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Die Luno , 2° Julii 1838 .

The Lord WHARNCLIFFE in the Chair .

Evidence on the Operation of the Poor Law
Amend ment Act .

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

WHERE do you live ?

At Bridgwater .

Do you carry on any Business there ?

I am a Wine Merchant at present .

How long have you been resident at Bridgwater ?

I was born there , but left at the Age of
Twenty Years . I was employed in the Trinity
Service , erecting Lighthouses , and then in the
East India Company ' s Service ; I then returned
to Bridgwater about Nineteen Years since .

*You were in the East Indies in the Company ' s
Service ?*

Yes ; erecting Lighthouses , and
manufacturing Machinery generally ,

*Your Business at Bridgwater is now that of a
Wine Merchant ?*

Yes ; I retired from Business , but in
consequence of the Failure of the great East
India Houses of Agency I engaged in Business
again , being called upon to do so .

You are a Guardian of the Bridgwater Union ?

I am not at present ; I was last Year .

When were you elected ?

I received Notice of my Election on the 30th
of March 1837 .

How long did you remain ?

I remained a Twelvemonth ; until last March.

*You were a Member of the Board of Guardians in
the Months of May and June 1837 ?*

I was .

*Do you remember in the Month of May the
Medical Persons of the Union being ordered to attend
the Board for the Purpose of stating to them the new
Division of the Districts ?*

I do remember it .

*Can you state how far those Persons were asked to
give their Opinion as to the Districts , and also as to
the Salaries that were attached to the Districts ?*

The Medical Men were directed to attend a
Committee , not the Board of Guardians ; and I
was not a Member of that Committee .

Therefore you do not know what passed ?

I do not , except as I heard .

Were you present subsequently when the new

Districts and the new Salaries were fixed ?

I was .

*Was there any Division or Difference of Opinion
in the Board upon that Occasion ?*

I do not recollect whether it came to a
Division , but there was a very strong Difference
of Opinion ; I recollect stating my own Opinion
very strongly upon the Subject .

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Upon what Subject ?

Of the Inadequacy of the Allowance to the
Medical Men .

On what Ground did you state that ?

I conceived that if the Medical Men were not
fairly paid it would be impossible for them to
pay that Attention to the Poor which they
required .

Why did you think they were inadequately paid ?

I scarcely know , any more than the Common
Sense View of the Case . They were paid at the
Rate of from 50l . to a smaller Sum ; I forget
what now ; but my own Experience induced me
to believe that that was a very inadequate
Payment . I hope I shall not be out of place in
saying that I am not prepared for an
Examination on this Subject , not expecting it ;
but I will give the best Information I can .

*Your Motive for advocating larger Salaries was ,
that you did not think it possible the Medical Men
could attend upon the Poor at those small Allowances
?*

I felt assured they could not .

*Were you present at the Board of Guardians on
the 2d of June 1837 when a Letter was received from
the Medical Officers ?*

I really do not recollect ; a Reference to the
Minute Book will show . I do not recollect by the
Date ; if the Subject of the Letter was mentioned
I could state whether I was present .

*The Subject of the Letter was the Inadequacy of
the Salaries ; and it was signed by the other Medical
Men in Bridgwater ?*

I remember being present ; I remember the
Letter .

*Was there a very great Difference of Opinion on
the Conduct of the Medical Officers ?*

The Chairman of the Day , Mr . Warry , made
some very strong Observations . He said he
looked at a Document of that Sort in the same
Light as he would on a Beggar approaching him

, putting a Pistol to his Head , and demanding 6d . ; and he threw the Letter very offensively on the Table . I rose on that , and stated that it was out of Course for a Member to use Language at that Board which he would not use in the Light of Heaven in the Presence of the Gentle men who wrote the Letter.

Was there a good deal of Discussion upon it ? .

There was a good deal of warm Discussion . .

Were there Imputations made upon that Occasion against the Medical Persons ?

Not the smallest in regard to their Medical Character . I particularly inquired whether there was any Objection to the Manner in which they had performed their Duty ; that was admitted to be unexceptionable .

Was there any thing said about its being Conspiracy and Combination ?

Such Language was used ; and I remonstrated against it as being improper and inapplicable to the Occasion .

Do you recollect whether you had a Division that Day upon the Subject ?

I cannot recollect . Was there any thing said in respect of sending a Reply to that Letter ?

No , there was not . I believe there was no Division , but I cannot swear it .

If there were warm Expressions on the one side , there were warm Expressions on the other , were there not ?

Warm Expressions on one side generally call out warm Expressions on the other ; but the Attack proceeded from the Chairman .

At the End of the Day did not the Chairman say something of this Sort , that there had been a great deal of warm Language , and he hoped it would not go further , or be mentioned out of the Room ? .

I do not recollect that he did ; I do not recollect any Circumstance of that Sort . I recollect , on taking my Seat at the Board , perhaps on the Second or Third Day I attended , the Chairman reminding us that it was a Secret Board ,

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and that we should rather endeavour to think aloud than to speak out , and I Mr . John Bowen immediately protested against that Doctrine , and said I felt bound to give the Persons whom I represented , and I represented 9,000 Persons at that Board , an Account of every thing I did , and to take any Means I chose of bringing the Business of that Board before the Public .

You do not recollect Mr . Warry saying any thing on the Subject at the Close of that Meeting on the 2d of June ?

I should say I have a distinct Recollection that he did not , for I left the Board with the Impression of his having behaved very improperly .

You do not recollect having refused to comply with that Request ?

I heard no such Suggestion at that Time .

You do not recollect having refused to comply with the Suggestion ?

Certainly not .

Did you stay till the breaking up of the Board that Day ?

Yes , I did . Mr . Warry threw the Paper down offensively on the Table , and that was the Commencement of this warm Language .

Did you report out of Doors the warm Language which had passed in the Board ?

I have not the smallest Doubt that I did , but I have no immediate Recollection of it .

Do you recollect to the contrary ?

No ; it was the common Subject of Conversation .

