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**The Almshouses of Bristol**

by W. C. Sampson  
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## THE ALMSHOUSES OF BRISTOL.

By WALTER A. SAMPSON.

SINCE the year 1292, the traditional date of the foundation of Burton's Almshouse, so far as can be ascertained, thirty-five almshouses have been founded in Bristol, of which number fifteen have disappeared from one cause or another, or have been amalgamated with other foundations.

Dealing first of all with the past :—

When Victoria Street was made, in the year 1870, the almshouse in Temple Street founded by Alderman Stevens was demolished. This almshouse was founded in 1679, together with the one in Old Market Street, by the same founder. The building in Old Market Street was therefore extended to accommodate the twelve poor women removed from Temple Street.

St. James's Parish at one time contained three almshouses. One of these, known as *Spencer's*, situate in Lewin's Mead, was founded by William Spencer, an executor to the will of William Canynge, in the year 1493, and dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

Barrett says that the site is described in old deeds as opposite to the House of the Grey Friars, next Pointmakers' Hall, extending from Lewin's Mead into the water of the Froom backwards, and over against the dissolved House of the Grey Friars. The founder endowed the same with twopence a week for each inmate. At one time this almshouse accommodated as many as sixteen inmates.

The second was called the Gift House, situated on St. James's Back, founded, it is said, by William Chester during his lifetime, about the year 1537. He was mayor in 1537 and 1552, also M.P. for the city in 1555. He left certain property

under his will, dated September 2nd, 1558, to pay six poor people who dwelt there sixpence weekly.

In 1794 this almshouse still contained six poor widows or single women, who received 2s. 6d. weekly.

The third, called St. James's Poor House, was situated in Barrs Lane. It was said to have been purchased with the "poor's money." The site was originally occupied by nine small tenements, wherein several poor men and women dwelt, who were allowed 2s. 6d. a week each from the Poor Rates. It was rebuilt by the parish in 1752.

When the Bristol Charities were being inquired into by the Commissioners appointed for that purpose, Spencer's Almshouse in Lewin's Mead and the Gift House on St. James's Back were among those particularly dealt with.

Both were in a dilapidated condition, and there was no money with which to rebuild; and being but poorly endowed, there were scarcely funds sufficient to keep the buildings standing. Application was therefore made by the vestry of St. James in 1841 to the Court of Chancery for leave to sell the two sites, and with the proceeds of the sale to pull down the third ancient and ruinous almshouse in Barrs Lane, and build there one almshouse in place of the three. The Court granted the leave asked, and in 1845 the two sites were sold; but when the vestry began to clear the Barrs Street site, the Corporation called upon them to put back the frontage, for the purpose of widening the street, to such an extent, that they found they would be unable to build on the remainder of the site. Negotiations were entered into with the Corporation, which resulted in the Corporation purchasing the entire site in 1847, and the vestry then applied to the Court to have the first order varied, and obtained leave to consolidate the purchase moneys of the three sites, and therewith build the *almshouse in Whitson Street*. This was done, and an almshouse to contain eight women was completed in the year 1853. Within recent years the trustees have added to the building, so that it has now accommodation for twelve almswomen.

St. Peter's or Aldworth's Almshouse was founded in 1634 by Robert Aldworth, who was buried in St. Peter's Church, at the upper end of the south aisle under a handsome monument. There is little on record and no trace of this almshouse, which was situated near St. Peter's Churchyard.

A poor house belonging to the Baptists in Broadmead and the Pithay was founded in Redcross Street. So early as 1775 it provided apartments for four poor persons, but no pay. The *Directory* of 1843 shows that it maintained four aged persons, who received 2s. 6d. each weekly.

Barrett states that an ancient hospital was supposed to have been founded underneath the Tuckers' Hall in Temple Street by the Tuckers' Company, wherein six poor people had their dwellings and 20s. per annum.

The *Directory* of 1794 shows that it found shelter for six old men or women.

From Barrett we learn that the Weavers' Company had several lands which they held under feoffees for the use of the poor of the hospital under the Weavers' Hall in Temple Street, which contained four poor women, who received 1s. per week each from the company.

Prior to 1786 this hall was used as a chapel by the Methodists. It was then leased for one hundred years at an advanced rent of £8 8s. od. to the Jews for a synagogue. Under this hall there was a small chapel, with a large stone table, where Divine Service was anciently performed, but this service had long since been discontinued.

The Weavers' Chapel in Temple Church also belonged to this company.

Mr. Francis F. Fox states that when the chapel was originally built it was a lean-to structure against the walls of Temple Church, and when taken into the church was charged with a fee of 4s. 1½d. for a right of way through the church. This fee at the Dissolution fell into the hands of the Corporation.

In 1775 four apartments under the hall were still

appropriated for so many women, who were the widows of the masters or the wardens of the company. They received 12s. 6d. on February 18th, and a like sum on August 18th, being the interest of £100 bequeathed by Abraham Spereing. In 1840 two persons occupied this house, but after 1846 no reference is again made to the Weavers' Hall in the *Directory*.

A letter in the Bristol newspapers asking for information as regards this institution produced a visit from a man who stated that his father, who was born in 1756, was the last surviving feoffee of the Weavers' Company. Until recently the original grant of the chapel, dated 1299, with other deeds had been in his possession. He had, however, sold them.

Of the last old woman who lived in the almshouse he had dim recollections. Her name was Betsy Hake, to whom his father paid a few shillings weekly or monthly.

