

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

1

525

Die Martis, 12th Juni^o 1838.

The Lord WHARNCLIFFE in the Chair.

Mr. ROBERT UNDER DOWN is called in, and
examined as follows:

*YOU are Clerk to the Board of Guardians of the
Bridgwater Union?*

I am.

How long have you been Clerk there?

From the Formation of the Union.

Are you a Solicitor?

I am not.

*Have you brought your Books with you containing the
Proceedings of the Board?*

I have not brought my Books; I was not desired to
bring them.

*Have you any Extracts with regard to the
Appointment of the Medical Officers of the Union?*

I have some Extracts; I have made some Remarks
on the Margin of the Medical Pamphlet.

You have not the Proceedings of the Board with you?

No; I thought they would be wanted during my
Absence, and there was nothing said in the
Summons as to their being required; I believe I have
furnished every thing which has been required.

*Can you give the Committee the Names of the Medical
Officers appointed the first Year after the Union was
arranged at Bridgwater, and state who had charge of the
several Districts, with their Salaries?*

I can; Mr. Abraham King for the Bridgwater
District, at a Salary of 100*l.* a Year.

Can you state the Population of that District?

The District is 8,833. The next was Mr. William
Lakin Caswell for Huntspill District, for a Population
of 3,654, with a Salary of 50*l.* a Year.

*What is the extreme Length of Mr. King's District? I
should think the greatest Distance was not above
Four Miles from his own Residence.*

What Size is Huntspill?

I am not so well acquainted with that; but the
District is not, I believe, large.

Probably not much larger than the Bridgwater?

I suppose it is rather more extensive.

What was the next?

The next was Polden Hill District. Mr. Baruch
Toogood was appointed at a Salary of 50*l.* a Year;
the Population was 3,697.

Which was the next?

The Middlezoy District; Mr. Joseph Addison was
appointed to that at a Salary of 35*l.* a Year; the
Population 2,560. The North Petheron, Mr. Horatio
Nelson Tilsley at a Salary of 63*l.* a Year; the

Population 4,967. The Cannington District contains
3,041; Mr. John Evered Poole was appointed at a
Salary of 35*l.* In the Stowey District Mr. Richard
Beadon Ruddock at 25*l.* a Year; the Population 1,808.

526 *Besides that they were allowed 10*s.* for every Case
of Midwifery attended by an Order from the Relieving
Officer or other competent Authority; were they not?*

Yes.

*In any of those Districts was there a greater Distance
for a Person to travel than there was in the Bridgwater
and Huntspill?*

In the Polden Hill District the Medical Officer
lived at a considerable Distance. It was not too large
a District, as I believe, provided the Medical Officer
had lived within it; and I think the whole of them
were moderate.

Where did he live?

At Bridgwater.

How far is that from this District?

I should think Ten Miles to Ashcott, which, I
believe, is the further Point; it may be Ten or Eleven
Miles.

How far was the nearest Point to Bridgwater?

I should think the nearest would be about Six
Miles; but I am not quite certain as to the Distance.

Are they bad Roads, or good?

They are Turnpike Roads.

*After these Persons had served those Districts as
Medical Officers the first Year, there was some Complaint,
on their Part, that the Salaries were not sufficient, was not
there?*

Notice was given to the Medical Officers to
attend, to know whether they had anything to say as
to the past Year; they did attend, but made no
Complaint of any Consequence.

Did not they subsequently write?

I wrote to them previously, and they attended the
Board.

They said nothing to the Board?

No, not relative to the Amount of Salary.

After that, did they write?

They did.

How long after that Time?

I do not recollect. As far as I recollect, the Board
divided the Districts into Nine at that Time, and
ordered Advertisements to issue for Medical
Officers. I think it was at that Time.

*Were they present during the Discussion with respect
to the new Division of the Districts?*

They were called in before the Board, those who
attended.

They made no Objection?

No, they made no Objection.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

2

Subsequently to that they wrote a Letter?

Yes.

When was the Meeting at which the Division took place?

On the 18th of May.

What was the Date of the Letter received from those Gentlemen, and which was written after that Day?

The Letter bore no Date.

On what Day was it received by the Board?

It was received the following Week after the 18th of May; I suppose it was the 2nd of June; it was on the Thursday. I see the Notice is dated the 22nd of May 1837.

In that Letter they declined taking upon themselves the Districts at the Salaries they had had?

Yes, they did.

527 *In consequence of that Letter of those Medical Persons was there any answer written to them?*

There was no Answer written to them.

Was that laid before the Board by you?

It was brought before the Board by a Man from the Poorhouse of the Name of William Gill; it came in rather a dirty State. The Chairman said, "Where did that Letter come from?" and it was said, "It came from Mr. Parker;" not one of the Medical Officers, but a Medical Man in the Town.

Mr. Thomas Coles Parker?

Yes; the Man stated that the Letter came from his House.

Did the Chairman open it?

Yes; and it was read to the Board.

When it was read to the Board, what Determination did the Board come to; or did the Board come to any?

They came to no Determination at all. It was attended by a Declaration of many of the Medical Men in the Town and Neighbourhood.

There was no Notice taken of the Letter?

No.

Was the Receipt of the Letter mentioned in the Minutes?

It was, I believe.

Are you sure that it was mentioned in the Minutes?

I am not.

Did the Board proceed to advertise to obtain Medical Men for those Districts immediately?

They ordered the Second Advertisement on the 16th of June.

Without taking notice of this Letter?

They said they could make no Arrangement until the Time was up for the Advertisement previously issued; they considered they were bound to wait; they had advertised previously.

As they had called those Persons to a previous Meeting, and had stated to them their Intention of altering the Districts and altering the Salaries, did they on that Occasion refuse to take the Districts at those Sums?

At the Time they were summoned to give Information to the Board they said nothing as to the past Year; they made no Complaint whatever, except that they were not properly paid for Midwifery Cases,

Were they informed that the Board intended to alter the Districts, and the Salaries attached to those Districts?

They were made acquainted of it by a Letter sent them.

A Letter summoning them to come to the Board?

Yes; but they did not alter the Districts according to the Plan laid down in those Letters; the Districts were not arranged in the same Way as the Letter I sent to them proposed.

The Letter you sent to them, summoning them to come before the Board, contains an Arrangement of the Districts different from the Plan proposed to them, and different from the original Plan?

Yes.

You say that, previous to the Receipt of this Letter, an Advertisement was put out, arranging the Districts differently, and putting other Salaries to them?

The Letter received from the Medical Officers was in consequence of the Advertisement previously issued.

The Guardians did not wait to know how far the existing Medical Officers would accept of the new Districts, with the new Salaries, before they advertised?

No.

528 *After the Receipt of that first Letter the Board received another Letter from those Gentlemen?*

They received another Letter the subsequent Week.

That had a Date to it, had not it?

That was dated the 6th of June.

The Medical Officers in that Letter offered, in order to prevent the Poor suffering by the Delay consequent on the Course taken by the Board of Guardians, to continue their professional Attendance on the Poor gratuitously till some other Arrangement should be made?

Yes.

There was an Answer sent to that Letter signed by you on behalf of the Board; was there not?

Yes; dated the 9th of June.

Did the Board accept of that Offer on the Part of the Medical Officers?

The Board did not accept that Offer.

There was a subsequent Offer then, on the Part of the Medical Officers, to take charge of the Districts at a certain Price per Head; was not there?

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

3

Yes; there were Letters sent to that Effect.

Did they offer to take the Charge of the Districts marked 2, 6, 7, 8 at 4d. a Head, No. 5. at 3¾d., and the Bridgwater District at 3d., on the gross Population of 1832?

Yes.

And the Union House, which is intended to contain 300 People, at 50l. a Year?

Yes.

Have you ever taken the Trouble to calculate what the respective Salaries of those Gentlemen would have been at that rate?

No, I have not.

Did the Board make a Calculation?

The Board did at the Time.

You have not got that with you?

No; there was no Minute made of it; the individual Guardians made it out at that Time.

You cannot, from any Calculation you have made, state what the Increase would have been upon their Salaries?

No, I cannot.

Upon the Receipt of that Offer on the Part of those Medical Men what did the Board do?

The Board rejected their Offers, and ordered Advertisements to issue.

Did they give any Answer to this new Proposal on the Part of the Medical Men?

Not any written Answer; they attended personally; a Message was sent to them that the Board would not accept that Offer.

Did you convey that Message?

No, I did not.

Then they proceeded immediately to elect the Medical Gentlemen?

No Election took place at that Time; the Election took place for District: No. 3, and 4. on the 16th of June, and not on the 23rd, the Date of Medical Officers Tenders.

There were some fresh Advertisements directed to be put into the London and Provincial Papers in consequence of that; were not there?

Yes.

How many Persons were chosen at that Time for the Districts?

No Election took place at this Time. Mr. Young and Mr. Phillips were elected on the 16th of June.

529 *Is Mr. Young a Medical Practitioner resident at Bridgwater?*

He is resident at Ashcott in the Hill District.

What aged Man is he.?

I should think he is about Thirty.

Has he been long practising there?

Not long, I believe.

How long?

I do not know; I did not know him previous to that Time.

You do not know how long he has been practising there?

No.

How long had the Gentleman who took the Polden Hill District been in Practice?

I think Mr. Phillips had been long in Practice.

Where does he live?

He lives about Polden Hill, in the District he took.

There were some Arrangements made with those Medical Persons, that, until Medical Persons were engaged upon Contract in that Way, they were to attend and have their Bills paid as for other Patients?

There was something of that Kind took place.

Was there any Minute of that Kind made by the Board?

There was.

It stands in the Minutes of the Board?

Yes.

Were not the Medical Officers afterwards directed to attend, and told that they should be paid as for other Patients?

They were.

In consequence of that they brought in their Bill afterwards?

Yes.

The Bills, when brought in by them, were disputed by the Board?

They were.

