Overseers and deposited in the Parish Chest. An example can be seen on the accompanying page. It is dated 1757 and is in respect of Phoebe Cox who was apprenticed to Thomas Lea, a local landowner in Hagley. The printed document lists the obligations of both Master and Apprentice and these duties were identical throughout the country. The parish chest contains 125 such indentures covering the period from 1697 to 1842. These are relatively few at the start of this period and few again after 1825. It is possible that some have been mislaid or lost and certainly in the last few years of the Poor Law the whole system of apprenticeships was under stress.

Most apprenticeships lasted until the child had reached the age of 21 or, in the case of girls, until marriage if this took place before 21. For some of the boys apprenticeships were undertaken until the age of 24, but the last of these is dated 1777. The age at which children were apprenticed varied considerably. Until the 1760's the age at apprenticeship is not recorded on the indenture but after this it is apparent that apprenticeships could start as early as the age of 7. The great majority of children started at an age between 7 and 10. After 1800 there are a few who were older and the highest age recorded is 14.

For the purposes of investigation the period has been limited to the 60 years between 1741 to 1820 as this series of indentures gives a good indication of being complete. The table below indicates the number of indentures per decade. It shows clearly how the numbers rose steeply after 1800 and this seems to reflect yet again the increase of poverty associated with war-time inflation and post-war depression. Within the general increase in numbers there are three minor peaks: 7 in the years 1801-2, 8 in 1806-7, including three children from one family, and 7 in 1818. On an admittedly rough estimate these figures suggest that in the decade between 1811 and 1820 one child in eight was an apprentice.

Figure 6

APPRENTICE INDENTURES 1741-1820

1741-50	1751-60	1761-70	1771-80
4	9	6	11
1781-90	1791-1800	1801-10	1811-20
13	10	22	26
TOTAL 101 Male 67 Female 34			

It is not too surprising that more boys than girls were apprenticed. It must be remembered that masters had to find employment for those in their charge and that only boys could be apprenticed to a trade.

Without exception the girls, 34 in number, were apprenticed to housewifery or, at it is referred to in the early indentures, 'good husifry'. For boys the most frequent trade was husbandry, with no less than 45 entering this general purpose occupation. For some this would have meant work on the land, but it could also mean the opportunity to work at Hagley Hall or with a local attorney-at-law. Few, even after 1800, went into an industrial trade. Only 10 went to industry and of these 5 went into nailing.

The master's occupation is useful in determining what sort of person took apprentices. Phoebe Cox went to Thomas Lea who was described as a 'yeoman'. All the landowners, including Lord Lyttelton and the Rector, seem to have taken apprentices and there is no doubt that it was seen as a duty on the part of the propertied classes. Apprentices also went to local farmers, to shopkeepers like the butcher and the baker, to the local school mistress and to the blacksmith and the whitesmith. It is significant that even in 1820 the parish was able to absorb the great majority of its apprentices. No fewer than 82 went to masters who lived in Hagley. A few (only 5) were re-assigned to new masters. Sometimes this was inevitable when a master died, but it might sometimes have been the case that master and apprentice were not suited. George Edge, aged 10, was apprenticed to Rev. Richard Harrington in 1802, but two years later he was passed on to a nailer in Oldswinford. Perhaps he was more comfortable in the nailer's shop than in the Rectory.