Did you ever report it to Mr . Toogood ?

I have not the smallest Doubt I must have done so ; he was a Friend of mine .

He was a particular Friend of yours ?

I have known him these Twenty Years . He was very kind to my poor Father and Mother when I had not the Means of supplying them with that Medical Attendance I wished . I consider myself under Obligations to him , which I think I shall not forget

You were there on the 9th of June ?

I was .

There was another Letter read from the Medical Gentlemen on that Occasion ?

Yes .

Did that produce Excitement like the former one ?

It did not . I do not recollect there was much offensive Matter . At the first reading of that Letter , I remember rising myself after it was read , and saying I had expressed myself warmly on the previous Day , but that I was very desirous of seeing Things brought to a favourable Conclusion to all Parties ; and that if I had said any thing which could be construed into a Cause of Offence to any Party I was sorry for it .

There was a Letter agreed to upon that Occasion , and written in answer to that Letter which was read

on the 9th of June ?

There was .

There was this Paragraph , " The Board cannot help lamenting the Tone of your Communications , little calculated to promote that cordial Co - operation with the Board on which the Well - being of the Poor and the Interest of all concerned so essentially depend . " Do you recollect any Discussion upon that Paragraph ?

There was a Discussion and Division upon it; I do not recollect the Numbers , but nearly equal. It was considered that that Paragraph was offensive to the Medical Gentlemen ; and after they had expressed a Wish , and their Friends , to avoid any thing offensive , it was considered desirable to leave out that Paragraph.

Can you state who proposed that Paragraph ?

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Yes .

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Who was it ?

The Letter was written by Mr . Poole , an ex officio Guardian and Magistrate , now dead ; he brought the Letter with him .

With that Paragraph in it ?

Yes .

Did you object to that Paragraph ?

I did .

Was the Discussion a warm one upon it ?

I think not ; I do not recollect that there was any thing offensive in that Discussion .

You stated that you Objected to that after the Medical Men had shown a Disposition to Conciliation ; in what had they shown that Wish for Conciliation ?

I took it from the Tone of their Letter , and from their Offer to attend to the Poor gratuitously until some other Arrangement could be made , while they clearly had the Power to force their own Terms upon the Board for some Time . I thought they stood in the Situation of moderate Men .

You mean in the Letter of the 6th ?

I do not recollect the Date of the Letter .

You mean the Second Letter ?

It is impossible to forget the Conversation I had with the Medical Men ; I pressed Moderation upon them , and I thought they

were disposed to act moderately .

Do you mean the Expressions used to you personally , or any Expressions signified to the Board ?

I believe the Board felt , at the Time , that there was no Disposition to speak or to act in an intemperate Manner .

You stated that you thought it unfair to the Medical Men to put this Paragraph into the Letter in answer , particularly after they had displayed a Disposition to Reconciliation ?

That was my Opinion .

How had they shown to the Board any Disposition to Reconciliation ?

I can only say by their general Conduct ; that was my Opinion upon the Matter .

And particularly from the last Paragraph , by which they offered to attend gratuitously ?

I considered it so ; they clearly had it in their Power to make their own Bargain .

Did you hear of a Meeting being held at Bridgwater by the Medical Men ?

Yes .

Was that before the 9th of June , or subsequently to it ?

I cannot say .

Did you ever hear any Discussion in the Board relative to the Meeting , and the Resolutions which had passed there ?

There was a good deal said on all those Matters , but I do not recollect that there were any Resolutions come to .

Were you present at the Election of Mr . Ward as the Medical Officer of the Bridgwater District ?

I was ; and that was the last Time I ever attended the Board of Guardians .

Mr . King was also a Candidate upon that Occasion ?

He was .

There was a Disposition in the Board to re - elect Mr . King ?

There was .

And he was called in ?

He was .

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Was he questioned with respect to his adhering to the Resolution of not Mr . John Bowen . meeting the Medical Gentlemen , or the Refusal to hold Intercourse with or to recognise any Practitioner called into the Town ?

He was ; and he distinctly declared that he should adhere to the Resolution .

In consequence of that was his Name still put to the Vote as a Medical Officer ?

His Name was put to the Vote , but not in consequence of that , I presume .

Did you approve of that part of the Resolution of the Medical Men that they would have no Intercourse with any Medical Practitioner brought into the Town ?

That is a large Subject of Opinion , on which I can hardly give an Answer , unless I am permitted to go into the Reason for such Answer . The Medical Men of the Neighbourhood have gratuitously attended the Infirmary for Twenty - five Years , and have given up a large Portion of Time , and I think they had a Claim upon the Public which would justify an Expectation of a Preference to their Services , provided they did not require any extravagant Terms ; and under those Circumstances I considered them justified .

You think they were justified from the Notion that those other Persons were to be brought in to interfere with their Practice ?

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After Mr . King ' s Name had been put up as a Candidate was there any Division upon it ?

I think there was an Amendment moved that Mr . Ward ' s Name should be substituted .

Then the Board voted either for Mr . Ward or for Mr . King ?

I am not quite certain that that was the Form ; I only know the Fact that they were both voted for , and that Mr . Ward was chosen and Mr . King rejected .

By what Sort of Majority was Mr . Ward elected over Mr . King ?

Very small ; I cannot state the Number .

You have stated that the Opinions of the Board were very much divided on all those Medical Point ? .

: Very much divided . -

That , you say , was the last Time of your attending the Board ?

The Impression upon my Mind is , that it was . I was so disgusted with the Introduction of Mr . Ward , and some other Things that I considered very improper , I never attended afterwards , or at all events not above once afterwards .

Was your Reason for not attending the Board the Treatment which you thought the Medical Officers had received , or any other Reason ?

That was the principal Reason ; but the general Proceedings of the Board were such , if I may venture to use such an Expression , as I could not sanction .

In what respect were they such as you could not sanction ?