When Victoria Street was made, in 1870, both hall and almshouse were demolished. The Sanitary Authority paid the informant £700 or £800 for the premises, he being the last representative of that ancient company. The money, he regretted to say, was, like the almshouse, a thing of the past.

In 1840 St. Philip's Poor House, Pennywell Road, was crowded out with the destitute of that populous parish. No further reference is made in the *Directory* after 1843.

The *Friends' Workhouse* in New Street was erected in 1698 by means of a subscription, at a cost of £1,016 15s. 9d., to which sundry legacies were added, these being secured upon the buildings and land. The house was opened in 1699 for the employment of poor Friends in cloth weaving, which was carried on until about the year 1720, when the manufacture was discontinued, and the building used as a residence for poor Friends, rent free, to the end of 1866.

It was then let at a rental of £40 to several Friends for missionary purposes, and is still so used in conjunction with the infant school and soup kitchen, the rent being applied to the benefit of the poor.

The origin of *Temple Gate Almshouse*, sometime called

Roger Magadalen of Nonney or Nunney, without Temple Gate, is lost in obscurity. Manchee states that from 1548 it appears to have been under the management of the Vestry of St. Mary Redcliff, and to have been kept in repair by the general parish funds. It was rebuilt in 1675, and in 1793 contained eight women and eight men. The site was sold by auction in 1843 to Messrs. Hare & Co., the proceeds being used for building a new infant school in Pile Street, opposite the old Pile Street Blue School. Subsequently this infant school was purchased by the Great Western Railway, a new one being built in Ship Lane.

The old site is now covered by Messrs. Mardon, Son & Hall's factory.

Jones's Almshouse, Castle Green, is shown in a plan commenced in 1813 by John Plumley and completed to 1828 by G. C. Ashmead. It was built, but never occupied as an almshouse so far as can be traced.

In a deed dated 1393 mention is made of a hospital or almshouse within Temple Gate, opposite the house of the Augustinian brethren; and in another, dated 1471, it is called John Spicer's Almhouse, near Temple Gate.

Cranidge's *Benefactions and Endowments*, dated 1818, states that there were then no remains.

Before we take leave of the past, I should like to mention that Pryce's *History* refers to a supposed Almshouse, All Saints, which was brought to light on rebuilding 41 High Street in 1850, when an oak beam was discovered bearing the inscription:—

“ 1581. That : we : maie : praie : whylls : we : hav : ”

It would be interesting to know whether this beam is still extant.

Having dealt with the past, we now turn our thoughts to the present-day almshouses. Beginning with Bristol's earliest foundations, Burton's Almshouse in Long Row, in the Parish of St. Thomas the Martyr, certainly claims precedence. Leland writing about 1542 says of it: “ The Almese House by Seynt

Thomas Church is called Burton's Almes House. Burton Maior of the Towne and Founder is buried in it." <sup>1</sup> A board on the front of the building claims that it was founded in 1292 by Simon de Burton, who was five times Mayor of Bristol. One of that name was mayor five times between 1294 and 1305, and owned property in Corn Street in 1297. <sup>2</sup> It is to be noted, however, that the entry in Ricart's *Calendar* under the year 1294—"This yere the abovesayd Simon Burton began to build Redclyf Church"—is in a handwriting three centuries later than the year 1294. It has been sometimes thought that the founder of the almshouse was John Burton, who was four times mayor between 1424 and 1451. But this is impossible, for the will of John Burton was proved on July 28th, 1455, while a legacy to the poor of this almshouse occurs in the will of Walter Derby, bearing date October 28th, 1385, seventy years before, and John Burton was buried in St. Thomas's Church. There really seems to be no valid reason for doubting the old tradition that the house was founded by Simon de Burton, and that he was buried therein; for though there is now no trace of a chapel, the almshouse has been twice rebuilt since the Reformation. The continued existence of the almshouse is proved by the repeated legacies to the poor persons in the House of Langrewe, or the almshouse in "la langrewe"; but the oldest benefaction now in existence is the gift of four shillings monthly by Thomas White in 1523. There is nothing to show what the original building was like, for the fabric was rebuilt in 1606 and again in 1721. So far back as 1623 the number of inmates was sixteen, as it is at the present day; but though, at any rate since the last rebuilding, all the inhabitants have been women, it would seem that in earlier days men also were admitted, for the burial of Robert the almsman was registered on March 23rd, 1558, and that of Mawd an almswoman, on January 31st, 1560. For a very long period almost all the support of the inmates must have come from the alms of charitable persons, for the endowments.

<sup>1</sup> *Transactions*, xiv, 256.

<sup>2</sup> Barrett, 506.

were very small, and no allowance was made from the general funds of the Vestry of St. Thomas's Church until 1786, when it was ordered that sixpence a week should be paid to each almshouse. Now each inmate receives six shillings weekly, and residence in the almshouse is not in all cases insisted on. The name "la langrewe," *the long street*, marks the foreign origin of those weavers who founded the trade which was for so long a time the staple industry of the parish.<sup>1</sup>

All Saints' Almshouse was originally a tenement in All Saints' Lane, given by Stephen Gnowsall for the support of eight poor women in the year 1350, two years after the great plague which wrought such havoc in our ancient city, when it is said the grass grew several inches in High Street and Broad Street. One authority gives the founder's name as Snowsale, and Barrett spells it Gnowsale.