There has been an Action at Law upon the Subject; has there not?

Yes.

Did all the Surgeons bring Actions for the Amount of their Bills?

Mr. Poole brought an Action against the Board, Mr. Caswell, and Mr. Ruddock.

Those Actions were tried at the Assizes?

One of the Actions, Mr. Poole's, was tried.

Did he obtain a Verdict?

He did; not for the full Amount of his Demand; he recovered 10l. short of his whole Demand.

What was his whole Demand?

Somewhere about 40l.

Was there any Tender made?

He was offered to leave it to Reference.

For how many Months did he attend in that Way?

About Twenty or Twenty-one Days.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

4

What was his Salary for the whole Year, under his original Contract?

His Salary for the whole Year was 35l. for the first Year.

He obtained a Verdict, for Three Weeks Attendance upon the Poor, 30l.?

He obtained a Verdict for less than his whole Demand; I do not recollect What was the exact Amount of his previous Demand.

530 *Have they been all settled with now?*

Yes, they have.

What was the whole Amount of their Bills, taken together?

About 248l., as I believe. Mr. King, for No. 1. District, was somewhere about 70l.

What has he received?

I think he received about 40l., and has since received an additional Sum to that; I think there was a Deduction of about Twenty-five per Cent. off the general Charge.

Was that the general Rule applied to all the Bills?

After the Decision of the Court at the Assizes with respect to Mr. Poole's Bill the Reduction was about Twenty-five per Cent. Mr. Ruddock's Bill came before the Board a few Weeks after that, and they agreed to settle with him in the same Proportion. Mr. King's had been settled by Reference, and he had not received so large an Amount as that the Board agreed he should receive in the same Proportion. Mr. Caswell for 93l. agreed to receive 40l.; and the other Two Medical Officers, Mr. King and Mr. Addison, were paid the full Amount of their Demands, The disputed Bills were paid in the Proportion of a Deduction of Twenty-five per Cent, with the Exception of Mr. Caswell.

For what Period of Service was this?

I think Twenty Days.

They received more for Three Weeks than they were to be paid the whole Year?

Yes.

Did this Sum include Cases of Midwifery?

They were always paid every Board Day as they occurred; they were not included.

Were there any fractured Limbs, or any thing of that Kind?

Not that I am aware of.

The Jury gave more than Double what you had agreed to give to the Medical Officers?

I think about Double.

The Jury gave a greater Amount than was ever known to be realized by any Medical Man in that Country?

Yes.

One of those Gentlemen received 30l. for Three Weeks; that would bring him in a Professional Income, if he could sustain it, in respect of his other Business, of nearly 4,000l. a Year; would it not?

Yes, I believe it would.

Did you ever hear of any Medical Man in that Part making any thing like that?

No (meaning Parochial Business).

Or 2,000l. a Year?

No, not by Parochial Business.

The Board considered it too much for the Duty performed?

The Board considered it was too much for the Duty performed.

How do you know the Profits of any of those Gentlemen?

I know nothing of their Profits; I thought the Reference was to the Salaries given them for Parochial Purposes.

How do you know what Profit they made upon their Parochial Attendance?

I was Assistant Overseer of the Bridgwater Parish for Eight Years, and I know what the Medical Man who had the Care of that Parish had at that Time.

Was it done under Contract during that Time?

It was.

531 *Was the Charge they made greater than that they made to their general Patients?*

I cannot say.

How can you tell what the Amount of their Receipts for their professional Attendance was?

I am not aware of what it was.

How do you know what their other Business was, so as to be able to give the Answer that if they were paid for all their other Practice at the same Rate they would get 4,000l. a Year?

I heard that named at the Assizes.

Perhaps it was by the Counsel?

Yes; and I have heard it named at the Board.

During the Three Weeks those Gentlemen were employed was there any very serious Illness?

I believe Sickness did prevail.

To any greater Extent than common?

I really cannot answer that Question.

Do you recollect at what Time of the Year it was?

It was in July.

Was there a great deal of Sickness prevailing at that?

I have heard from the Medical Officers that there was.

Was there any Fever?

I cannot say.

Those Medical Men were employed by Tender, were

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

5

not they?

There was One Advertisement issued for Tenders.

Bidding against each other?

No Election took place by Tender, and no Offers were made but by the Medical Men in Office in the Union.

You took the Man who offered to take the Business for the least Sum, without at all knowing what his Skill was?

The old Medical Gentlemen offered Tenders, I think, on that Occasion, and no other Person, as I believe. Messrs. Young and Phillips were appointed the Week before.

Were not there several appointed by Tender?

No.

Did you know any thing about their Skill?

I did not.

Were they not taken because their Tenders were the lowest, without any Knowledge of their Skill?

I cannot say that.

Some of them are called "Licensed to practise"; are they regular Apothecaries or Surgeons?

I believe the Law recognizes those Gentlemen as Surgeons.

Do you not mean something different from regular Surgeons or Apothecaries; the Members of the Apothecaries or Surgeons Company?

I did not think that necessary if they had practised previous to a certain Date.

Those Medical Persons who were advertised for were to produce Testimonials of Competency?

Yes, they were.

Can you tell to what the Charges for Midwifery Cases amounted?

I cannot; they are not included in the Bill.

What Proportion did they bear to the Salaries in each Case?

The Cases of Midwifery were not very numerous.

532 *Who is the Person who determines what Cases shall be attended by the Union Medical Men?*

The Relieving Officer generally gives his Order at his Discretion.

By what Rule is he guided in giving those Orders?

I cannot tell. If a Person were in Circumstances not to afford it the Relieving Officer gives an Order.

Is it the Families of able-bodied Labourers?

Yes, sometimes.

Has it reference to the Number of Children of the Labourer?

Of course it has reference to that.

He does not limit it to those who are called Paupers?

No.

Does he act in a liberal Way, or in a contracted Way?

I should think in a liberal Way.

Did not you make a Payment to those Medical Gentlemen after the Verdict or the Award of the Referees?

Yes.

What was the Amount you paid?

Unless I had the Account before me I cannot state it correctly.

Was it 188l.?

I believe it was; but I was summoned so suddenly to come to Town I cannot say.

Their original Demand being 248l.?

Yes, as I believe.

How much would they have received during the same Time under their old Contract?

I have made no Calculation as to that.

Did not you supply the Calculation of that very Fact that it was 38?

No.

Who are the Medical Men in attendance now; are they the same?

They are the same, with the Exception of Mr. Ward.

The Witness is directed to send for his Minute Books, for the Letters from the Medical Men, and for their Accounts. The Witness is directed to withdraw.

Mr. BARUCH TOOGOOD is called in, and examined as follows:

YOU are a Surgeon residing at Bridgwater, are you not?

I am not residing there now; I resided there formerly.

You were residing there in the Year 1837?

Part of the Year.

The early or the latter Part?

The early Part of the Year; I left in November.

You have been in charge of One of the Districts of the Bridgwater Union as Medical Attendant?

Yes.

Which of them was it?

The Polden Hill District.

At what Time did the last Year of your Attendance upon that District cease?

I held it from January 1836 till June 1837.

533 *Was that the first Time that Medical Officers were appointed to the Districts?*

It was.

At the End of that first Year of your Attendance what occurred between you and the Board; were you sent for to the Board on any particular Day?

Yes; but it was previous to the Termination of the Time; we were sent for with regard to the Subdivision into more Districts.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

6

Are you the Author of a Pamphlet intituled "Facts connected with the Medical Relief of the Poor of the Bridgwater Union"?

I am not.

Are you at liberty to state who was the Author of it?

I conceive I am. It was drawn up by the Committee of the Medical Association, of whom my Father is Chairman.

Are you a Member of the Association?

I was a Member of the Association.

Was your Father, Mr. Jonathan Toogood, One of the Persons who had been in charge of any of those Districts?

He was not.

How far is Bridgwater from your District of Polden Hill?

From the extreme End of it it is Ten Miles and a Half.

From the nearest Point?

Five Miles, or rather more.

What was your Salary for attending upon that District?

£50 a Year.

You were to be allowed something in Midwifery Cases?

Yes.

That Sum was to include the Expenses of Vaccination?

Yes; and all Accidents.

And all Surgical Cases?

Yes.

Previously to the End of the Year you were sent for to attend the Board?

Yes, all of us.

When you got to the Board what passed?

We were merely asked what we thought as to the Redivision of the Union; whether we thought the Districts were too large or not. Our Opinion was merely asked, and we gave our Opinions.

What was your Opinion?

I hardly know that my Opinion was asked. The District I had had they intended to divide into Two; they asked me whether I approved of it; I said, I thought it was too large.

Did they propose to make Two Districts out of that One District, or to divide it into Two, and to give a Part of each to some other District?

They proposed to divide it; but they added to Part of that a Part of another District.

When they had done so did they state to you the Salaries at which they proposed to offer them to Gentlemen willing to attend to those Districts?

No; that was done by a printed Circular, which

was sent afterwards to all the Medical Men.

All you were asked at the Meeting was with respect to the Size of the District, and not with respect to the Salaries attached to the District?

I do not think we were asked that then; but One of the Medical Men made a Remark with respect to the Payment.

What was that Remark?

That he thought the Payment was inadequate.

534 *Was any Answer made to that?*

I think it was said that that was to be considered another Time.

There was not any Remark made by any one on the Subject of Payment; it was put aside?

Yes. Before we went there we had some Conversation among ourselves; and it was distinctly understood that that Point was not then to be considered. We had heard that it was not to be considered by the Board on that Day, but that we were to have another Meeting for that Purpose.

The next Proceeding was an Advertisement on the Part of the Board; was not it?

Yes.

Were those new Districts ever tendered to you, the old Medical Officers, in preference to anybody else?

No, they were not.

The first Proceeding you knew of afterwards was the issuing of the Advertisements?

Yes; the Advertisements were directed to all the Medical Men residing in the Town and Neighbourhood.