I could not sanction their Course of proceeding , both in respect to the Medical Me , and the Treatment of the Poor in the House , which was such as I had frequently protested against , without being able to obtain a sufficient Alteration in the Diet and the general Mode of treating the Poor .

What did you object to in the Treatment of the Poor in the House at that Time ?

I was appointed a Member of the Visiting Committee very soon after taking my Place .

Of how many did that Visiting Committee consist ?

I cannot state .

Can you tell the Names of the Members of it ?

I can tell the Names of the greater Part of them ; the Minute Books will show the Names .

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There were only a certain Number attended ; there were some appointed who never attended .

Will you state the Names of those who usually attended ?

The Reverend Mr . Ruddock ,

Mr . William Pitman King — he attended pretty regularly .

Mr . Richard King ?

He attended sometimes .

Mr . Robert Everett ?

I never saw him attend .

Mr . T . W . Inman ?

He sometimes attended .

Mr . John Bowen ?

I attended every Committee Day .

You met once a week , did you not ?

I believe there were some extra Meetings . I

believe I was never absent from the Board of Guardians or from the Committee unless when I was confined to my Bed .

Mr . James Somers ?

Mr . Somers attended .

The Reverend John West ?

He attended .

You never attended the Visiting Committee after you ceased to attend the Board of Guardians ?

I never did .

Every Member of the Board of Guardians may visit the House as often as he thinks fit , whether he belongs to the Visiting Committee or not , may he not ?

I conceive so .

He may insert his Report in the Book of every thing he sees ?

Yes , I conceive so .

Every Magistrate of the County has the same Power , has he not ?

I believe he has .

He may inquire whether the Bye Laws are carried into execution , and into . the general Management of the Poor , may he not ?

I cannot speak to the Particulars of the Act .

It appears , upon reference to the Book , that your Name is not inserted among the Guardians present any Day after the 28th of July ?

I believe I did not attend after that .

It is presumed you continued to discharge your Duties as a Visitor up to the End of July ?

Yes . It is to be understood that the Visiting Committee appointed a Visitor for the Week ; they took it by Turn to visit for One Week ; and it is considered that the House is particularly under the Superintendence of that person who is the weekly Visitor .

Were not there Three weekly Visitors ?

No ; only One for the Week .

Three were to be the Quorum ?

Yes . The Committee met every Board Day , and then Three were the Quorum ; but One went round the House on other Days .

Did he sign the Book with the Queries ? ,

Yes ; as one of the Visiting Committee . On the Board Day the Visitor for the Week signed it ; he did not do that on any other Day he visited

You were understood to say that it was the Custom for the Visiting Committee to agree

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Committee to agree amongst themselves that One of the Visiting Committee, should pay daily Visits during the Week to the Workhouse ?

That they should pay Visits to the Workhouse .

Every Day ?

Not every Day .

That Person was the Person who signed the Book every Week ?

Yes , generally ; but there are Exceptions to that .

Were you ever that Person who visited the House?

Yes .

Does your Name appear upon the Book as a Visitor ?

Yes . If your Lordship will turn to the 16th of June my Name will appear there ; I recollect that Date .

What Part of the Management of the Workhouse , as it respects the Poor , was it that you objected to so strongly at the Time you left the Board ?

I objected to the general Proceedings of the Board .

You stated that you objected to the Management of the Poor in the Work house at the Time you left the Board ; what was the particular Part of that Management which induced you to take that Step ?

I considered that they were materially under - fed .

In what Way do the Poor in Bridgwater usually live ; what Description of Food do they generally live upon ?

I find a very great Difficulty in answering that Question . I only know that on the old Diet of the House , while I acted as the Overseer for nearly Four Years , the Poor were healthy , and apparently contented and cheerful ; and that under the new Dietary of the House , when it was introduced , they became very ill , and a great Number of them died .

It is comparing the new with the old Dietary in the House which makes you think that they were not sufficiently fed ?

Yes ; and my general Acquaintance with the Poor .

If you have a general Acquaintance with the Poor in that Neighbourhood , you can state in what Way they usually feed their Families ?

They some of them prefer one Thing and some another ; some Potatoes and some Bread ,

some Rice ; I do not think there is any general Description of Food used .

Are they in the habit of using Meat ?

Yes ; the Labourers of the Town generally eat Meat .

What are their Wages ?

A considerable Portion of them are Men who work about the Quays , hobbling , as it is called , which means bringing Vessels up and down the River . Their Wages are very irregular ; but I should think perhaps 12s . or 13s . a Week may be on the Average .

Those eat Meat , and their Families also ?

Yes , as often as they can get it ; perhaps Two or Three Times a Week .

Do you mean Bacon or fresh Meat ?

Any thing they can get , according to the Price .

With respect to Agricultural Labourers , what is the usual Rate of Wages for that Description of Persons in that District ?

The Assistant Commissioner wrote to the Clerk of the Board of Guardians , desiring him to get the Board collectively to return what , in their Opinion , was the Rate of Wages in the District . The Board of Guardians agreed on a Return of the Rate of Wages at 7s . a Week and Three Pints of Ale or Cider in the Day , that is Persons who work by the Day ; but they returned the Wages of Persons working by Job at , I think , 9s . or 10s . I have a Copy of the Return with me . I have likewise prepared a Paper which I thought might serve to elucidate this Matter , if your Lordships are pleased to receive it . It contains an Account of the Statistics of the Union , the Number of Acres , the Amount of Poor Rate , and so on , under the old System .

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Is it made out from Information you procured yourself , or from what Documents ?

I will name the Documents from which the whole of it is taken . The Number of Acres I procured from the Population Abstract ; the Number of Square Miles I deduced from the same Document ; the Number of Acres and the Population is from the decennial Returns to Parliament ; the Number of Agricultural Labourers from the same ; the Labourers employed in Labour not Agricultural , from the same Authority ; the annual Value of Real Property assessed in 1815 , from the same Authority . The next is the Amount of Poor Rate ;

that is on the Authority of the Poor Law Commissioners ; they published the Average for Three Years , I think , in their Second Annual Report ; Persons of all Ages receiving Relief from the Union 2 , 624 , of whom 1 , 019 are Children , that is from the Records of the Board since the Board was established ; average Wages of Day Work of able - bodied Labourers , as returned by the Board of Guardians to the Assistant Commissioner 17th April 1837 , 7s . per Week .