This tenement was sold to the Corporation in 1740 for the sum of £420, and the south and east part of the present Exchange Buildings covers its site.

A new building was erected and completed in 1742 in St. John's Lane, the situation being described in Matthews's *Directory* of 1793 as Tower Lane Steps. There the almshouse remained until 1813, when city improvements once more called for its removal. A site was selected in All Saints' Street in the Parish of Christ Church, which was the property of All Saints' Parish, and here a new almshouse was built.

After enjoying a rest of seventy-five years this site was required for the extension of Messrs. Fry's factory. A new almshouse was therefore erected in Rupert Street—referred to in the *Bristol Directory* of 1889 as Bridewell Street—adjoining the Crown and Dove Hotel, in the Parish of St. James, and completed in 1888.

Scarcely a decade passed when an adjoining brewery required its site, and it became necessary to erect a new building elsewhere, a site being selected in *St. James's Barton*, in

<sup>1</sup> The author of this paper has very kindly allowed a former Vicar of St. Thomas the Martyr to write this account of Bristol's oldest almshouse.

*the Parish of St. Paul.* This building was completed in December, 1899, where eight poor women now dwell, who receive 8s. each weekly.

Fate, I suppose, rarely decreed that an almshouse should occupy five sites, and wander, as this one did, through four parishes. Seeing it now occupies one of Bristol's busiest centres it is not improbable that it may at no distant date have once more to move on.

The actual date of the foundation of *Trinity Hospital Chapel* and *Almshouse* is unknown, but it must have been before the end of the fourteenth century. The chapel was dedicated to the Holy and Undivided Trinity and Saint George, being situate on the south side, within Lawford's, Gate in the Parish of St. Philip. The founder, John Barstaple, was the son of Walter Barstaple, a merchant and burgess of Bristol, bailiff in 1379, sheriff in 1389, and mayor in 1395, 1401 and 1405.

His wife is said to have founded the hospital or almshouse on the north side of the gate, and there seems to be some probability that this was the case. She died soon after her husband, about 1412, he having died in October 1411. They were buried on the right and left side of the high altar in the chapel, which contained two brasses with the following inscriptions under their figures, with his cypher, and a coat of arms under that of his wife.

*Under his :—*

"Hic jacet, Johannes Barstaple burgensis villæ Bristol, fundator istius loci, qui obiit 15 Kalen. Octob. litera Dominicalis D. A.D. MCCCCXI (1411) cujus animæ propitiatur Deus. Amen."

*Under hers :—*

"Hic jacet Isabella quond uxor Johannis Barstaple quæ obiit A.D. MCCCC \* \* \* \* litera dominicalis \* \* \* \* cujus animæ propitiatur Deus. Amen."

The founder provided twelve chambers and twelve gardens for six poor men and six poor women, together with a priest to officiate in the chapel on the south side of the gate.

The following are two of the earliest references made to this hospital, viz. :—

In Wadley's *Bristol Wills* (page 47) it is recorded that in 1396 legacies to the poor of the Hospitals of St. John and St. Bartholomew in Bristol to the poor of the renovated hospital at Lafford is Gate, etc.

And the following extract from *Cal. Papal Registers, Papal Letter V*, page 245 :—

“ Holy Trinity, Bristol, 1399. 15 Kal. May (April 17). St. Peter's Rome.

“ Inhibition under pain of the greater excommunication not to be removed by other than the Pope, except in the hour of death, from interfering with the execution of the will of John Barstaple of Bristol, who has founded and built a Hospital of Holy Trinity at Lafford is Gate by Bristol for the sick poor, and who proposes to endow it by will.”

Reverting to the north side foundation, we learn much of its purpose and character from an indenture dated April 14th, 1572, which recites that Francis Codrington, a merchant of Bristol, by his will, bequeathed the sum of £50 for the benefit of this hospital.

The deed further declared that from thenceforward the sheriffs should cease to be at the charge of any priests or singing men at Mass holden in the chapel, and that they should also be discharged of a drinking yearly made under the mayor and his brethren.

In consideration of which discharges it was then agreed that the sheriffs should pay yearly 40s., to be employed upon the making and repairing of bedding, to be provided in the hospital for the comfort of poor people, strangers coming and going through Bristol, being sore sick or otherwise destitute of comfort and relief, there to be harboured and succoured by the space of one, two, or three nights at the most. Subsequently certain lands and tenements were purchased at Portbury and Portishead with this bequest.

In 1512 the income of this trust amounted to £35 15s. 2d.

In the same year (1512), Dame Elizabeth Seymor gave thirteen pence to each of the poor people quarterly, with an additional fourpence every Shere Thursday, which according to Brand is the Thursday before Easter, and is so called "for that in old Father's days the people would that day shere theyr hedes and clypp theyr berdes, and pool theyr heedes and so make them honest agenst Easter Day."<sup>1</sup>

The accounts of the hospital, still in the possession of the Trustees of the Bristol Municipal Charities, for this period are full of detail, and it is manifest that the chapel was exceedingly well cared for. Frequent charges are made for lamp-oil, tapers, new wax, scouring the standards, candlesticks on the awter, scouring the lamps before the hie awter, and for rushes against Trinity Sunday.

Father William Wode was paid £5 4s. for the year, and the bellman was paid sixpence for going about the town two times to show the pardon.

The inmates still offered Mass for the souls of their founders.

Twelve priests, in the year 1513, were paid 3s. 8d. for derygs (dirges) and Mass, one penny being charged as Mass penny.