They sent you a Copy of the Advertisement?

Yes.

Upon the Receipt of that what Measure did you take?

We called a Meeting of the Surgeons who had held Appointments under the Union, and addressed a Letter to the Board, requesting them to reconsider the Subject, and stating that we were not able to undertake the Attendance on the Poor at so low a Rate.

Previous to that had there been any Meetings of what you call the Medical Association at Bridgwater?

No; it was not then formed, I think.

Is this the Letter you mean, declining the Salaries: "Sir, the Medical Officers of the under-mentioned Districts of the Bridgwater Union respectfully acquaint the Board of Guardians, that, from their Experience during the past Year of the Extent of the Duties to be performed, the necessary Expenses of Medicines, &c., they cannot, with Justice to the Poor, the Guardians, and them selves, continue their Charge at the Salaries proposed; at the same Time, they are willing to resume their Duties on Terms consonant to the Feelings of Men of a liberal Education"?

I believe that was the first Letter.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

7

Do you know the Date of that first Letter?

No; it was drawn up very hastily, and I think it was sent without a Date.

Was this added to it: "We, the undersigned Surgeons at present practising in Bridgwater, with much Pleasure concur in the Feeling expressed by the Medical Officers of the Bridgwater Union; and are of one Opinion, from our local Experience, that the Poor cannot be properly attended by competent Medical Officers at the Salaries offered without subjecting them to a considerable loss"?

Yes, that was added to the first Letter.

This Confirmation or Approval from those other Gentlemen was appended to your Letter?

Yes, it was.

You say the Bridgwater Medical Association had not been formed at that Time?

I think not.

Do you remember when it was formed?

I think it was formed about that Time, that it was proposed that the Medical Men should form themselves into an Association.

Did you receive an Answer to that Letter?

No; there was no Answer sent.

535 *Did you attend afterwards to give in a Proposal to take any of those Districts?*

No, I did not.

Did you ever go near the Board after that again?

No, I never did.

Was there any Offer on your Part made, until a new Arrangement could be made, that you were willing to attend the Poor gratuitously?

Another Letter was written by the Medical Men who had signed the former Letter, offering to take charge of the Poor gratuitously till something could be arranged.

That Letter was dated the 6th of June 1837; was not it?

It was.

Is this, which is printed in Pages 62 and 63 of the Papers laid before this Committee, a Copy of that Letter? (The same being shown to the Witness.)

Yes, it is.

To that you received an Answer?

Yes.

They declined that Offer of your attending gratuitously?

Yes.

On the 16th of June was there another Offer made by you to the Board of Guardians?

Yes; we offered to take a Fraction less than was given in the surrounding Unions. or to take a less Sum than was given in any of the surrounding Unions.

Did you propose to take it by the Head on the Population of 1832?

Yes, we did.

Was that done in Writing?

Yes, I think.

Did you state that as being less than the Ground of Compensation in any other Union?

No I think not in any other, but in some others; I think the Dorchester Union was mentioned, and One or Two other Unions in the Neighbourhood of that Union. This is a Letter which was written on the 16th of June: "Sir, The undersigned Medical Gentlemen beg respectfully to inform the Board of Guardians that they are willing to undertake the &: of the Poor on fair and equitable Terms, although they cannot accept the Offer contained in the Circular Letter addressed to them. They beg to direct the Attention of the Board to the Fact, that the average Payment on the Population in the Bridgwater District is considerably lower than in others."

Was there any Offer made of taking charge of the Districts marked 2, 6, 7, 8. at 4d. a Head, No. 5. at 3½d, and the Bridgwater District at 8d., on the gross Population of 1832?

I am not able to give so distinct Evidence respecting this as some other of the Medical Men, for my District was then occupied by another Gentleman, and I did not attend the Poor; the Vacancy for mine was filled immediately.

By whom was your District filled?

It was filled by Mr. Robert Young and Mr. Phillips.

After the first Refusal you did not know much upon the Matter?

Not very much.

You were not one of the Persons who were ordered to attend upon the Poor afterwards, upon the common Terms of being paid for their Medicine?

No, I was not.

Mr. Jonathan Toogood is not here?

He is not.

You have since left Bridgwater?

Yes

536 *During the Time you were in charge of that District were you frequently called out from your Home to attend upon it?*

Every other Day.

You had to ride upon the Average how many Miles? I had to ride on the Average Twenty Miles every other Day.

Your Salary was 50l.?

Yes.

For which you were obliged to ride every other Day into this District to attend Patients?

Yes.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

8

How could it by Possibility answer your Purpose?

Yes.

I was in Practice with my Father and Brother, all Three Partners. It was in consequence of their Assistance I was enabled to do it, and only in consequence of their Assistance; for within the first Week I held the Union a very severe Accident occurred in one of the Parishes: a Man was thrown down, a Waggon passed over his Legs, producing a Fracture of both Legs, and I had to stay with him from the Wednesday, when the Accident occurred, to amputate his Leg, and to obtain the Attendance of my Father and Brother, and to watch him till Sunday Night constantly, and to attend him afterwards Three Times a Week first, and then twice till he got well; and it would have been quite impossible for me to have done that had I not been supported by my Father and Brother; I must have suffered the Patient to have died, or put the Board of Guardians to a great Expense in getting other Medical Assistance.

What Age were you when you held this Appointment?

Twenty-five.

How long had you been practising as a Surgeon?

I had been practising since the Age of Twenty-two; not always in England.

You were not paid extra for the Fracture?

No; it was proposed at the Board of Guardians that some Remuneration should be made to me, but it was negatived, at the Recommendation of Mr. Weale, as I understood.

Without referring to that particular Accident of the Man breaking his Leg, what Sort of Attendance generally was it necessary for you to give to that District?

When I first took it I rented a Room at the further End of the District, for which I paid the Rent of 5*l.* a Year; and I made an Arrangement with the Chairman and Board to be there twice a Week, to prevent the Patients having to send so far for their Medicines.

Then there was the other Part of the Week, when you attended on alternate days?

Yes; and very often every Day.

Of course you had Practice in this District besides; independent Practice?

Certainly.

You took the Opportunity, when attending your independent Practice, to visit your Pauper Patients?

Very often.

Have you in any way considered, supposing you had had no independent Practice, what was the Time it would have taken you to attend upon the Paupers?

It would have taken almost the whole of my Time, I should think.

All the Three Days in the Week?

You sometimes went into your District for the Purpose of attending your other Patients upon those other Days?

Yes.

537 *Did you equally take an Opportunity of seeing the Paupers who were ill?*

Yes; but I was regularly obliged to make my Visits Twice or Three Times a Week, whether I had other Patients or not.

Did the Patients come to you at the Room you have spoken of, or had you to visit them at their Houses?

They came, but not so regularly as I expected.

Did they come so regularly as to prevent the Necessity of your making Visits to their Houses?

No, I had always some Visits.

Whereabouts was the Room you took?

It was Eight Miles from Bridgwater.

Therefore, when you went to that District you were obliged to ride Sixteen Miles on that Day?

Yes.

It was necessary for you to keep a Horse for that Purpose?

Oh yes.

How many Horses did you employ in your Business during that Time?

We had Six or Seven between us.

That was for Three of you?

Yes.

Had your Father and your Brother more or less Journeying in your professional Business than you had?

More.

Did you calculate that you took One Horse, or more?

Certainly more than One; my Father generally used Three Horses, and my Brother and myself generally used Three or Four.

Under those Circumstances how was it that you expected to make any Profit whatever from your Attendance upon those Paupers?

It could not be expected, I think, at all; nor was it expected.

When you took it it was not expected?

No; but the Inducement held out was that we should be better paid the Second Year.

Who held out that?

The Chairman; not publicly, but in private Conversation.

Was that held out to you personally?

Yes; he said, "I dare say another Year the Thing will work better and be paid better;" and he had some Intention of forming Medical Clubs and joining the Salary of the Medical Club with the Union.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

9

What is the Name of the Chairman?

Mr. Warry.

Did you personally state to him your Views of the Smallness of the Salary?

It was Matter of Conversation.

Do you mean to say that Mr. Warry stated to you that you would be paid better the next Year?

He said, "I have no doubt next Year it will all work better, and you will be paid better."

Do you mean to say that he said you would be paid better by the Board of Guardians, or that it would become more advantageous to you in consequence of the Operation of the Medical Clubs?

I think that was his Idea.

It was not your Idea that he held out that you would be better paid by the Board of Guardians?

No. I expected better Payment.

538 *You in fact took it on the Notion you had, in consequence of the Conversations, that it would be better another Year, from some Cause or other?*

Yes. We had no Idea of the Extent of the Labour the First Year, that it would be so much.

Were you influenced in taking those Paupers at that low Sum for the Purpose of preventing any other Medical Man coming into that District who might take from you some of your private Practice?

Partly; there was no Medical Man residing there then.

If you had not taken it another Medical Man might have come and taken Part of your private Practice?

Yes; that has been the Case since.

Generally the Inducement, probably, was to get into Practice yourself?

Certainly.

To have an Opportunity of showing your Skill to the Country, and by that Means to obtain Practice?

Certainly.

Whatever your other Objects were, you contracted the Notion that, in some Way or other, the Profits would be increased the following Year?

Yes.

At the End of that Year what Prospect was there of your obtaining any additional Remuneration from any Sick Clubs, or any thing of that Sort?

The Thing was proposed, but the Sick Clubs were never formed, I believe; and we were very much surprised indeed when the Circulars were sent round, and the Salaries were found not to be raised, or rather to be diminished; the Medical Men determined at once not to accept the Situations.

Why were they diminished?

The Unions were divided, and therefore the Salaries were not so great.

Was not the Sum Total as great?

I hardly know.

Were you reduced or raised?

A great many Paupers were sent into the Poorhouse, and therefore that made a Difference.

There were no Medical Clubs established?

No, I think not.