Replace the following with a page image

The same is read as follows : STATEMENT of the aggregate Population , Extent , & c . & c . of the Forty Parishes comprising

the Bridgwater Union . (Fractions are omitted .) Number of Acres

87 , 300 Square Miles

Population in 1831 , 39 Rural Parishes , 20 , 759

Do . Bridgwater , 7 , 807 Agricultural Labourers Twenty Years of Age and upwards in 1831

2 , 399 Labourers employed in Labour not Agricultural

795 Men employed in Manufacture Annual Value of Real Property as assessed in 1815 : - 39 Rural Parishes , I

155 , 9501 . ; Bridgwater , 29 , 2351 .

Expended on the Poor , Average of Three Years before the Formation of the

he } £13 , 387

Union : - 39 Rural Parishes , 10 , 4711 . ;

Bridgwater , 2 , 9161 . . - 5 Persons of all Ages receiving Relief 25th December 1837 , of whom 1 , 019 were 594

Children under Sixteen Years of Age relieved with their Parents - S Average Wages at Day Work of able - bodied Labourers , as returned by the Board of Guardians to the Assistant Commissioner , 17th April 1837 ,

7s . per Week and Three Pints of Ale or Cider per Day . The Sums returned as " expended on the Poor " in the Thirty - nine Rural Parishes do not amount to ls . 4½d . in the Pound on the Assessment of 1815 . But even this is materially overstating the comparative Amount ; for assuming the Labourers above Twenty Years of Age to be underpaid to the Amount of 2 d . per Day , and Females and Persons under Twenty to be under - paid to the Amount of 1d . per Day , the Sum so withheld from the Labouring Poor exceeds the Amount of Poor Rate . "

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I have another Paper , which was made out by the Clerk of the Union , to whom I applied for a Copy .

This is made out from Returns sent up by the Board of Guardians to the Board of Commissioners ?

Replace the following with a page image

It is .

The same is delivered in and read , and is as follows . AVERAGE WAGES per Day in this Union , including Harvest and other profitable Seasons .

ABLE - BODIED AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS .

FOR WORKING OR GLOVING

IN MANUFACTORIES . *

Men .

Women .

Boys

under 16 .

Day Work ,

Task Work .

Day Work .

Day Work .

Women .

Girls .

1s . 2d . and

Three Pints

of Ale or

Cider .

Supposed to be

about 1s . 8d .

with Ale and

Cider also .

} 8d .

14d .

L

6d .

3d .

*** There is no Manufactory in the Union worthy of Notice . There is a little Silk spun at**

Bridgwater ; the Earnings are as above .

Dated 17th April 1837 .

According

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According to that , an able - bodied Labourer will earn at Day Work 1s . 2d . Mr . John Bowen . with Ale or Cider , and at Task Work 1s . 8d . a Day with Ale or Cider ; what Food were they in the habit of supporting their Families on ?

I believe their Families received some Support from the Parishes generally ; but I am afraid their Food was not always sufficient , and very coarse .

Supposing they had no Rate of Allowance , what Sort of Food , and what Quantities of Food , were they in the habit of getting ?

I never could understand how a poor Man could live on 78 . a Week ; I have tried many Times , but cannot understand it .

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. If you cannot make out that , how do you know that the People are not fed in the Workhouse better than they are out of it ?

Judging from their Appearance . Men out of Work can find Means which may not be always fair of improving their Diet .

You were Overseer of the Poor under the old Law at Bridgwater ?

I was .

The Persons you had to attend to as Overseer of that District were not Rural Labourers ?

They were not ; but I have , as a Contractor for Road - making , had something to do with Rural Labourers ; I have always paid them above the Wages of the Country ; I never considered that a Man should be paid less than 10s . a Week , and never paid him less .

Can you state , from your Knowledge of the Workhouse , whether the Quantity of Food they obtained in the Workhouse was more or less than they usually had when they subsisted themselves ?

It is necessary to consider that there were scarcely any able - bodied Labourers in the Bridgwater Workhouse ; I never recollect more than Two at any one Time ; the Inmates of the Workhouse were Persons far advanced in Life , generally ; the Diet of younger Persons cannot fairly be brought into comparison with theirs . I have the Means of stating to your Lordships the Expences of keeping the Poor under the old System .

Have you any Means , from your own Knowledge

, of comparing the Quantity and Quality of the Food an able - bodied Labourer in Bridgwater , if driven into the Workhouse , gets there at present , with what he gets out of the Work . house ?

I have not ; I never made such a Comparison.

Does not it appear to you , that in order to make a fair Comparison how far they are sufficiently fed in the Workhouse it would be necessary to know how they are fed out of the Workhouse ?

I think nothing can be more fallacious than to endeavour to ascertain in Ounces how much a Man in and out of the Workhouse eats .

You say they have Meat Three Times a Week out of the Workhouse ?

I mean to say Men who have not large Families may have Meat Three Times a Week .

What is the Amount of the Family you call a large Family ?

That must depend upon the Health of the Family , and upon the Age of the Children ; some Men find a much greater Difficulty in supporting Three Children than others do Four or Five ; healthy Children can work at an earlier Age than others . I had a Brother about Twelve Months younger than myself ; he was able to go to work , and help to maintain himself earlier than I was ; I could not get any thing towards my Living till I was Eleven ; I believe he commenced at an earlier Age .

Supposing the Children about the average Number , what Quantity of Meat would the Family get on the Wages you have stated ?

I cannot answer that ; a kind Employer may make Four or Five Children a small Family , by employing them at an earlier Age than usual , while a Master not entering into their Feelings and Interests may occasion a small Family to be a great Burthen .

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What do you call , in point of Numbers , a large Family ?