In the year 1546 the founder's obit was kept on the 17th day of September.

It is perhaps worth noting that Arabic figures were made use of occasionally in the accounts for the year 1564 prior to this Roman numerals were invariably used.

The Reformation did not deter Master John Mathoes (Matthews), a draper of Bristow, from his desire to benefit this Foundation, for it was during the year 1564 that he gave the following property for the benefit of this almshouse, viz. :—

- A tenement in Brode Street.
- A tenement in Ballwyn Street.
- A tenement in Grope Lane.
- Two tenements on the Keye.
- A tenement in Corn Street.

<sup>1</sup> Brand, *Pop. Ant.*, i, 83.

To complete the benefactions, it will be well to state here that by a deed dated 5th December, 1809, Richard Reynolds, a member of the Society of Friends, settled £4,000 3 per cent. annuities for the relief and better support of the poor men and women in this hospital.

Codrington, Matthews and Reynolds, who so considerably enhanced the value of this ancient foundation, should certainly be gratefully remembered, and it would, I venture to suggest, be appropriate to see their names recorded in the chapel which contains the brasses of the founders.

The penmanship of the weekly accounts is worth notice, especially between 1514 and 1590.

Writing was a fine art in the days of the quill. Clerks must have taken pleasure in making out their accounts, for the sentiments expressed are more than descriptive; at times they are poetic, as the following examples show:—

1s. 2d. is paid for 4 pounds of candles to burn in the chapel from All Hallowetyede (*i.e.* Hallowmas, the Feast of All Saints) until Candlemas (2nd February, the Purification of the Virgin Mary) to geyve lyghtt unto the poore and others that comythe in and owtt to praye.

1s. for iiiii pounds of candles for the seyde poor people of the almshouse for this wynter tyme, to burn in the seyde chapell, to geve them lighte cominge together in the evenings, to geve God thanks for his great mercies shewed to them.

7d. is paid for ringinge the bell at vii of the clocke in the morninge and eveninge that they may come together to geve God thanks for his great benefyts and mercys shewed unto them.

There are many more such entries, but these lift the veil and give us a delightful glimpse of the past, which would otherwise have been lost.

In 1574 we get a view of the old buildings and neighbourhood, for good Queen Bess paid Bristol a visit on her way to Wales.

We learn from the accounts of their time that the feoffees

expended the sum of 4s. in lime and hair to make the hospital fair against the Queen's coming.

The Queen first alighted at St. Lawrence's Hospital, changed some apparel, was met at Lawford's Gate by the Mayor (Mr. Kelk) and Council riding in scarlet with their foot clothes and pages. She was received at the Gate with an oration made by John Popham, Esq.

While she remained here many pleasant shows and sights upon land and water were made by the citizens, which much delighted Her Majesty.<sup>1</sup>

The hospital and chapel stood immediately within Lawford's Gate. Although the buildings are more extensive, the almshouses still occupy their original sites, with the exception of the chapel, which formerly stood on the opposite side of the quadrangle, and was removed owing to the site being required for the purpose of widening the street.

The gate was taken down to widen the entrance to the city in 1768. A street close by, however, perpetuates the name Lawford.

The precincts adjoining the almshouse on the south side are called the Batch, which signifies mound or hillock. Although it is now difficult to realise the fact, the hospital at that time was pleasantly raised above the surrounding country.

The inmates of our day have the benefit of living in a beautiful building with a green quadrangle, but in the sixteenth century, instead of a city, the inmates were surrounded with gardens, orchards, and waterways.

Two pieces of parchment written in Latin and set to music found their way into the accounts of the chapel for the year 1594. Although the writing is faint, the notes are quite clear.

The affairs of the almshouse in 1626 appear to have been managed very irregularly. Like other public institutions, the foundation felt the effects of the unsettled state of the times prior to the Civil War. The almshouse on the north side was closed and leased for other purposes.

Probably this accounts for seventeen pensioners being paid

<sup>1</sup> Evans, *Outline of the History of Bristol*, p 150.

varying sums from sixpence a week to £4 per annum. Payments were made indiscriminately, some of the recipients being children.

1s. a week was paid to a child born in New Gate, and a cripple brought out of the Bridewell was made a similar allowance.

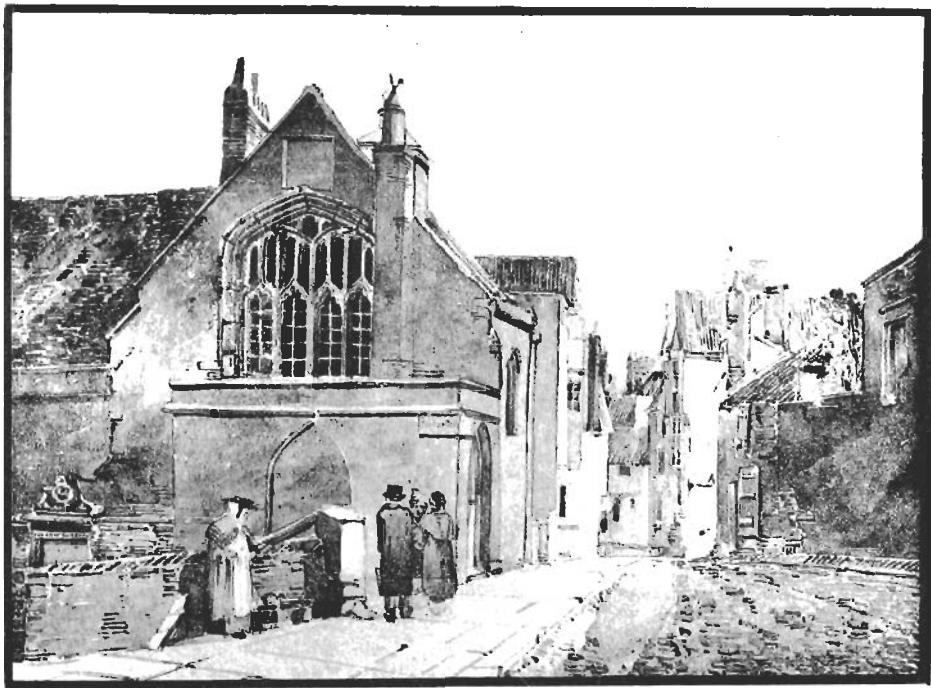
While the Civil War was raging between the Puritans and Charles I the funds were used for the relief of the poor in the widest sense, payments being made to soldiers and sailors of various nationality.