PAYING FOR POOR RELIEF

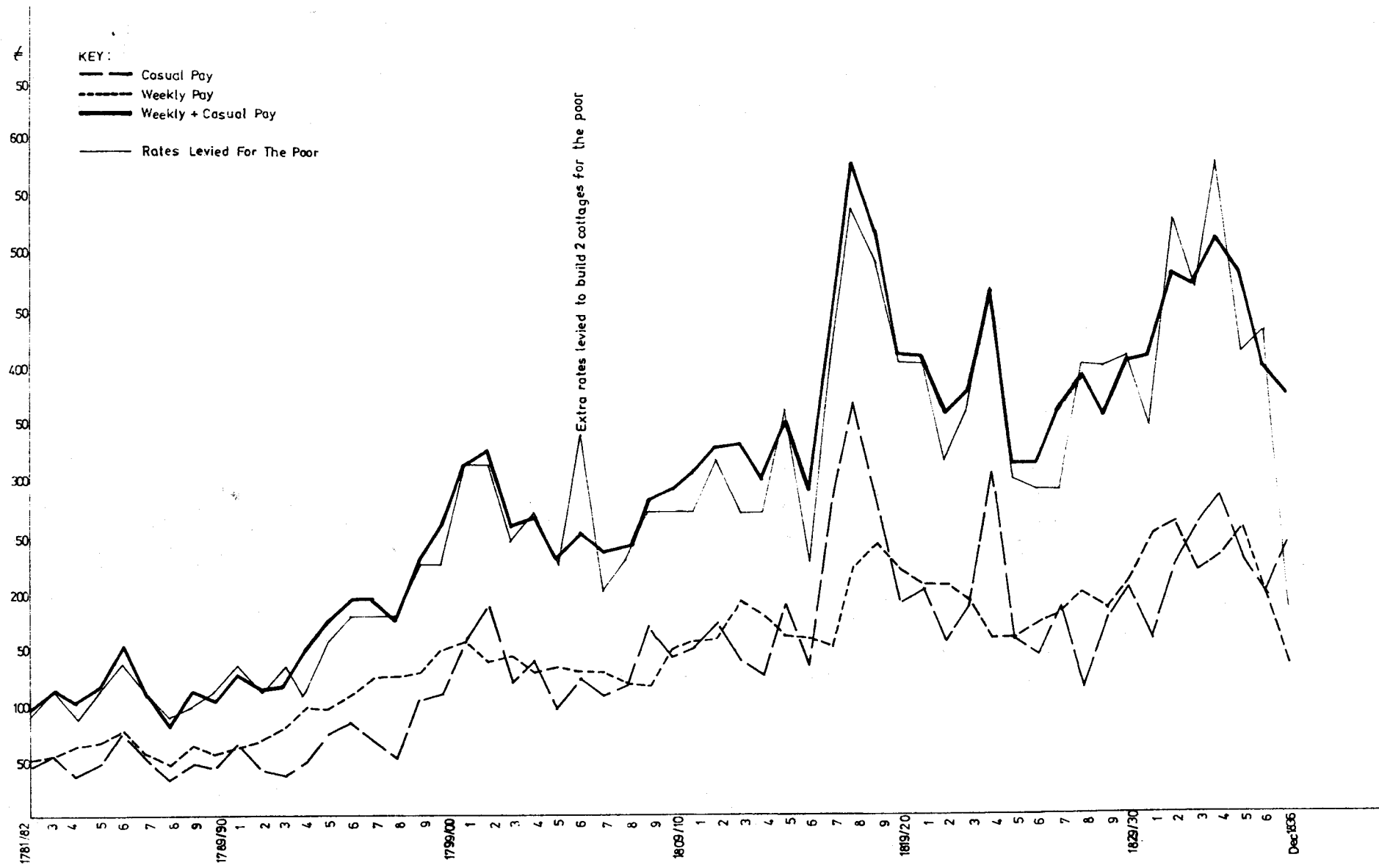
Considering the range of payments that have been examined, it is obvious that the cost of relief was not cheap. Especially in the periods of real economic distress paying for the poor developed into a burden that the property owning classes came to regard as a national economic problem. After the peak of expenditure in the late 1820's and early 1830's a Royal Commission was established in 1832 and its Report recommended the drastic revision that was put into effect by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.

For Hagley the expenditure on relief is set out in the accompanying chart (Figure 7). It illustrates at a glance the steady increase in costs and the particular peaks of local expenditure. To some extent it mirrors the national pattern with the steep increase coming after 1793, the sharp peaks of 1801-2 and the generally high level of expenditure during the war years. The highest peak coincides with the depth of the post-war depression in the years from 1817 to 1820. The final peak occurs after 1830 and represents the background against which the Royal Commission held its deliberations.

The figures as extracted from the Account Books make a distinction between 'casual' and 'weekly' pay. This is a useful distinction because it differentiates between those who were a regular charge on the parish (the old and mothers with young children) and those whose dependence on relief was regarded as short-term. In practice what happened was that the Overseers had to agree formally that any individual should receive regular weekly pay and this decision was then recorded in the Order Book. Casual pay was given to those whose need for relief was regarded as temporary. Casual pay is therefore a better indicator of prevailing economic conditions, and in particular of unemployment.

However, there are further problems over the interpretation of casual pay. After 1800 the cost of administering the Poor Law was rising significantly and at times this creates a considerable distortion in the casual pay figures. It was not that the Overseers and Constable were being extravagant. The

Figure 7 EXPENDITURE ON POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION IN HAGLEY 1781-1836



growing complexity of Poor Law administration included correspondence with other Overseers on the subject of settlement, legal charges for an opinion from counsel in unusual cases, and the increased number of visits by the Constable to Sessions and inquests. That this was not confined to Hagley is shown by the Return to a House of Commons Select Committee in 1819. This Return shows clearly the extent of administrative costs.