I find it difficult to say ; a Family ranging from Four Children to Eight or Nine or Ten ; any thing above Four Children .

Of course the Means of maintaining those Children by more or by less must depend on a great Number of other Circumstances ?

Yes .

Taking the Average , how much Meat , generally speaking , does a Labourer having Four Children consume in his House in a Week ?

I am utterly unable to answer that Question .

What Means have you of comparing the Quantity of Food they use in the Workhouse to that they use out of it , so as to enable you to say they are insufficiently fed ?

I am comparing the Condition of the Poor on the present System with the Condition of the Poor under the old System .

How do you know that they were not better fed in the Workhouse under the old System than they were in their own Houses ?

I do not know that they were not ; I take for granted there were none in that House that could be fed out of it ; I take it in that Way . People in the House were better fed than they would have been out of it , or they would not be there . If your Lordships will allow me to give a Statement of the Paupers that were in the House that would simplify the Matter .

You say there were some able bodied Men in the House under the old System ?

Yes .

Were those Men better or worse fed in the Workhouse under the old System than they could have been on the Wages obtained out of it ?

We never took an able - bodied Man into the Workhouse if he could obtain Wages out of it ; if taken in , he was kept a very short Time , Two or Three Weeks , or perhaps Four .

During these Three or Four Weeks was his Allowance in Food greater than a Man who could earn Wages would have ?

Certainly not .

You are sure of that ?

I am quite sure of that .

Supposing an able - bodied Man driven to the House , would the Food in the House have been better or worse than he could obtain out of it , supposing he obtained Wages of 7s . a Week ?

So much would depend on the particular Circumstances of the Man , I cannot answer that Question .

Supposing a Man with Four Children to earn Is . a Week , Is . 8d , a Day , at Task Work ; was the Quantity of Food given to his Wife and Children and himself greater in the House than he could have obtained for his 9s . out of it under the old System ?

It is impossible to answer that Question .

You had no Dietary at all under the old System ?

There was an understood Dietary , but it was never rigidly acted on .

Had they as much as they chose to eat ?

There was an understood Quantity ; I do not remember a single Instance of its being exceeded considerably .

What was that understood Quantity of Food ?

I cannot recollect that .

Was it in Writing ?

Yes , it was ; but I do not bear it in Mind .

Have you never ascertained what it was ?

I have ascertained the Expense of keeping the Poor Year by Year , for several Years ; but as to determining the relative Quantity of Meat or

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Bread , or any other Articles , I cannot . I have had no Means of comparing the Details Of the Dietary under the old System and under the new ; but I have the Cost of each .

What is the Cost of each ?

This paper is prepared very accurately , and will show for Seven Years , 1829 , 1830 , 1831 , 1832 , 1833 , 1834 , and 1835 . I introduced this Mode of arranging the Parish Account that the Parishioners might be enabled to understand and to check the Expenditure at all Times .

Is that your own Account ?

It is .

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nora :

Can you state how many Persons of whom you have taken the Average were grown - up Persons , and how many of them Children ?

By referring to another Document I can . In the Year 1830 , being desirous of ascertaining the Character and particular Circumstances of the People in the House , I took the Age of every Individual , and the Length of Time that he had been in the House ; and the List I now produce is the Result . The Total Number was Seventy - four . The Ages of Thirty Persons in the House at that Time averaged more than Seventy - four Years of Age ; those Thirty were more than Seventy Years of Age on the Average before they were admitted into the House . There were Four Idiots and Lunatics , Twenty - four Children , and Sixteen Persons of intermediate Ages ; but I believe at that Time there was no able - bodied Man in the House .

Those Persons who were of intermediate Ages were Cripples or diseased ? Yes ; this I took for my own Information at the Time . What do you mean by the intermediate Ages between Seventy as the greatest , and what as the lowest ?

There were Twenty - four Children generally up to Eleven ; there were Two Instances of Children of Twelve , but they were weakly Children , that could not be got out . Those

between Twelve and Seventy were mostly diseased in some way .

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This

The Statement is read as follows :

STATEMENT of the Inmates of the Bridgwater Workhouse 1830 - 31 , with their respective

Replace the following with a page image

Ages , the Length of Time they had been in the House , and their Age on entering the Workhouse .

Years of | Had been in the

House .

Age on entering the Workhouse .

Age .

Years . Months .

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Cane , Barbara

Watts , William

Nurton , John

Perry , Ann

Chinn , Ann

Jenkins

Nurton , Sarah

Bevin , John

Rousell , John

Webber , Robert

Walter , William

Noon , Thomas

Norse , James

Manchip , Jane

Sparrow , Margaret

578

Average Number of Persons in
the House , including the Go
vernor and Family - | 74

| 76 | 78 | 86

| 83 | 78 | 73

Average Expense of each person weekly , 3s . 21d . , Clothing excluded ; the weekly Expense on the old System was 2s . 11d . for each Person . From September 1836 to March 1837 the weekly Expenses of each on the new System ranged from 1s . 10 d . to 25 . 1 d . , being a Reduction of about 33 per Cent .

(Signed) J . Bowen .

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Among the Articles there are Malt , Cider , and Spirits as used ; were they allowed in the old Workhouse ?

Yes .

Is there any Malt , Cider , or Spirits allowed in the Workhouse now ?

Not any .

Do you think it is a proper Thing that Malt , Cider , or Spirits should be allowed to the Paupers in the House ?

I do . There were Thirty Persons of Seventy Years of Age ; they had a Pint of Beer every Day , and I think that highly necessary .

That could not have come to 541 . a Year ?

There was the Governor and his family , Six Persons , residing in the House .

You think it proper to allow them Cider and Spirits ; supposing the Malt and Table Beer allowed to the old People , do you think the Sums of 541 . , 43 . , 501 . 5 501 . , 551 . , 42 . , and 441 . should be expended on those Articles in the different Years ?

I have paid a great deal of Attention to the Expenditure during some Time , and I think it could not be safely reduced . That included the Wine and Spirits , in case of extra Nourishment required for the Persons who were ill ; and what Deductions should be made on that Account I do not know .