The several parishes of the city were at this time called upon to subscribe towards the relief of maimed soldiers. Seven parishes in all contributed £4 6s. 8d., and a note of the ten parishes who refused to pay was ordered to be entered on the books:

The following payments show the dreadful state of affairs at that time, Alderman Shierman, the Mayor, ordering many of the gifts to be made:—

	£	s.	d.
To a poor woman which came out of Ireland..	0	2	6
To a soldier who was hurt at Pembroke Castle	0	1	0
To a poor woman taken by the Turks.. ..	0	2	6
To two soldiers .. .. .	0	2	6
Lady Essex in the Towlsey .. .. .	2	0	0
For maymed soldiers at the Towlsey which came from Pembroke .. .. .	0	6	0
To a companie of Scotchmen were taken by the Ierish .. .. .	0	5	0
To John Clifford came from York and his brother and their wives and children ..	0	4	6
To Frenchmen at the mayor's door ..	0	10	0
For one man taken by Capt. Barklett ..	0	1	0
To 3 Frenchmen taken by Ierish Friggetts	0	1	6

Taking advantage of these troubled times, George Ball, the bailiff, stole the almshouse bell and an iron crane out of the kitchen in the summer of 1653. He was ordered to bring in a new bell of the same weight and goodness and likewise an iron



Chapel of the three Kings of Cologne,  
Top of Christmas Steps, Bristol.

J. Johnson, 1824.

W. MOLINE. Photo.

*By permission of the Art Gallery Committee of the City of Bristol.*

crane before Michaelmas Day, and a note was made of the several sorts of goods belonging to the hospital in the custody of this somewhat questionable bailiff.

About this time it became necessary to consider the advisability of drawing up orders to regulate the civil behaviour of the inmates, particular stress being laid on the point that thenceforth no man or woman should after admittance into the almshouse presume to marry, upon penalty of expulsion. After a lapse of about three years on June 9th, 1653, the following orders were drawn up and put in force:—

First, that they be careful to pray privately every morning and evening in their chambers; that they frequent constantly every morning and evening, their parish church where they may hear sermons and be instructed in the knowledge of God and exercise of religion, and to hear lectures, sermons on the week days, and that for every omission that shall be proved against them fivepence of that week's pay shall be kept back at their next pay-day, provided that they be not hindered by sickness or some urgent necessity of which the mayor and aldermen only are to be the judges.

If the porter or deputy fail to open or lock the gate he should forfeit fourpence each time, which was to be divided amongst the rest of them.

If at any time either of them were contentious, and attempted to revenge himself by opprobrious and insulting speeches, he should forfeit 12d. of his pay, half to go to the party wronged, the other half to the poor box, and every inmate failing to attend the reading of the rules had to put 12d. into the poor box. The remaining rules are practically the same as those now in use after a lapse of two and a half centuries. Happily in the present day the trustees find no necessity to resort to fines.

In February, 1669, it was determined to grant thenceforth no pension to any person not dwelling in the hospital, and steps were to be taken to get possession of the almshouse premises on the north side for the use of the poor people. Not until

1690 were the premises restored and ready for occupation as an almshouse, when twelve widows were admitted and paid 1s. 4d. per week each.

Notwithstanding the feoffees' determination in 1669 to grant no pension to any person not dwelling in the hospital, six pensioners (two men and four women) were receiving 2s. 2d. a week in the year 1731, and in 1732 two more men were elected to receive pensions. No payment, however, appears to have been made after the following year. Possibly these pensioners were required to take up residence.

In April, 1696, the sum of £3 4s. od. was written off as value lost through the fall of the guinea from 30s. to 22s.

This foundation possessed three public houses on the Key (1712), viz. :—

The Three Kings and House adjoining on ye North .. .. .	£10
The Swan Tavern .. .. .	3
Ye Corner House called Ye Cock and Pye, newly built in 1689 .. .. .	6

Early in the eighteenth century the hospital on the south side, very commonly called the Dial Almshouse, contained ten men, ten women, a bedmaker and a washerwoman, while the almshouse on the north side contained twelve women. In 1739 the north-side building was extended, but the new portion was not completed until 1744, when six women were elected to receive 3s. weekly on admission, and six others to have the use of rooms only.

The chapel was rebuilt in 1796 at a cost of £463 4s. 3d.