Will you refer to the original Salaries paid, and the Salaries which were proposed: take the Bridgwater District, which, under the first Arrangement, contained a Population of 8,833 Persons; the Salary was 100l.?

Yes.

Look at Page 61; it is there stated, "Bridgwater Parish, containing the Borough and Parish of Bridgwater, with a Population of 7,807; the Salary 70l. a Year." The Reduction, in point of Population, is about One Eighth; the Reduction of Salary is more than One Fourth; can you state any Ground upon which the Reduction of the Salary should have been so much greater in proportion to the Reduction in the Population?

No, I cannot.

Do you know whether the Workhouse was in the Bridgwater District at first?

Yes; but it was not built at first; the Workhouse was in another District.

By whom was that attended?

It was attended by Mr. Abraham King, I believe. Part of the Poor were at another Poorhouse, in another District, at North Petherton. The Children, I think, were there.

Were the Parishes of Wembdon, Durleigh, Chilton Trinity, and Chedzoy attached to the Bridgwater District in the First Year?

Yes.

539 *How far are those Parishes off?*

Chedzoy was the furthest off, I think.

The taking them off would be a great Relief to the Medical Officer?

Yes.

If he could afford to do it, in the one Case, at 100l., was 70l. too small into the District when reduced in that Way by taking off those parishes?

Not in proportion, I think, because he did not want a Horse for the Bridgwater District alone.

You said you thought the Salaries the Second Year were rather diminished; do you mean to say that the Sum Total of the Salaries was diminished?

No.

Are you not aware that the Sum Total was considerably increased?

I was not aware of that; I did not hold an Appointment under the Parish.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

10

You did not offer yourself?

No.

As far as you are aware of the Salaries of the Unions, were the Salaries such as they ought to have been for the Care of the Paupers committed to you?

Certainly not.

According to your Opinion it was impossible for any Medical Man, with that Salary, to give that Attention to the Poor, and furnish them with that Medicine which in the ordinary course of Things they would require, except at very considerable Loss?

Decidedly.

Do you know that an eminent Practitioner expressed, before those Salaries were fixed, an Opinion that the Salaries were sufficient?

No.

Are you, from your Practice, decidedly of opinion that they were not sufficient?

In my own Case it was decidedly not.

Do you mean to say, that if there were an insulated Practitioner, or one not assisted by other Practice, it would be impossible to supply that Attendance at that Rate?

I had other Practice, and my Father and Brother had other Practice.

If you had been in possession of the general Practice of that District in which you were engaged with the Paupers, would not an additional 50l. have been an adequate Remuneration to you for your Services?

No, not considering the Distance.

You were in Practice in the Year 1835, were not you, jointly with your Father and Brother?

Yes.

How many Horses did you keep then?

Five on Six; I think Five. He kept more after I joined him; as soon as I joined him he kept more; he always kept Four or Five; I think always Five; but sometimes we kept Seven after that.

Previous to your attending the Poor he always kept Four or Five?

Yes.

There was no additional Horse taken in consequence of your Contract with the Union?

There certainly was One Horse; it made a Difference of One Horse, I am certain.

How many Horses did your Father keep before you contracted with the Union?

He did not always keep the same Number, for they were not always used professionally; they were sometimes used for other Purposes.

540 *Has he kept a greater Number, or less, since?*

Since I left him he has kept less.

How many does he keep now?

He keeps now Five, I think.

Your Acceptance of that Contract, however, introduced you to a greater Quantity of Practice, which perhaps you would not otherwise have had?

Oh dear no.

Do you think it a good Plan to get Surgeons to attend the Poor to give them Experience and bring them before the World as skilful Persons?

I should think not.

Would a Salary of 50l. a Year have made it worth your Father's and Brother's while to attend the Poor if you had not been with them?

Decidedly not; my Father was against my taking it.

Would it have been worth the while of any other Person to take it?

No; I am quite certain it cost me 20l. or 30l.

Can you state what the Medicine cost you?

No.

Would not the Medicine alone, if you supplied the best Drugs, be considerable?

Yes; I am sure it cost me 20l., if not 30l., for my Trouble and for Drugs.

If you take 20l. out for Drugs, and 5l. for the Lodging, you have only 25l. for yourself to go there at least Three Times a Week?

I cannot tell what the Drugs cost me; we used the same for the Paupers as we did for all the other Patients, and they were dispensed by the same Person.

In the Polden District, of which you had the Charge, there are 3,697 Persons; supposing those Persons to have been attended at 4d. per Head, what would be the Amount?

61l. 12s.

Then the Increase upon that Salary, supposing it taken upon those Terms, would have been 11l. 12s.?

Yes.

Would that Increase of 11l. 12s. have been such an Increase as would have enabled you to do it without its actually costing you more Money than you received?

I hardly think that my District is a fair Example, for it is so large, and so far off, it would not answer. I think in another District I might have done it; but I had to ride Five Miles before I got into the District.

That District is not a fair Case, in consequence of your Distance from it?

Yes.

Was there a Person living nearer than Bridgwater?

Yes, there was a Person, but he was not properly qualified; he was not considered properly qualified by the Board; he did not offer.

Did the Board require at first that they should be all Members of the Surgeons or Apothecaries Company?

They required us to send our Certificates.

Did they do so subsequently?

I believe they did not.

Did they afterwards take Persons who were not Members of the Surgeons or Apothecaries Company?

They did.

Do you know any of those Persons who were so taken?

I do.

Do you conceive they were legally qualified?

They were not legally qualified.

541 *Do you know any thing of their Skill yourself?*

I know only One of them who was employed the Second Year.

Do you consider that Person of sufficient Skill to have the Care of the Poor of that District?

I hardly know whether I can answer that Question.

Is he one of the Persons who practised as Surgeons before the Year 1815?

Yes.

Supposing you had lived in that District, and for many Years had been employed in attending to the Poor, would it have been necessary for you to keep a Horse for that Purpose?

Yes, certainly.

If you had likewise your Time to give and the Medicines to provide, would 61l. 12s. have been a sufficient Remuneration for you to undertake that Duty?

Barely, I think; but then I should not have kept my Horse entirely, perhaps, for the Union; I must have kept a Horse for the Union, but I should have used it on other Occasions.

One great Inducement in taking the Poor at this low Salary would have been to prevent any other Medical Person coming into the District and taking away Part of your private Practice; would it not?

I think that was one great Inducement.

Supposing you had been inclined to take Bridgwater Parish, with a Population of 7,807 Persons, at a Salary of 70l., would that have paid you for your Attendance on the Paupers of that Parish?

I should think not.

You have said that in the Two Districts into which, your former District was divided the Persons resident there have made it answer; supposing you had been resident in Bridgwater, why could not you make the Attendance on Patients in Bridgwater answer as well?

I think there was more Sickness, generally, in the Town than in the Country Parts.

Bridgwater is not a very healthy Place?

No; there was an Epidemic more than once

during the First Year.

With respect to Huntspill District, in which there was a Population of 3,001, the Salary attached to that, according to the Advertisement, was 40l.; sup posing a Person to have been resident within that Division, could he have received any Emolument from the Attendance on the Poor on those Terms?

I should think not; there was a great deal of Sickness in that District all the Time; it was the most troublesome District almost to the Board.

Was that from any casual Circumstance, or was it generally so?

I know it was so the whole Time.

The whole Country is subject to Agues, is it not?

It was very much so; it is not so much so now.

With respect to the North Petherton District, which contains 4,967 Persons, the Salary attached to that is 631, a Year; if you will refer to Page 60 it appears that there is a Reduction in the Salary of 8l., according to the Return in June 1837?

That is so.

Who was the Medical Officer of the North Petherton District?

Mr. Tilsley.

Did he reside in the District?

Yes, he did.

Is that a very considerable District?

Very.

What Distance would he have to go to attend the Paupers?

I think Four or Five Miles, but I cannot tell exactly.

542 *In your Opinion, with the Reduction of 300 Population, would the Salary of 55l. have been such a Salary as would have enabled him to do the Duty with any Profit whatever to himself?*

I think not; I think none of the Salaries would be at all profitable; the only Inducement was an Introduction, and the keeping others out; but I do not think it was advisable for any Man.

What Age is Mr. Tilsley?

Between Thirty and Forty.

He has Part of the Union under his Care, has he not?

I think he has; but I have not been residing there lately; he had when I left in November last.

He had it for a Year?

Yes; there have been fresh Contracts since that.

You do not know what he is paid now?

No, I do not.

Do you not think the old Parish Contracts were considered very profitable in themselves by the Medical Men who took them?

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

12

No; they were not considered worth much; but the whole Amount of that was considerably more than the Amount given under the Union.

Still it was not considered to remunerate?

No.

What was the Difference of Payment under the old Poor Law and the new?

I think it is almost 100l.; I do not know what the whole Amount under the Union was; I think it was 370l., and that there was about 100l. Difference.

You had an Opportunity of ascertaining the Amount paid under the old Poor Law in the entire Union?

Yes.

On comparison it was 100l. higher than at present?

It was considerably higher; I think more than 100l.

Generally speaking, do you consider that Medical Men are less well paid under the new Law than the old?

Certainly; there is more expected of them and less Pay.

Do you consider that in consequence of that the Poor are suffering?

I am sure in the District I had they suffered very materially, for they were not able to send for me the Distance when they were ill, and they were not able to send for my Medicines; and in Midwifery Cases they had to come to me sometimes Eight Miles.

In this District it was a great Inconvenience to the Paupers, you say, not having a Medical Man nearer; how did they manage before the Formation of the Union?

There were Medical Men employed then who lived there, but they were not qualified; One of them presented himself to the Board, and was rejected, having no Qualification.

They were considered quite good enough to doctor them by the Overseers, but not by the Board of Guardians?

Yes.

But do not the Board of Guardians consider some of those unqualified Persons sufficient to doctor them now?

Yes, they do, in some Instances.

You say there is more Work now; is there more Relief required?