If you conceive , in a Country where they are in a habit of drinking Malt Liquor , that it is right Malt Liquor should be allowed , do you see any Reason , in a Country where they are in the habit of drinking Cider , why Cider should not be allowed ?

I think not . I should conceive that must depend upon the former Habits of the People , and the relative Prices of the Articles . If we

could buy a Hogshead of Cider for a smaller

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Sum than we could buy Malt and brew a Hogshead of Beer , Cider was used ; we could buy Cider at 30s . to 40s . a Hogshead .

Sometimes under 20s . , could not you ?

Sometimes .

Could Persons having 7s . a Week Wages , and having a Family of Seven Children , have afforded to buy for themselves Cider or Beer ?

I must advert again to the Fact that Thirty of the Inmates of the Workhouse were above Seventy Years of Age , and had no Means of purchasing a Cup of Beer or any thing else .

Supposing able - bodied Men admitted into the House , would they have this Allowance of Beer ?

That would depend upon the Character of the Men ; if they were Men who appeared desirous of taking advantage of any Work which offered they would have it , but if they were considered Skulkers they would not have it .

When their Masters employ them they have Three Pints of Beer a Day , have not they ?

Yes ,

They will then be doing Work , of course ?

Yes .

Were you the Overseer for those Years ?

I was the Overseer in 1829 and 1830 . The Magistrates were desirous of introducing a better System , and their Clerk called to ask me whether I would undertake the Duty , seeing it was an unpleasant Duty ; but they requested me to undertake it . There never had been till that Period a Publication of the Parish Accounts ; I brought them into that Form in which they could be presented to the Parish . That , I believe , was the first Attempt at publishing the Parish Accounts of Bridgwater . I was desirous to place them under the Inspection of the Parishioners , where they may see the Expense of every Article ; and they were called upon by Advertisement from the Overseers to make any Observations on the Expenditure .

By means of those Alterations did you reduce the Amount of Expenditure in the Workhouse , and to what Extent ?

I beg to observe that I served in 1829 in consequence of the Application I have already mentioned . I volunteered to serve in 1830 . The next Year I was chosen unanimously Churchwarden ; and , from my Two Years

Experience as Overseer , I again served a Third Year . A Part of the Fourth Year I served for another Gentleman .

Did you , in consequence of those Alterations you adopted , reduce the Expenditure of the Parish ?

I did .

To what Extent ?

I cannot say .

Was it to a considerable Extent ?

I do not think the Amount was considerable . I found so much Confusion in the old Accounts I declined going into them .

Do you know of your own knowledge whether the Expenditure in the House was reduced or not ?

I know it was reduced .

Can you state to what Extent it was reduced ?

No , I cannot ; there were no Documents existed before I came into the Office that could be readily referred to .

Then how do you know that you reduced it ? By reference to the rough Accounts which then existed .

How do you know that it was reduced at all if you cannot state to what Extent ?

"I know as a Rate - payer that I used to be called upon to pay larger Rates .

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There are other Things besides the Workhouse , such as Relief out of the Workhouse , for which Rates were raised ; but with respect to the House itself , have you the Means of stating to what Extent the Expenditure was reduced ?

No .

But upon the whole you know there was a Reduction ?

Yes . " I provided against confused Accounts for the future by establishing this Practice . The whole of the Expenses every Year after the Year I came into Office were regularly brought forward .

Those Expenses are of different Descriptions ; first , the Expense of Paupers in the House ; then the Expense of Establishment ; then the Pay for the Out paupers , which appears by far the largest Sum ; then you have Contingencies and other Expenses , which includes Law ?

Yes .

How do you know that the Decrease in the Rates was not in consequence of less Money being paid for the Out - door Paupers and those other Contingencies , and not to a Reduction of the

Expenses of the House ?

I can offer no Proof of it , except my own Conviction and my Understanding at the Time . It was supposed there had been Jobbing and Trickery formerly carried on in the House . The present Clerk of the Union , Mr . Under down , was the Assistant Overseer at the Time I was in Office , and he can speak more particularly . My Desire was to present the Accounts to the Parishioners in such a Manner as to bring them under their Control .

At the Time you were Overseer you were a Spirit Merchant ?

No .

When did you begin to be a Spirit Merchant ?

About Five Years since .

That would be in 1834 ?

Yes , thereabouts .

You are quite sure you did not supply the House with Spirits at that Time ?

I am quite sure of that .

You began the Wine and Spirit Business after the Failure of the Calcutta Banks ?

After the Failure of the House of Alexander and Company , and other Indian Houses ; but nothing would have induced me to supply any of those Articles .

You had nothing to do with the Supply of Malt or Cider or Spirits ?

Malt or Cider I never dealt in ; but the Quantity of Spirits would have been so small that it might have been supplied without my being aware of it .

You must have been aware whether the Parish were your Customers or not ?

Not to my Knowledge at that Time .

You must know who your Customers were ; were the Parish your Customers or not ?

I think I shall not be considered wanting in Respect to this Committee when I avow myself to have been as fully determined not to make my Office a Source of Profit as any Gentleman whatever .

Were the Parish , or not , Customers to you for Spirits ?

To the best of my Knowledge they were not ; but it is impossible for me to answer that Question decisively . I know that the Board of Guardians are at present .

You cannot tell whether they were at the Time you were Overseer ?

I doubt whether the Parish paid 31 . a Year for Spirits at that Time .

Have you the Means of dividing those Articles of Wine , Cider , and Spirits ?

I have not ; but Mr . Underdown may be able to do it .

Who attended to the Care of the Wine ?

The Assistant Overseer .

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Was he resident in the Workhouse ?

He was the Governor of the Workhouse ; and I laid down a rigid Rule , from which I never departed , that he might purchase Articles from whoever he pleased . I , or another Overseer , always examined that they were properly charged .

Who passed his Accounts ?

The Overseers and Churchwardens .