Figure 8

RETURN TO HOUSE OF COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEE 1819

	1816	1817	1818	1819
Rates levied ⁺	£285.10.4 ³ / ₄	£418.12.5.	£578.18.1.	£517.11.6.
Amount spent on other than poor relief	£51. 2.9.	£52.13.5.	£101.12.6 ³ / ₄	£123.15.11.
Percentage on administration	18%	13%	18%	24%

⁺ Some of these figures show discrepancies when compared with the Account Books but are as stated on the Return

In the three years following 1819 the amount spent in this way remained high and represented 22% of expenditure. There were of course special reasons for high expenditure in some years. The peak of 1806 is explained by the construction of a pair of cottages for the poor. In 1824 the decision to undertake a general reassessment of rateable property entailed a survey which cost £67.16.0.

The sums required for poor relief during the peak years were not far short of £1.0.0. a year for every man, woman and child of the parish, and it was not surprising that rates were a controversial matter. They were paid by the holders of property and the sum payable was based on a fixed assessment of the value of their land and buildings. The Overseers knew that a double rate levy of 2s.0d. in the pound would bring them in just over £44.0.0. and it was a simple operation for them to work out the sum they required. At the start of the period they were asking for a double levy twice a year, but in 1818 they required no less than 12 double levies. By this time the frequency of collection alone had become an expensive business. The rise in the number of levies is shown in the chart below.

Figure 9

THE NUMBER OF RATE DOUBLE LEVIES 1781 - 1835
ANNUAL AVERAGE OVER FIVE-YEAR PERIODS

1781-1785	2	1811-1815	7
1786-1790	2	1816-1820	9
1791-1795	3	1821-1825	7
1796-1800	4	1826-1830	6
1801-1805	6	1831-1835	8
1806-1811	6		

Only a relatively small number of people paid rates and not all of these had their residence in the parish. In 1800 the ratepayers numbered 46 and by 1817 this number had increased to 55. Lord Lyttelton paid the largest single sum, which in 1817 amounted to £10.17.7. In practice a small number of landowners paid most of the rates as Figure 10 below describes. Seven persons accounted for 72% of the total while 35 of the 55 accounted for only 7%.

Figure 10

RATE LEVY FOR 1817First Rate Lady Day 1817. A Double Levy at 2s.0d. in £.

Amount of Rate paid	£3 or more	Between £1 and £2.19.0	Between 10/- and 19/6	Between 5/- and 9/11	Between 2/- and 4/11	Between 6d and 1/11
Number of 55 Persons in all	7	2	5	6	17	18
Total	£31.18.7.	£3.13.4.	£3.5.8.	£2.0.0.	£2.6.0.	£0.18.5.
Percentage of Levy	72%	8%	7%	5%	5%	2%

Pressure for change came to the surface in 1822 when the Order Book noted that the old rate was 'very unequal in its operation.' It was agreed to make a new assessment and to spend the necessary money on a survey. It is not clear who led the pressure. The large landowners might have hoped to spread the burden while those who paid small sums might have been aware of others who had escaped the rate net entirely.

The revised assessment made some significant changes. The 1831 rate levy shows that the number of individuals who were making payments had almost doubled to 101. The new parish total amounted to £58 of which Lord Lyttelton contributed £12.9.2. Although this was a larger sum in cash his share had fallen from 23% to 22%.

By 1832 the cost of poor relief had caused so much concern nationally that a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the whole system. Public opinion in most areas was in favour of change. Parliament acted quickly on the Commission's Report published in February 1834. By August of that year the Poor Law Amendment Act had been passed. After centuries of parochial administration the poor passed into the hands of salaried officers in Union Workhouses, working under elected Boards of Guardians. These local Boards were to be supervised by a central body, the Poor Law Commission, and its inspectorate. The workhouses were intended to be so unattractive as to keep out all but the truly destitute and so force people into independence.

Hagley Parish was assigned to the Bromsgrove Union but the new law took some time to come into force. In the meantime, in June 1835 the inmates of the two poor houses at Harberrow were ordered to be evicted and the two cottages advertised for sale. An offer of £150 for the cottages was accepted in March 1836.

Relief continued to be given to the evicted families and to others until December 1836. On 23rd December 1836 the accounts record a payment of £90.16.4³/₄ to the Board of Guardians for the Bromsgrove Union. On the same date the 'Poor from the Parish of Hagley' were taken to Bromsgrove Union Workhouse.

*Expenses conveying the Poor from the Parish
of Hagley to the Bromsgrove Union by
order from the Poor Law Commissioners* } 10

No names were given and not even the number of 'poor'. No records of their entry into the Workhouse seem to exist.

So ended, no doubt with a great deal of apprehension on all sides, a long chapter in the history of the poor. The Hagley Accounts, for the period in which they exist (1781-1837) show not ungenerous treatment of paupers and unemployed, and a surprising range of relief.

The extract above is taken from the Overseers' Account Book showing Casual Pay for the month of December 1836