Yes, I think there is; the Relieving Officer is always going round.

The Poor are better taken care of than they were under the old Law?

I cannot say; I never held an Appointment before.

You have stated that the Poor suffered in consequence of the Change?

Yes; they suffered in my District, certainly.

543 *Was there any Objection on the Part of the Guardians to give additional Food in the Shape of Wine or Meat, if ordered by the Medical Man?*

No; when it was required we gave an Order for it,

but they had to take it to the Relieving Officer several Miles, and which they sometimes neglected to do.

Did not the Relieving Officer go round the District?

Yes, once a Week; but it was sometimes desirable at once.

Was the Relieving Officer in the habit of visiting the Paupers who were sick?

Yes, I think so, but I very seldom saw him.

What makes you think he did so?

I know he had his regular Rounds to visit all the sick.

His regular Round was not more than once a Week?

No.

Consequently if they wanted any thing in the meantime they could not get it?

No; they must apply to him.

Could not they apply to the Overseer or to the Magistrate?

I believe they could. I recollect One Instance where I was requested to go to visit a Midwifery Case at some Miles distant. The Clergyman of the Parish came to me, and represented the Person to be in a dangerous State on the Road. I met the Relieving Officer; he told me I should certainly have an Order. I told him I had none. I went to see the Person; she was not in a State to be delivered. I prescribed for her. She was not delivered then; and because she was not delivered I was never paid by the Board, which made us careful not to go unless we got actual Orders from the Officer. I rode Sixteen Miles and got nothing for it.

Were you under Contract to attend the Paupers?

Yes; but we were to be paid extra for Midwifery Cases. The Woman was in Labour when I saw her, but she got better.

Did you call it a Midwifery Case because the Woman was suffering Pain with her Pregnancy?

Yes.

How soon was she delivered?

The Day afterwards, I think.

You were not present then?

No.

The Pangs of Labour had taken place?

Yes; the Labour was protracted.

Because you were not present at the Time she was actually brought to Bed you received nothing?

No.

Did you go the Sixteen Miles again to attend her?

I was not sent for to attend her afterwards.

Should you have expected to be paid for Two Labours if you had gone a Second Time and attended her?

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

13

Certainly not.

You did expect to be paid something for going, though she was not brought to Bed?

Yes; because the Clergyman of the Parish came to tell me, and I met the Relieving Officer.

You rode Sixteen Miles to attend that Woman?

Yes; that was a common Case. It very often happens that People of that Class send for the Medical Man much before he is wanted, and he may go Three or Four Times over.

544 *They pay only One 10s. when they employ you themselves?*

Yes; they take advantage of that; they send as soon as they are unwell.

It is in consequence of the Uncertainty of the Time during which your professional Services are inapplicable for any other Services that that large Remuneration of 10s., which is more than you would receive for other Services, is fixed for Midwifery Cases?

It was not considered as large, for when it was proposed the Medical Gentlemen requested they might be paid a Guinea for such Cases. There were not in the whole of my District more than Two or Three Cases occurred which I had to attend.

Did any other Person attend the Woman in her Labour?

I think the Nurse, which is very often the Case.

Did the Woman do well?

Yes.

Did the Parish pay for that Midwife?

I cannot tell.

Did you ever hear from any of the pauper Patients that they were worse off in respect of Medical Attendance under the new Poor Law than the old?

Have heard them complain certainly of the Inconvenience of sending such a Distance.

They have to send greater Distances than they had before?

Yes.

Do you think that those Complaints were well founded?

In my Case certainly they were.

They had to send first to the Relieving Officer?

Yes.

Then to the Doctor?

Yes.

The Relieving Officer might live Five Miles one Way, and the Surgeon Five Miles another?

That is possible, certainly.

Did you ever attend the Poorhouse at Bridgwater?

No.

The Witness is directed to withdraw.

Mr. JOHN EVERED POOLE is called in, and examined as follows:

YOU are a Surgeon by Profession?

I am.

Where do you reside?

In the Town of Bridgwater.

In the year 1836 were you a Medical Officer in any of the Districts of the Bridgwater Union?

I was in the Cannington District; it is marked No.6.

Are you still the Medical Officer of that District?

I am not, of that District; it has been altered.

The Population was 3,041 in 1836?

Yes.

You took it a Salary of 35l.?

Yes.

You have still that Cannington District, reduced to a Population of 2,394?

545 *What is your Salary now?*

32l.

How comes it to be 32l.; it was stated in the Advertisement of the 22d of May to be 30l. only?

The District was let to Mr. Ruddock; the Two Districts run together. When they found there was no Medical Officer to take the District, they appointed Mr. Ruddock of Nether Stowey to it; he declined taking it, and said if the Board would sanction his dividing it with me he would take it, which they did.

What does he get for the Stowey District?

48l

That would be an Increase of 5l. on the original Sum proposed on the 22nd of May 1837?

It was a slight Increase; I do not know to what Amount exactly.

Yet the new Salary was proposed to you, did you object to it?

Are you paid more or less, in proportion to the Work you have to do, than you were when you had charge of the larger District?

I think I am paid in somewhat the same Proportion; I have not made any accurate Calculation.

You signed a Letter to the Chairman of the Board of Guardians, shortly after that Advertisement of the 22nd of May 1837 was issued, did you not?

I did.

You stated in that Letter, that after Experience you could not, in Justice to the Poor, the Guardians, or yourself, continue your Attendance at then Salary proposed?

Yes.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

14

If you are not paid more in proportion now than you were previously to 1837 how have you satisfied yourself that you can continue your Services?

My Impression was, if I continued it, that the present Inquiry going on, or likely to go on, would prove beneficial to the Medical Officers, and I would not throw any Obstacle in the Way of the Board; that was my Feeling.

When was it you entered into the Service of the Board for 321.?

On the 24th of June 1837, or about that Time.

What Inquiry was going on at that Time?

We anticipated an Inquiry, and we thought we would go on.

What Inquiry did you anticipate?

We anticipated such an Inquiry as is now going on.

That influenced you to take it in June 1837?

Yes.

When you had the larger Cannington District you were living at Bridgwater?

Yes.

How far was the nearest Part of Cannington District from you at Bridgwater?

About Seven Miles.

Taking an Average, how far had you to ride to see your Patients?

On an Average from Four to Five Miles.

Have you many of your own Patients in that District?

Yes; and though I am a young Man beginning Life, and have not so many as some, yet I have Patients in the Neighbourhood.

Had you when you took it?

Yes, I had.

What Sort of Increase to your Business did your taking those Paupers occasion?

A very considerable one.

546 *Had you a Horse previously?*

I had.

Have you been obliged to keep Two Horses, or One, since?

I have kept a Second for the greater Portion of the Time.

Do you mean at a particular Time of the Year?

I have kept a Second Horse until last Christmas.

During the whole of the first Year from 1836 to 1837?

Yes.

By the Reduction of your District, are you enabled to do with less Horse. work?

Yes.

What Addition have you made in consequence of

having those Paupers in point of Horse-work?

I have made no Addition since Christmas; I have occasionally hired a Horse when my Horse has been distressed.

Supposing you had no Patients whatever but the pauper Patients, would you have been obliged to have a Horse constantly, or only to have hired occasionally?

I must have had a Horse constantly in the Stable.

Supposing you had got no independent Patients?

Yes.

Would you have had full Occasion for the whole Use of that Horse?

I think I should; there may have been a Day occasionally when I may not have wanted a Horse.

Supposing you had not had the Paupers, would you have been obliged to have a Horse for the independent Patients you had?

I must have kept a Horse under any Circumstances, but the Horse perhaps would not have been wholly engaged.

How did you make it answer to you to take this District at those Prices under those Circumstances?

It never answered my Purpose in the Way of Remuneration; I always lost Money by the District.

Do you mean to say you were not so well paid as you would have been for independent Patients, or that you were in reality out of Pocket?

I am in reality Money out of Pocket.

Was it in Medicines or Expenses?

It was in both.

Can you give a Notion what the Medicines in 1836 and 1837 cost you?

I could by running through my Books; I am not prepared with an accurate Statement. I should think my Drugs may have cost me about 25l.

Out of 321.?

Yes: I am including Bottles and Things; the Use of Leeches and various Things.

Do you mean the prime Cost, or with a Profit upon them?

The prime Cost.

At what do you set the Amount you expended with respect to your Horse upon those Paupers?

Not much extra Expense with my Horse; he ate more Corn certainly; that was the only extra Expense with my Horse.

You mean to say, that being obliged at all events to keep a Horse, you only gave him some more Corn to enable him to do more Work?

That was the only additional Expense I was at.

Could you give a Notion of the Amount of the Addition for the Year?

I think very trifling.

547 *There was the Wear and Tear of the Horse?*

Yes; that would be considerable, and the Turnpikes would be attended with some Expense.

Can you give a Notion of the Expense occasioned in those respects?

The Turnpikes amount, I think, to about 5l. a Year; the additional Corn of my Horse would not amount to much; perhaps Twenty Bushels in a Year.

The rest would be for your Time?

Yes.

. How much do you calculate you should be paid for your Time out of that 32l.?

I do not consider I am at all paid for my Time.

Is it not your Intention to continue to take charge of that District?

I have accepted the District for the ensuing Year.

Upon the same Terms?

Yes.

If the Account you have been giving of what you made of that District be a correct Account, what has induced you to continue to take charge of that District?

It is in consequence entirely of this Inquiry. I wrote to the Board of Guardians a Letter to the Effect that I would wait the Result of this Inquiry, and would throw no Obstacle to impede the Prosecution of the Poor Law Amendment Act; that I would accept it for the present Year upon those Grounds.

Supposing nothing comes out of this Inquiry, is it your Intention to continue to keep your District beyond your present Contract?

I certainly should not continue it.

Is it the Fact that you have made up your Mind upon that?

At present my Impression is that I would not continue it.