As time went on the pay of the inmates improved.

	s.	d.
In 1822 the weekly pay was .. ..	4	0
In 1832 .. ..	4	6
In 1834 .. ..	5	0
In 1872 .. ..	6	0
In 1880 .. ..	7	0 (the same as they now receive).

The almshouse building on the south side was partly pulled down and rebuilt in 1857-8 for twelve inmates at a cost of £1,624.

In 1865 an addition was made for eight inmates, costing £2,688.

In 1874 land adjoining the almshouse was purchased at a cost of £1,600 for a further extension of the buildings. The enlargement was made in 1875-6 providing accommodation for twelve more inmates at a cost of £4,746. A further addition was made in 1880 for four inmates costing £1,190.

The chapel was again rebuilt in 1882 at a cost of £1,416. The foundation-stone was laid on August 15th, 1881. A bottle containing copies of the local newspapers and the *London Times*, a parchment setting forth the history of the foundation, and a few coins of the *Realm* were deposited in a cavity made in the foundation-stone.

The Rev. John W. Caldicott, D.D., conducted the opening service on Sunday, October 22nd, 1882.

The Merchants' *Hospital, King Street*, was formerly known as St. Clement's Almshouse. Barrett states that a guild was instituted in the year 1446 for the soul's health and good of the king, the mayor and others; and for the prosperity of the mariners who were exposed to manifold dangers and distress, there should be a fraternity erected to the worship of God, our Lady, St. Clement, St. George and all the saints of heaven to be founded in Bristol for a priest and twelve poor mariners to pray daily as above.

One of the earliest references to this almshouse is contained in a deed dated October 10th in 3 Elizabeth, 1561, which confirms to certain merchants of Bristol all that chapel with its appurtenances, commonly called St. Clement's Chapel, and all that parcel of land in the Avon Marsh, upon which soil a certain hospital, called St. Clement's Almshouse, was situate with garden.

Latimer, in his *History of the Merchant Venturers' Society*, states that it is not a little strange that scarcely an allusion to

this almshouse occurs in the records from the reign of Elizabeth until the announcement was made of Edward Colston's benefaction in 1695. This gift of land was estimated at a value of £1,000. Another gift of £1,000 was shortly afterwards received from the executor of Mr. Richard Jones, of Stowey, Somerset, on the Society of Merchant Venturers covenanting to build rooms for six additional almsfolk.

During the year 1696 the Society proceeded to build the western wing, and three years later the eastern wing, and then they rebuilt the old centre, thus uniting both angles.

The Rector of St. Stephen's Parish attends to the spiritual wants of the inmates.

The present almshouse is occupied by nineteen seamen and twelve seamen's widows, who receive 7s. each weekly. The Society makes a similar allowance to four out-pensioners.

*Redcliff Hill Almshouse*, said to have been founded by William Canynge about the year 1440, for fourteen poor persons. This house was originally situated on the west side of Redcliff Hill, on the road from the church towards Bedminster. It became ruinous about the year 1700, when it was rebuilt.

William Prewett left two houses in 1733 for the benefit of the poor inmates.

Tradition says it was originally a spittal for the entertainment of travellers, who received 4d. a day for their support.

When the New Cut was made for the Avon in 1805 the site was required. The house was taken down and a new one built by the Dock Company with a south aspect facing the river, the position being shifted a little for the convenience of their works.

The almshouse is situated in what is now known as Commercial Road.

From early times this house was appropriated for the reception of parish paupers. Now it is managed by the Redcliff Vestry, who pay fourteen poor women 1s. or 2s. a week.

*Foster's Chapel and Almshouse*, founded by John Foster during his lifetime, between the years 1481 and 1483.

By his will, dated August 6th, 1492, he desired to be buried beside the altar of the Holy Trinity, within the Parish of St. Werburgh, Virgin, of Bristow. He appointed a priest to sing in the chapel of his almshouse in Steepe Street, for twelve years after his decease, for his soul and the souls of his late wife, Elizabeth, their fathers, mothers and benefactors, and in especial for the soul of Jamys Venables, the priest to be paid yearly £4.

The almshouse was erected on a piece of void ground adjoining the house and land of St. Mary Magdalen, conveyed by an indenture dated October 4th, 1483, from the Prioress of the House of St. Mary Magdalen to John Foster.

Measures were now taken to erect a chapel for the inmates. By an indenture dated April 12th, 1484, John Foster held a piece of land under seal of the House of Tewkesbury for ninety-nine years, paying annually to the Prior of St. James 4s., undertaking within a year to erect upon the said ground a chapel in honour of the three Kings of Cologne. Upon this site, which was 36 feet in length and 90 feet in breadth, the chapel was erected in 1484 and dedicated, according to the stipulation of the Abbot of Tewkesbury, to the three Kings of Cologne.

No person was to be admitted but English, and none to be under the age of fifty years or married.

After the founder's death his executor, John Esterfield, purchased the land on which the chapel and almshouse stood for the benefit of the charity, and by an indenture of March 17th, 20 Henry VII (1505), he made certain bequests for the further benefit of the almshouse, stipulating that four of the poor women should be named and appointed by the Mayoress of Bristol for the time being, if any Mayoress be, or else by the Mayor. Four rooms are still retained for the Lady Mayoress's nominees.

Dr. George Owen, physician to King Henry VIII, granted

certain lands, chiefly in Redcliff, in the year 1553, to find ten poor men to be placed in Foster's Almshouse, and have 7d. weekly paid to them. The almshouse was rebuilt in 1708. Each inmate enjoyed the use of a small strip of garden until the year 1822.