Did the Overseers and Churchwardens check the Quantity of Butcher ' s Meat and so forth , with the Names of the Persons who supplied it ?

I conceive not .

Were you able to know by any Means what Quantity of Butcher ' s Meat or other Food was the common Diet of the Workhouse ?

I must again say there was an understood Quantity ; but I believe the Assistant Overseer never weighed the Meat out to the Poor while I knew the House .

Do you mean an understood Quantity for their Consumption for the Week ?

Yes .

What was that Quantity ?

I cannot say .

So much a Head ?

I suppose it was so calculated . I have regularly attended the House myself , and frequently seen the People dine .

You cannot tell what Quantity of Meat per Head was allowed to each Pauper in the Workhouse ?

I cannot .

Nor of any other Thing ?

I cannot . I believe there never was a rigid Allowance ; if there was an Allowance it was not rigidly acted on .

Under those Circumstances were the Paupers in the House better fed or worse fed than Persons in their own Class out of the House ?

There are no Persons of their own Class out of the House ; they were generally taken in in an extreme Case to save them from starving .

Did you feed them , when in the House , as well or

better than they would have been fed , supposing them to have been well , and on full Wages ?

I cannot suppose them to have been well and on full Wages ; they were Persons upwards of Seventy Years of Age .

Comparing their Food with that of Persons who were well and on full Wages ; was the Allowance given to those in the Workhouse greater than that which Persons receiving full Wages out of the House would have received ?

If that Question were applied to a particular Age I might answer it .

Take the Case of able - bodied Men ?

I suppose the old People in the House had about the same as the able - bodied Men would have been able to get out of it .

Who was the Governor of the Workhouse at that Time ?

Mr . Underdown , the present Clerk . I considered it my Duty to keep those Persons comfortably , but not to permit any thing to be wasted .

Did you give them more than you thought was necessary to support them ?

Certainly not , in Health and Strength ; and the Result showed it was so .

You gave them Cider and Beer , dependent upon their Character , and not upon what was necessary to support them ?

I beg your Lordship ' s Pardon . I believe my Answer will be found to be that the old Persons generally received a Pint of Table Beer a Day . I was asked then , whether an able - bodied Man would receive that Allowance , and I stated , that if he was a Man of good Character he might be allowed a Pint of Table Beer , but that if there was the smallest Ground for believing that he was a Skulker he would not be allowed it .

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Do you not think it right to allow those Men of good Character more than those who were Skulkers ?

Undoubtedly .

You say you kept the People comfortable ; but you say there were no able bodied Persons in the House ?

Yes , I may say that .

Were there any Children under Sixteen Years of Age ?

There were Two Children of Twelve , One of Fifteen and One of Sixteen .

Were all the Men of Thirty - six , Thirty - four , Twenty - nine , Twenty - eight , Twenty - seven ,

and Twenty - six , Men who had met with Accidents ?

Between Fifty and Sixty ; there were Ten diseased ; One was an Idiot .

All able - bodied Paupers who applied you never took into the Workhouse , but gave them Relief out of it ?

Yes .

Was that an universal Rule ?

It was the general Rule ; and I do not recollect more than Two or Three Exceptions to it .

You never in those Days said to Paupers , “ No , we will not give you any Relief , but you may come into the Workhouse if you like ” ?

Yes ; that was said to several Persons .

Did they come into the Workhouse ?

No ; for that was never said when there was the smallest Chance of their coming into the Workhouse ; it was said only when we knew the Persons were Impostors .

You mean Persons who were Skulkers ?

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In every other Case , if the able - bodied Labourer got into Difficulties he had Money or Relief in Kind out of the Workhouse ?

Yes .

Did any Disposition exist then on the Part of the Labourers to go into the Workhouse ?

No ; a strong Disposition to the contrary . I know one Case of a Man being taken into the Workhouse , and excused from Work in consequence of his having been a respectable Man , the Son of a respectable Tradesman ; he had been in the Army , and became dissipated . He was so much affected by coming into the House I thought we had a Hope of saving him . He was kept there for some Weeks , and afterwards left the House , and is living very respectably as a Schoolmaster .

You never did apply the Workhouse as a Test of Destitution as it is now used ?

We did not apply it in the same way as at present ; it was always applied by us as a Test , not of Destitution , but of Imposition . In a small Community it is very easy to discover whether a Man is destitute .

Were any of those able - bodied Labourers continued any Length of Time on the Poor Rates out

of the House ?

I think not .

For a Year together ?

Those Men with large Families might have been so , but very few .

Do you mean that very few able - bodied Men continued to receive Relief out of the House for a Year ?

No , not a Year .

Do you believe a Labourer could support a large Family without some Assistance ?

I think the Porters in Bridgwater can do so .

Not Agricultural Labourers ?

No .

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They must either receive Relief or starve ?

Yes .

Did you not endeavour to find Employment for them before you afforded them Relief ?

We did .

You were understood to say that the independent Labourer improved his Livelihood by unfair Means ; did you refer to any particular Means ?

No ; I meant to say that Persons who were at large have Means of improving their Livelihood not in the Power of Persons under Restraint .

What is your Reason for saying that the Diet in the Workhouse now is not sufficient for the Paupers in it ?

The Death Book , I think , will show that .

You mean to say the Effect of the Gruel ?

The Effect of the Gruel and the Change of Diet .

Which brought on Diarrhæa ?

Yes .

Have you looked at the Amount of Deaths lately ?

I would beg to be understood as giving no Opinion upon the Diet used at present . I have not attended the Workhouse since June , and would wish not to enter into that .

Has there been any Alteration ?

The Diet was changed in May 1837 .

That was before you left the Board ?

Yes .

Did you find great Fault with that Change ?

It was a very desirable Change .

Was that after the Appearance of the Diarrhoea ?

It was .

Was there any Alteration in their Health after that Change ?

The Health of the People improved materially .

Do you know whether the Health of the People has continued good since that ?

It has not .

To what do you attribute that Change in the State of their Health ?