Why should you give up the Contract you have entered into?

Because I do not consider the Salary a sufficient Remuneration.

You do not consider the Salary sufficient, or that it is worth your while to do the Duty for that Salary?

I do not.

Is there no Hope, such as getting you into Practice, or any thing of that Sort, that would induce you to continue it?

Certainly; that was my great Object in taking the Union, in the first instance. I was a young Man, and wished to make myself known.

What is your Age?

Thirty-three.

How long have you been in Practice?

Ten Years.

Where have you been in Practice?

At Bridgwater.

No thought you could obtain more Practice by taking this Step?

Yes

Do you find it has answered your Purpose in that respect?

It has to some Extent; I have increased my Number of private Patients.

But for the Prospect of something coming out of this Inquiry, would you continue to take this District at its present Price after the Year for which you have engaged?

I should not like to answer that Question. I do not know what my Feelings may be a Twelvemonth hence; but my present Feeling is, that I should not.

Would any body, supposing him not to have Objects of the Sort you have alluded to in his Mind, be disposed to take those Districts at those Prices?

No, I should think nobody would.

548 *With a view to those Objects, you conceive there are some Persons who would take them?*

Yes, I can conceive that.

What Sort of Persons would they be; Persons already launched in the Profession, or Persons beginning it?

Persons beginning it.

But Persons duly qualified?

Many who are not duly qualified offer themselves for the Appointments. I dare say there are qualified Men that would do so; I think there may be some well qualified.

Is it not a dangerous Speculation to put the Poor, generally speaking, into the Hands of young Persons, who are desirous of taking them more for the Purpose of perfecting themselves in the Profession than for Profit?

I think if a young Man is well qualified, and has Testimonials of his Skill, he ought to be very competent, as a young Man, to take charge of a District.

Have not they taken some who have not those Testimonials?

I understand they have.

Was one of your chief Inducements in taking this Appointment at a low Salary to prevent any other Medical Man coming in?

That was one of my Inducements, and the chief one, which had great Weight with me, that if Men were introduced into the Villages which we were constantly riding over they might take Part of our Business from us.

A great Objection is felt by Professional Men generally to allow a new Practitioner to come in and deprive them of a Port: ion of their Business?

Yes, certainly; we make very great Sacrifices sometimes on that Account. There are so many

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

16

Medical Men around us, if the Business is much more divided it will not be worth attending to.

There is a Resolution to this Effect, at a Meeting of the Medical Society at Bridgwater: "That they will not recognize or hold Intercourse with any Medical Practitioner who dishonours the Profession by acting in opposition to their Resolutions"?

Yes.

Did those Gentlemen who are Members of this Union take any Notice of your having after that Vote taken this District?

They did not; we are still upon intimate Terms.

Did you attend the Poorhouse at Bridgwater?

I did.

During any Illness which prevailed?

I attended during the Time of the Diarrhoea; during the Months of December, January, February, and March.

You acted as Honorary Secretary to that Meeting when they came to that Resolution, did you not?

Yes, I did.

One of those Resolutions was, "That this Meeting pledges itself not to accept any Appointment under the Poor Law Amendment Act without the Sanction of the Committee," was it not?

Yes, I believe it was.

Did you get the Sanction of the Committee for accepting the Appointment you afterwards accepted?

Yes.

Have you had the Sanction renewed for entering into a fresh Contract this Year?

No; I have not consulted them upon the Subject.

Does that Association continue?

We have not met for a Length of Time; many Months.

549 *You do not perhaps consider it in force?*

Yes, it still exists, but we have not had any Meeting.

Were you influenced in any Proceeding you took by Hostility to the Poor Law Commissioners or the Persons acting under them?

Decidedly not.

Have you any Reason to think that the Members of that Society in beginning to associate were influenced by such a Feeling?

No; I have not any Impression of the Kind.

With the Salaries offered by the Board of Guardians, do you think that the Poor in that District could be properly attended to?

They have been properly attended to; but I think that they do not give the Medical Man any Remuneration for his Time.

Is it likely that in Times to come they will be attended to properly for such a Salary?

I trust they will be; I will do my Duty.

You have no Doubt that a Supply of Professional Men may be obtained properly educated for those Salaries?

That is a Question I cannot answer; there are young Men sometimes ready to take any thing in the Shape of Business; that is a Question I do not feel prepared to answer.

If the Poor have been properly attended to, has it not been at a considerable Loss to the Medical Men?

It has been a Loss to the Medical Men; I have no Doubt every Medical Man in the District has lost Money by it.

Is it not universally the Case when young Medical Men set up first that they lose Money till they have made themselves known and introduced them selves into Practice?

Previous to the new Poor Law Act we were a great deal better paid.

Is not a Medical Man always out of Pocket when he first starts, before he makes himself known?

I should say he is.

He would be out of Pocket, because his Keep of his Horse and his other Expenses would exceed his Receipts?

Yes.

A young Man charges the same for Fees and his Medicines as an old Man does?

Yes.

Is it not very much the Practice for Medical Gentlemen, under those Circumstances, to attend the Poor gratuitously of their own Accord, not employed by the Parish or Union?

We occasionally attend them gratuitously.

Persons who wish to introduce themselves into Practice do that, do they not?

I never heard an Instance of that in my Neighbourhood.

You attended the Workhouse during the Time the Diarrhoea was prevalent there, did you not?

I did.

What was the Occasion of that Diarrhoea?

I attribute the Diarrhoea in the House to the Diet, and the House being too thickly populated.

What Part of the Diet is it you attribute that Disease to?

To the Gruel.

What Quantity of Gruel had they have?

They had a Pint, I believe, Three Times in the Day; but I am not quite prepared to state the exact Quantity.

550 *Do the Poor in your District make use of the Gruel?*

I am not prepared to say.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

17

What is their usual Food?

Principally Vegetables, and Salt Meat and Bread.

A very considerable Quantity of Bread?

I think not a considerable Quantity, generally less, I think the Poor in our Neighbourhood live on Vegetables with Bread.

Do you mean Potatoes?

Yes; I imagine they do generally; I am not prepared fully to answer that Question.

What Proportion of Meat or Bacon?

That I am not prepared to say; I have occasionally gone into the poor Men's Houses, and seen them at Dinner with Potatoes, and Meat and Bread before them, but I cannot say in what Proportions.

You say your Impression is, that the Diarrhoea came from the Diet, and particularly from the Gruel; did you take any Measures to get any Alteration made in it?

I frequently mentioned the Subject to the Visiting Committee; I never on any Occasion wrote to the Board upon the Subject, certainly.

Did you make any Entry in the Medical Journal?

No; we never do that. It is done by the Visiting Committee. In our weekly Return Book we make an Entry of the People.

Did you make an Entry that the Illness was owing to the Dietary?

I did not.

How came you not to do that if you were of opinion that the Illness was owing to the Dietary?

We were requested to meet the Visiting Committee, which we did, and every Alteration we wished was mentioned to them, and carried W. them to the Board. We never mentioned any thing to the Board in any other Way.

How many Weeks did you mention this?

Many Weeks following.

Was any Alteration made, and when?

An Alteration was made, I think, the latter End of October.

When did you first mention it?

The Alteration was not made when I first mentioned it.

When did you first mention it?

I think early in October.

When was the Alteration made?

I think the First Week in November.

That was Three or Four Weeks?

It was Two or Three Weeks, certainly.

Had you mentioned it more than Once to the Visiting Committee?

Yes, certainly, I had.

You pressed it upon them as absolutely necessary to be done?

Yes

What Answer did they make?

They said they would bring the Subject before the Board.

At last was it altered in consequence of what you had stated to them, or in consequence of what Mr. King had stated to them?

I should rather say in consequence of what Mr. King had stated to them; he wrote a Letter to the Board, and it was attended to in the course of the next Week.

Did that make any Alteration in the Health of those People?

Yes; they daily improved from that Time.

551 *How many had died in the meantime, from the Time you began to complain?*

I am not quite prepared to answer that.

Were there many died?

I have no Doubt a Dozen died of the Diarrhoea, or there may have been more.

Are you prepared to say that they died of Diarrhoea, or that they were ill of other Disorders, or that they died from old Age, and so forth?

Very few died from old Age at that Period; but those were Cases of Diarrhoea.

You mean to say that Diarrhoea was the Occasion of the Death of those Parties?

Yes, I think it was.

That is from the Beginning of October till the Time that the Dietary was altered on Mr. King's Application, which was the first Week in November?

I think those were the Dates.

You say you made your Complaint early in October?

I am not prepared at all with the Times.

You were not Surgeon of the Workhouse?

No, I was not.

When you attended the Workhouse you attended for Mr. King?

Yes.

How long did you attend for Mr. King?

About Four Months.

When did you first complain to the Visiting Committee of the Gruel as creating the Diarrhoea?

I really am not prepared with the Dates.

Are you sure it was Two or Three Weeks before it was altered?

Yes; I believe it was Two or Three Weeks before it was altered.

Was it longer than that?

No; I think thereabout.

Do you know the Date of Mr. King's Letter to the Board of Guardians?

No, I do not.

If that Letter was dated the 25th of October 1836, at

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

18

that Time Mr. King was returned, and that Alteration was immediately made, therefore it must have been Three or Four Weeks previous to that that your Complaint was made?

Yes, I believe it was.

You say that there were Twelve People died of Diarrhoea during those Three or Four Weeks?

I am not certain as to the Number, but several Persons did die; but I should not like to state any Number.

Several died with that Complaint; of Diarrhoea arising from the Gruel?

Yes.

Does any Medical Man sign the Register of Deaths in the Bridgwater Union?

Yes.

Did the Medical Man sign the Register of those Deaths?

Yes; Mr. King I apprehend did.

Did you not sign the Register of the Deaths which occurred while they were under your Care?

I think I did, a few.