In speaking of the improvements made in 1855 in Queen Street, now known as Christmas Steps, reference is made in the *Bristol Mercury* to the niches which are still preserved on the steps. They are said to have been used at one time by the mendicant friars, who sat there and collected doles from passers in and out of the city, a practice which within the memory of persons then living was imitated by the old women of Foster's Almshouse, who used on St. Michael's Day to sit in them with clean aprons and white plates and beg alms of the benevolent.

About the year 1860 Mr. John Foster, architect, prepared complete plans for the extension and rebuilding of this almshouse in order that the work might be proceeded with when the trustees had sufficient funds in hand.

The first extension was made in 1861, providing accommodation for four additional inmates at a cost of £2,254.

The almshouse was further enlarged in 1873 for the reception of six more inmates at a cost of £2,331.

The most extensive part of the design was executed in the years 1882-3, when the old buildings were pulled down and rebuilt for fourteen inmates, with three shops beneath facing Christmas Steps, at a cost of £4,916, thus providing for twenty-eight inmates in all, who each received 7s. a week.

St. John's or Strange's Almshouse, sometimes called Stranger's Almshouse, said to have been founded in the year 1491 by Robert Strange, who was three times Mayor of Bristol, was anciently described as being situate at the foot of the steps going into St. James out of Tower Lane. Manchec states that no document could be found among the parish papers to show by whom this almshouse was founded or endowed.

It seems to have fallen on very troublesome times, for

in 1640 a commission was appointed by the Bishop of Bristol, Dr. Wright, who found that many leaves had been cut out of the parish books which related to this charity, and further that the inscription on Robert Strange's tomb in St. John's Churchyard was entirely defaced. The Great Rebellion soon put a stop to all further proceedings under the commission.

The almshouse becoming ruinous, was taken down and rebuilt in 1721 with accommodation for thirteen women.

This building was sold to make way for Messrs. Fry's factory in 1901, and another was recently erected at *Rose Green, St. George's*, with accommodation for seven inmates.

The Temple Hospital, commonly called Dr. White's Almshouse, in *Temple Street*, was founded in 1610 by the Rev. Thomas White, D.D. He gave lands and tenements to the value of £52 per annum to endow the same. The building was completed in 1613 for six men and six women, who received 3s. each weekly. In 1824 the almshouse was entirely rebuilt with a modern and simple Gothic front by Mr. Edward Brickden, described as an operative architect of the School of Smirke.

The founder, the son of John White, was born in Temple Street, not far, it is said, from where the almshouse stands. He became a student at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1566, a Doctor of Divinity and Rector of St. Dunstan's, London, in 1584. In 1591 he became a Prebendary of St. Paul's, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, and in 1595 Canon of St. George's, Windsor. He died on March 1st, 1623.

The foundation now maintains thirty-two inmates and eight out-pensioners, who receive 8s. each weekly.

The inmates are elected by the Vicar of Temple, two aldermen and two members of the Bristol Town Council.

*St. Nicholas Alms or Poor-house in King Street* was erected in 1656, and is singular among Bristol institutions, in that it was erected upon the petition of the inhabitants of the parish. At the time of its erection its situation was described as under the wall in the Marsh, near Back Street Gate. The site was

granted in perpetuity by the Corporation on payment of 6s. 8d. per annum. The almshouse now contains twelve women and a matron.

*Alderman Thomas Steevens*, sometime Mayor of Bristol, by his will dated 6th April, 1679, gave lands and tenements in Breach Yate and Wick and Abson in the County of Gloucester to purchase two pieces of land, one in St. Philip and Jacob, the other in Temple Parish, to erect two almshouses for twelve poor men and women in each. A piece of land in Old Market Street was purchased from the feoffees of Trinity Hospital, subject to a yearly fee farm rent of £4. This almshouse was erected in 1686 for the maintenance of sixteen freemen's widows or daughters. The present building is a stone structure, probably built in 1725, as this date appears together with a bust of the founder at the upper end of the court. The building was enlarged in 1872 to receive the inmates from the Temple Street Almshouse on its demolition. It now contains twenty-four inmates, who receive 7s. or 8s. weekly. The founder was born at Bishop's Canning, Wiltshire. He came to Bristol as a poor boy, being of humble parentage, and was apprenticed to Thomas Gough, a grocer. About the year 1630 he commenced business on the old bridge, where it is to be presumed he made his money.

This bridge built in 1247, supported tall houses on either side. A chapel stood in the centre, called the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, where prayers were daily celebrated. Alderman Steevens was married three times, and was buried in St. Nicholas's Churchyard. His third wife survived him. Her maiden name was Cecil Selfe. He left money for the poor of the parish of Bishop's Canning.

*Edward Colston* founded a chapel and almshouse on St. Michael's Hill at a cost of £2,500 for the reception of twelve men and twelve women during his lifetime, about the year 1690. He reserved the nomination of the almspeople to himself, and after his death bequeathed the same power to the Merchant Venturers' in perpetuity.

Edward Colston was born in the Parish of Temple on November 13th, 1636, and was never married. He died in 1721 at Mortlake in Surrey, his body being brought to Bristol and buried in All Saints' Church.

An annexe providing for four additional inmates was built in 1869. The overplus of the estate is paid towards the maintenance of the Merchants' Hospital in King Street.

In 1814 Mr. Hart Davis gave three acres of land in Clifton to increase the weekly pay of the inmates.