552 *If a Dozen died of Diarrhoea while under your Care you signed a Certificate of their Deaths, did not you?*

I cannot say whether I did; Mr. King always attended, though he was in ill Health, and was not equal to the whole Duty.

Either you or Mr. King signed the Certificate of every Person who died of Diarrhoea?

Yes.

In which you stated the Cause of the Death?

Yes,

Then if it appears by the Return made between the 28th of September and the 15th of October that no Person died, and that between the 15th of October and the 25th of October only Five Persons died, and not One of them died of Diarrhoea, are you not incorrect in supposing that Twelve Persons had died during those Three Weeks of Diarrhoea in the Workhouse?

I fear I am incorrect as to the Dates; I am not at all prepared with the Dates. I commenced visiting Mr. King's District for him on the 27th of October.

You think it was later than October that those People died?

I rather think it was.

Did not Mr. King re-commence his Visitations from that Time—the 25th of October?

No, I think not.

Did you continue to attend with him?

I think I continued visiting with him till the March following.

In consequence of Mr. King's Representation on the 25th of October that the Gruel was the Cause of Complaint, it was discontinued, was it not?

It was.

Then if those Deaths occasioned by Diarrhoea occurred after that Period the Diarrhoea was not owing to the Gruel?

It was produced by the Gruel. ^o

Do you mean to say it continued notwithstanding the Change of Diet?

No; they improved; and, if I recollect correctly, they went back to Gruel again after a certain Time, but I cannot say at what Time, and they became worse; and the Diet was again changed, and then again they began to improve.

When was it that they went back to Gruel again?

I am not prepared to give the Date.

Was it while you attended?

Yes.

Did you approve of their going back to Gruel again?

No.

Did you express any Disapprobation? I mentioned it to Mr. King, and he mentioned it to some of the Guardians.

Had there been any Application to the Guardians?

I cannot say whether there had.

Did you yourself make any Application to the Guardians?

I did not.

You were recognized by the Guardians as attending for Mr. King?

Yes.

You did not make any Application to the Guardians?

I did not.

You did not think the Case so serious as to call upon you to make an Application to the Guardians?

It was left to Mr. King; he made all the Representations to the Guardians. #

553 *Did you make any Complaint to the Visiting Committee when they returned to the Gruel?*

I did.

Who were the Visiting Committee?

I am not prepared to say who they were; they came every Week.

Do you recollect at what Period it was that you complained, or that they returned to the Gruel?

No, I do not.

How long did you continue to assist Mr. King in his Attendance on the Workhouse?

I think till March.

You cannot take upon you to recollect when it was that the Return to Gruel took place; was it after One Month's Use of the new Diet, or Two Months, or Three Months?

I am not at all prepared to state the Dates.

On what Occasion did they return to the Gruel?

I imagine that their Health was tolerably well; that they were so much improved that they thought they might go back to the Dietary again. I do not know that that was the Impression of the Board.

Do you know whether that was on the Recommendation of any Medical Man?

I cannot tell.

Have you ever attended the North Petherton Union?

No.

As often as they returned to the Gruel did the Diarrhoea return again?

Yes; I believe on the Occasion that they returned to the Gruel the Diarrhoea returned.

Were there Deaths after that?

I believe there were.

Were those in your Union Deaths owing to Diarrhoea?

They were.

Was the Diarrhoea attended with Typhus Fever?

No, it was not.

Will you look at those Returns of the Register of Deaths between the 9th of November 1836 and the 21st of March 1837, and state how many Deaths are stated to have taken place from Diarrhoea in that Period?

There are Ten.

Was that Account signed by you?

No.

You do not know that that is an accurate Account?

Certainly not.

Do you happen to know the Names of any of those Persons who have so died of Diarrhoea between the Beginning of October and the Beginning of November?

I do not.

You will observe that between the 28th of September and the 7th of November there is no One Case of Death from Diarrhoea?

There does not appear to be, according to this Account.

Are there any of those whom you can state, by Name to have died of Diarrhoea during the Time you attended the Workhouse?

I do not know that I can state any; it is very common for Diarrhoea to terminate in Effusion.

Who makes the Entries in the Surgeon's Book?

It is done by the Surgeon.

554 *Have you made no Entries?*

I have no Recollection of having done so. I think Mr. King would be able to state all the Particulars; he had the sole Management of it.

When you attended the Workhouse at that Time you made no Entries when you attended the Patients?

No; I merely attended for Mr. King, and I think he

made the Entries.

Is Mr. King here?

No, he is not.

When you attended the Workhouse, and attended any Patients for him, did you not enter the Names of those Cases in the Workhouse Book?

I always made an Entry of the Case in my weekly Return, and returned it to the Board of Guardians.

Who made an Entry of the Deaths?

We do not usually make Entries of the Deaths in our weekly Return Book.

Was it the Master of the Workhouse who made the Return of the Deaths?

I do not at all know how that was done.

Did you ever yourself make an Entry of the Death of any Person you attended?

I may have done so in a Case or Two.

You do not usually do so?

No; Mr. King is the Registrar.

The same Mr. King who is the Surgeon?

Yes.

Were many of the Patients removed from the Bridgwater Workhouse to any other during the Time of the Diarrhoea?

Many were removed to the North Petherton Workhouse.

During the Time you were attending there were some removed to the North Petherton Workhouse?

Yes.

If you find that some died of Sickness there, having been previously affected with the Diarrhoea, and that others who died there are stated to have died from Diarrhoea, are those the Cases which you think occurred during the Time you attended the Workhouse?

I am aware that some of those sent to Petherton died, but I am not prepared with their Names; I never saw them afterwards.

They went away from the Workhouse with the Diarrhoea?

Yes.

Did they all go with the Diarrhoea?

I really cannot say.

Do you apprehend all those Cases stated as Measles were Cases of Measles, and not Cases of Diarrhoea, or do you suppose they were Cases of Diarrhoea followed by Measles?

I should imagine from this Return they were Cases of Measles.

Supposing they had had the Diarrhoea before, and that they were then attacked by Measles, were they not more likely to die?

Undoubtedly.

Do you know that those Persons were attacked by Diarrhoea before?

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole, p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

20

Elizabeth Brown, aged Two Years and a Half; do you know that she was attacked with Diarrhoea before?

No, I do not.

Were they affected with White Mouth?

We had a few Cases of White Mouth.

What does that proceed from?

Very commonly from the irritable State of the Bowels.

555 *Such a State as would precede Diarrhoea?*

Yes.

Do you believe Elizabeth Brown had the White Mouth?

I do not recollect.

Do you know whether all those sent to Petherton Workhouse had the Diarrhoea?

I know that many of them had.

If they had the Measles afterwards they were very likely to die?

Yes

You considered the Locality of this Workhouse at Bridgwater very un healthy?

Yes, very unhealthy.

Had you any Persons there attacked with Diarrhoea, or those other Complaints, that were not in the habit of taking Gruel?

They were all in the habit of taking Gruel throughout the House, I imagine.

Was the Governor ill whilst you were there?

He was.

Was he in the habit of taking Gruel?

He took it to try the Effect of it.

And his Family also?

I cannot say; but I heard him say that he took it several Times; that it was very pleasant, but that it produced Diarrhoea; he took Sugar with it, and made it very pleasant.

Still it produced Diarrhoea?

Yes, and he was very ill, for he went to Bath or Clifton for Change of Air.

Was that the Case with his Children also?

Yes.

After some Persons had been sent away from the Workhouse, did they send in any other Patients?

Yes; they were constantly being sent in.

Did you remonstrate against that?

Yes, frequently, to the Visiting Committee.

Was that Remonstrance attended to?

No; they were not sent so frequently after that, but some were sent in.

Was not it dangerous to send them into a Workhouse where those Persons had died?

Yes; we had not Room for them.

Did you remonstrate with the Visiting Committee?

Yes; Mr. King did also, in my Presence.

Did that make any Alteration in the Number sent in?

They did not come in so frequently.

What was the greatest Number in the Workhouse?

I cannot say.

Do you know the greatest Number in it when it was used as the Bridgwater Workhouse?

I think 105.

What was it [held?] as capable of holding?

I cannot say; I never heard.

What was the Name of the Master of the Workhouse who you say had taken the Diarrhoea?

Govier, William. I believe his Wife lived at the House with him at the Time.

556 *Is he still the Governor of the Workhouse?*

No, he is not.

A great many of those that came after you had remonstrated died?

Yes.

Where does Govier live?

He lives at Bridgwater; he is a Sail Maker.

Did the Persons who came in eat of this Gruel also?

Yes.

Diarrhoea is not infectious, is it?

Not in a general Way. I think the Health is very much injured by coming into such a confined House, and that they had taken the Disease. The Children were lying Five and Six in a Bed.

The House was too confined?

Too thickly populated; we had the Children Four and Six in a Bed.

The Illness might have arisen from other Causes than the Gruel?

I think the Gruel was the immediate Cause. Their Health was injured by being brought into so confined a House, where were so many diseased Persons.

Was there any other Disease prevailing?

No; it was principally Cases of Diarrhoea. There were also some old Persons, such as there always are in Workhouses.

The Diet Table is one of the Diet Tables recommended by the Poor Law Commissioners, is it not?

I believe so.

Was not the Medical Attendant allowed to prescribe what he liked for Infants under Seven Years of Age, and for aged People above Sixty, in that Diet Table?

I never read the Diet Table. I am not aware whether there is any such Reservation. I believe if

they order any Comforts for old People in the House that has been occasionally attended to.

Has not that been always attended to?

Not always.

In what Instances has it not been attended to?

I recollect that I have said to the Master I should like these Children not to take the Gruel, but to see whether they would not do better on Bread and Butter, but they have gone on in that Way daily.

If you had looked at the Diet Table you would have seen that the Medical Officer was entitled to order what he thought fit for the old People and the young; were not you aware of that?

I did that occasionally myself.

Have you for old People and young Children made an Alteration in the Diet Table of your own Authority?

I have latterly, I think.

Why did you not in the first instance?

I do not think I was in attendance when the Diarrhoea commenced.

You came to the Belief that the Diarrhoea was owing to the Gruel; and with respect to the old People and the Children you had the Power to change the Diet; why did you not immediately on believing that change their Diet?

I did not know that I had Power to order them any thing I wished. I knew I could order little Things for them; I thought I could not alter the Diet of the House generally. Certainly I might have altered it for One Individual, or Two, or Three; given them some Sugar in their Gruel, or given them a little Bread and Butter, if I thought fit.

Did you not know that you had the Power at once to change the whole Diet if you thought fit, if the Individual was sick?

I believed I had some Power, but to what Extent I did not know; I did not think that I had the Power to alter the Diet in the House generally

557 *As a Professional Man, do you think yourself justified in undertaking the Charge of any Patients where you had not a Right to prescribe the Diet that was necessary for them?*

I think I had a Right to do so certainly; we had an undoubted Right to do so.

Did you make any Complaint, when you exercised that Right, that your Instructions were not followed?

I have frequently found the Mistress of the Workhouse had not attended strictly to my Orders; I have asked the Reason, and she answered that she could not do it without the Permission of the Committee.

Did you report that to the Board of Guardians?

No.

Can you state the Name of any One Case in which that happened by Name?

No, I cannot, by Name.

Did that strike you as an Omission likely to have bad Consequences?

It did; and I mentioned it to the Master once.

Did you not think it right and necessary to report to the Board of Guardians when you found the Mistress not following the Course which you thought essential to the Health of the Persons whom you had under your Care?

I did not, because I mentioned it to the Committee myself frequently, and Mr. King also.

When you found that the Visiting Committee paid no Attention to your Complaint, did you not think it necessary to complain to the Board?

The Complaint was attended to after a short Time.

The Complaint you made was not immediately attended to, you say?

No; I had no Opportunity but once a Week to apply to them.

Had you not an Opportunity each Week to apply to the Board of Guardians if you thought fit?

Yes; but I did not think it necessary when I had mentioned it to the Visiting Committee.

Though the Visiting Committee had neglected to attend to your Complaint?

We were not aware of that; we do not attend the Board on every Occasion.

You found that your Orders were not complied with?

Yes; in several Instances.

Notwithstanding that you never thought it necessary to make a Complaint to the Board of Guardians?

Only through the Committee. I concluded that the Board would not sanction it. They have sent frequently to request my Attendance in the Workhouse to meet the Visiting Committee to make my Report.

You did not attend the Board of Guardians?

Never on that Subject.

You would take it for granted that if you communicated that which you thought right, and they said they should report it to the Board of Guardians, they would do so?

Yes.

You have said that the Moment a written Complaint was made by Mr. King of the Dietary it was altered?

Yes; I believe it was in the course of a few Days.

When they returned to that which you considered a mischievous Diet, and bad Consequences ensued, you made Complaint of it to the Visiting Committee?

Yes.

Was it remedied again immediately?

Yes, I believe it was, very soon after.

558 *What was the Alteration made in the Dietary?*

We gave them Rice and Milk instead of Gruel.

Did they stop the Gruel altogether on one Occasion?

I believe the whole was stopped.

Do you think in a Case of Life and Death you did sufficient in telling the Visiting Committee that you thought there should be an Alteration in the Diet?

That was my Impression, that the Visiting Committee met me to receive my Report, and as I made the Report to them when they were going to the Board Room, I thought I had done my Duty.

Did you meet the Visiting Committee the Day that the Board of Guardians met?

Yes, always; they met and then went to the Board Room.

Can you tell in what Form you made this Complaint to the Visiting Committee?

I do not recollect the precise Words.

Did you tell them those People were suffering very much from the Diet, and it was essentially necessary the Diet should be altered?

I did, or Words to that Effect.

Had you repeatedly told them that during those Weeks in October?

I am not clear as to Dates, but during the Time I attended I can say confidently I had.

You attended during Four Months?

Yes.

Was that during the whole of those Four Months?

Not the whole, perhaps.

When did you begin attending?

I think in the End of October.

It was not in the End of October the Gruel was left off?

I may be wrong as to the Dates; I could have been prepared with the Dates if I had known the Subject of my Examination, but I have not got my Book with me.

What Book could you have referred to to give you Certainty as to Dates?

I could refer to the Weekly Return for the Week in question.

Inasmuch as this Complaint was made during the Prevalence of a certain Disease, you could by reference to your Book know the Period at which you made this Complaint?

I suppose my weekly Return would correct me, or pretty nearly.

In the former Part of your Examination you stated that this was going on for Three Weeks before the Alteration of the Dietary in consequence of Mr. King's Letter?

That is what I fear I am wrong in.

Was the Diarrhoea going on, and did you make

Complaint of the Gruel producing it for Three Weeks previous to Mr. King's having made that Application to the Board of Guardians?

I certainly did some Time, but I am not prepared to say what Time.

That Complaint was dated the 25th of October 1836; was it previous to that that you had found Fault with the Diet?

It must have been, certainly. I have not the Date of the Letter.

It is during that Period you believe that Death arose from Diarrhoea, occasioned in consequence of the Use of Gruel, and of your Complaints not having been attended to?

I do not mean to say that all the Deaths occurred in Three Weeks.

559 *Did any Deaths which occurred in consequence of the Gruel occur during the Three Weeks which preceded Mr. King's Application in consequence of which the Diet was changed?*

I cannot answer as to Dates; Mr. King I am sure will be able to do it quite satisfactorily.

Did Mr. King attend them at the Time?

Yes; he went through the House with me, and made a Report to the Board; and every Communication went through him to the Board. I never wrote to the Board but on the Occasion when I state the Diet was altered, and that the Inhabitants were daily improving.

He compiled the Register of Deaths during that Period from his own Observation?

Yes.

You still adhere to the Statement you have made, that a considerable Number of Deaths took place in consequence of Diarrhoea?

Yes.

And that that Diarrhoea was produced by the Gruel, which was persevered in notwithstanding your Remonstrance?

That is not exactly my Statement; but that the Diarrhoea was produced by the Gruel, and that it continued till some of the People were worn out.

And that that Gruel was continued after you had made Remonstrances?

For a short Time.

It was not continued long after your Remonstrances?

I am not able to recollect exactly how long.

Two or Three Weeks?

I have said Two or Three Weeks.

Supposing the Two or Three Weeks had not elapsed, would that have made a Difference as to their Deaths, or the Deaths of any of those Persons, in your Opinion?

I think their Deaths were owing to that; I can attribute them to no other Cause.

You complained repeatedly to the Visiting Committee?
Yes.

How often in the Week did you see the Visiting Committee?

Only once a Week.

Repeated Complaints to the Visiting Committee had been made, and they were made not more frequently than once a Week?

No; I should imagine not more than that.

Was there Complaint made to the Matron?

Yes, repeatedly.

Supposing the Visiting Committee had reported it to the Guardians, and the Guardians had made an immediate Alteration in the Diet, you are of opinion that the Illness of some of those Persons would have been stopped?

I am.

Can you point out the Names?

I cannot.

Would you apply that Observation to Infants or adult Persons, between Six teen and Sixty, or above Sixty?

It affected both the old People and the Infants.

You believe that Mr. King did represent it to the Board?

I so understood.

Did you complain to the Visiting Committee, or did Mr. King?

Both of us.

You both complained to the Visiting Committee?

Both of us did.

560 *He also communicated to the Board?*

Yes.

Do you attend the present Workhouse?

No.

Who attends the present Workhouse?

A Gentleman of the Name of Ward.

Is he a Person lately come into Bridgwater?

Yes. *Can you state the Names of any of the Visiting Committee to whom you made this Representation?*

No, I cannot; they were changed every Week.

Cannot you recollect the Names of the Gentlemen to whom you represented that Persons were dying of this Disease every Week, and who took no Notice of that Representation?

I cannot.

Did you not think it very strange that they should take no Notice of your Representation?

I did think it very strange.

Were you acquainted with the Guardians who attended?

I knew a great many of them.

Do you know several of the ex-officio Guardians?

Yes.

And several of those elected Guardians?

Yes.

Some of them were Members of the Visiting Committee?

Yes, certainly they were.

Do you recollect whether Mr. Bouverie was ever one of the District Visiting Committee?

I never saw him there.

Mr. Strangways?

No.

Mr. Meade King?

I think he may have been there; but I cannot say.

How many Guardians were there altogether?

About Forty-six.

How many of those attend weekly?

Generally about Thirty, I should think.

Of how many of those did the Visiting Committee consist?

I am not prepared to state that. Of about Half a Dozen, perhaps.

They were changed every Week?

Yes.

Was the Diarrhoea at the Period you have been speaking of confined entirely

to the House, or was it in the Town P

I had very few Cases of Diarrhoea; scarcely any in the Country; a few Cases in the Town.

It was not a prevalent Disorder at the Time in the Neighbourhood?

It was not, in my Practice.

Did you ever taste the Gruel?

I have done.

Could you discover any thing in it which should cause this Disorder:?

No; I thought it always tasted poor and disagreeable, but I could not tell from what Cause.

561 *Did there appear plenty of Oatmeal in it?*

Yes.

Oatmeal is of a very purgative Quality, is it not?

Yes.

Probably in that Country the People are not accustomed to that Diet?

I fancy they are not.

Probably the Effect would be very different as to those who were accustomed to use it, and those who were not?

Certainly; in many Counties they use it very largely.

Then their Bowels would get accustomed to it?

Probably they might.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry on the Operation of the
Poor Law Amendment Act.

Day 1 12 June 1838

Evidence of Robert Underdown, p 525; Baruch Toogood p 532; John Evered Poole,p 544

Edited by Tony Woolrich 22/04/2021

24

The Witness is directed to withdraw.

Ordered, That this Committee be adjourned to
Thursday next Twelve o'Clock.