The almshouse now contains twelve men and sixteen women, who receive 7s. each weekly.

*The Merchant Tailors' Almshouse in Merchant Street* was under the control of the Company of Merchant Tailors of Bristol, which had its origin in a charter of Richard II, dated 16th October, 1399. This charter states that a chapel had been founded in the town of Bristol in honour of God and St. John the Baptist, to found, ordain and incorporate a certain fraternity for ever, to endure within the chapel to the honour of God and St. John the Baptist. The chapel was a chantry of St. Ewen's, the site of which is now partly occupied by the Council House.

One of the earliest gifts to the almshouse was made by John Wilson in 1587, who bequeathed two tenements in St. James's with a rental of £26 per annum for the poor of this almshouse.

The present structure was erected by Sir John Duddlestone, or, according to Barrett, by the Worshipful Company of Merchant Tailors in 1701, with nine apartments for either single or married people. At present nine widows or daughters of tailors receive 6s. each weekly.

*Blanchard's Almshouse in Milk Street* was founded by Elizabeth Blanchard, a spinster, who by her will dated 4th October, 1722, left six tenements, the one in which she lived to be continued as an almshouse. This house was at the north-east end of Milk Street, to reach which it was necessary to pass through a public house known as the "Bunch of Grapes."

She also left her furniture for the use of the poor inmates, who were to be five poor old maids or widows, special reference being made in her will to the clock and case standing in her dwelling-house.

This property was sold about the year 1890, together with the public house, the inmates being transferred to *No. 89 Grosvenor Road* in the parish of St. Barnabas.

Once again the inmates were removed about 1899 to Blanchard Cottage, which bears also the more prosaic name of 89 City Road. Under an order of the Charity Commissioners dated 18th May, 1900, the accommodation of this almshouse is to be for not more than six persons. At present three women inmates are paid 5s. 6d. weekly from the funds and three others live in the almshouse at a nominal rent of 6d. a week.

*Stokes Croft Almshouse* was built by Abraham Hook, merchant, and other members of the congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Lewin's Mead in the memorable time of the South Sea Bubble, A.D. 1722, upon ground purchased in Stokes Croft. The fact that it was built in conjunction with a school for boys renders it somewhat unique in the history of Bristol almshouses.

The building forms three sides of a square, the two side buildings constituting the almshouse for fifteen women, the rest of the building forming the school and dwelling-house for the master.

*Sarah Ridley*, by her will dated 10th November, 1716, gave £2,200 to purchase houses or land in or near some church or chapel in Bristol, to erect or convert some building as an almshouse for five old bachelors and five old maids, over the door whereof should be engraved :—

“ In memory of Mr. Thomas Ridley and Sarah Ridley being brother and sister, never married.”

This almshouse was erected in 1739 at the south-west corner of Milk Street.

Several benefactors left varying gifts, some to the bachelors, some to the maids, some to both bachelors and maids. The ten inmates now receive 4s. 6d. each weekly.

From an indenture dated August 1st, 1777, it appears that William Fry had about that time erected a tenement as a hospital or almshouse, situate on the south side of Redcliff Churchyard, bounded on the front or northward part by a common-way leading from Redcliffe Hill to Cathay, called Colston Parade.

It was to be called the "Mercy House," for the reception of eight widows or single women. Eight single women now receive 6s. 6d. weekly.

*St. Raphael's House on the New Cut* was founded by the Rev. Canon Miles in 1859 for five sailors or sailors' widows, who must be communicant members of the Church of England.

There is no endowment, but the inmates receive a small weekly allowance and a supply of coal.

An almshouse was erected in *Jacob's Wells, Clifton*, under the will of Mr. Thomas William Hill for the reception of twelve poor women. This foundation is jointly managed by trustees appointed under the will of the founder and the Society of Merchant Venturers. Forty-six out-pensioners, all women, are also elected under this charity

Under the will of Dame Sarah Haberfield, dated 25th April, 1870, a site in Dowry Square, Hotwells. was purchased for the erection of an almshouse which was completed in 1891 at a cost of £11,288, and in the same year twenty-four men and women were admitted. According to the terms of the will, half of the inmates must be selected from persons living in the old Parish of Clifton, and half from the old Parish of Redcliffe. Each inmate receives 7s. weekly.

Henry Bengough, by his will dated April 9th, 1818, left property in the parishes of Nempnett and Blagdon for founding a hospital adjoining Trinity Hospital, for aged men and women not under fifty-nine years of age, in the proportion of two women to one man, half to be of the Church of England and

half Dissenters. The funds were insufficient to erect this almshouse before 1877, when no suitable site being obtainable adjoining Trinity Hospital, land with certain tenements adjoining in Horfield Road was secured at a cost of £3,323. The buildings were completed in 1879 at a cost of £6,197.

Married couples are now elected in place of single men and women under a new scheme of the Charity Commissioners. each married couple receiving 10s. weekly.

And this completes the roll of Bristol Almshouses. Between the traditional date of the foundation of Burton's Almshouse and the completion of the foundation of Lady Haberfield's, six centuries passed away, and each century left behind it in its course some of these havens of rest for those with whom the chances of life had dealt hardly, yet for whom there should still be some years of rest and comfort. The old city has never lacked rich men furnished with ability, living peaceably in their habitations, merciful men, whose righteousness hath not been forgotten. Few perhaps in ancient times left a memorial in their day which did more timely good.

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