In the first place many Persons had relapsed who were previously affected with the Diarrhæa ; the Diarrhæa returned .

You say when the Change took place in May 1837 their Health improved on the Change ; have you compared the Diet Table used before and after that Change ?

I did at the Time .

Are you aware that the Diet on which they improved was a lower Diet than that they had left ?

I was present at the Time , but I took no Part in forming that Dietary .

Are you aware that the new Diet on which you say they improved is a lower Diet than that on which you say their Health was affected ?

I cannot answer that Question . According to the particular Times , and the Observations which were applicable to the Dietary , the present is one which appears to agree better with the People .

Are you aware that there is a smaller Quantity of Food supplied in the Dietary on which you say they improved than that on which you say they did not improve ?

I am aware that there is a smaller Quantity of Meat , and perhaps a Double Quantity of Potatoes ; but I conceive that when they come to reckon by Ounces in their Allowance to Men of Seventy Years of Age it will not answer .

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Do you conceive that the People of Seventy Years of Age were injured by the Diet Table being calculated in that Way ?

I think the Death Book will prove that the Diet was unfavourable to them .

That it produced Illness ?

Yes .

Did the Medical Officers ever complain of it ?

They did .

When ?

I do not recollect the Date ; there is a Letter

from Mr . King , dated the 25th of October .

Was not it immediately changed upon that Complaint being made ?

I was not at the Time a Member of the Board , and therefore I cannot speak on my own Knowledge .

Do you not know that there is a Note , at the Foot of the Diet Table , that Persons above Sixty Years of Age may be fed according to the Will of the Medical Officers ?

No ; there is not such a Note , I believe .

Do you not know that sick Persons may be fed according to the Regulations of the Medical Officers ?

I know that a sick Person may be fed according to the Regulations of the Medical Officers , but not old Persons who are not sick ; they may receive Tea instead of Gruel .

You state that there has been considerable Reduction in the Expense of maintaining the Poor ; to what do you attribute that ?

To a Reduction in the Allowances .

Is the Allowance now reduced below what it ought to be ?

I conceive it is materially .

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There appear to have been Charges generally for Beer , Cider , and Spirits ; you say the old Persons were allowed a Pint of Beer per Day ?

Yes ; and more too , if it was necessary for their Health ; that was the usual Allowance .

Can you state what was the Cost to the Parish per Pint or per Gallon for that Beer ?

No ; I cannot separate the Beer allowed for the Poor from the Wine and allowed to the Sick , and the Consumption of the Governor of the Workhouse and his Family ; those Things were placed at his Disposal .

Can you state what was the Price of such Beer as had been supplied to the Workhouse per Gallon ?

I cannot .

Was it brewed in the Workhouse ?

Yes ; the Governor superintended the brewing it .

How many Bushels to a Barrel ?

I cannot say ; strange to say , I never tasted it .

Do you mean to say you were the only one who did not taste it ?

I do not mean to impute any Blame to the other Officers , but I was so desirous of

administering the Fund rigidly that I never tasted it .

Then you do not know whether it was good ?

No .

Has there not been a great Saving in legal Expenses since the new Law ?

I think there is not Room for a Difference of Opinion that there has been great Improvement in the Law of Settlement ; but that I take to have no necessary Connexion with the new Poor Law .

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Has there not been any great Saving in Legal Expenses under the new Law ?

There has , generally .

The only Saving has not been in the withdrawing the Allowances , but the Lawyers have got much less than they used to do ?

The Paper before your Lordships will show how much they used to get out of that Parish .

They do not get as much since ?

I think they have got much more , in consequence of the bad Management of the Board with regard to the Medical Men ; about 4701 . have been expended in contesting the Medical Accounts .

That was owing to the unfortunate Disagreement between the Board and the Medical Men ?

Yes ; and the old Expenses were in consequence of some Disagreement or other .

Are you connected with the Press ?

I am not .

Have you been connected with the Press ?

I have written these Pamphlets , but not for Profit .

Have you not been connected with a local Newspaper ?

Yes ; but not for any pecuniary Consideration .

How do you mean not pecuniarily ?

I will explain if it is wished , but I did not expect to be questioned upon that Point . I will not decline answering any Question .

Have you had any Share in any local Paper , or been employed in it in any Way ?

Yes ; but it never was done by me in any way for Profit . I never received a Farthing from any Newspaper . In consequence of an Attempt to revolutionize the State , I , with several other Persons , established a Paper called The

Bridgwater Alfred , and I took the Conduct of that Paper upon myself , but I never received One Farthing from it .

It did not turn out a very profitable Speculation ?

I beg to say it was not undertaken as a Speculation , but undertaken to assist in upholding certain Principles which were believed to be essential to the Preservation of Church and State , and I acted as Editor .

Are you connected in any Manner with the Times Newspaper ?

Not at all ; I have written in it very frequently ; I have no other Connexion with it .

Have you been connected with the Dorset County Chronicle ?

I have written in it very frequently ; but I have never written One Word in that or any other Paper which I am not disposed to acknowledge .

Did you put your Name to every thing you did write ?

It is not the Practice to put the Name to an editorial Article .

Did your Letters have your Name to them ?

The Twelve Letters published , and on your Lordships Table , are known to be mine ; they have my Name , and I am accountable for every Line in them .

When you say the Allowances have been reduced , do you mean the Allowances given within the House , or given out of the House ?

Both .

You have drawn the Attention of the Committee to the Rate , which had been stated as the Rate of Labour in the Union , of 7s . for Day Labour ; were not Allowances given generally to Labourers with large Families before the new System ?

The Allowance System is a System I know nothing of . It was never introduced into Bridgwater ; but I believe in some of the

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surrounding Parishes it was ; in others not . I would never administer the Poor Law on the Allowance . Scale ; I take it to be a very bad Thing .

Was there any Case in Bridgwater where a Man in constant Work had Relief likewise from the Parish ?

Yes ; there were such Cases ; but they were not Cases on any Scale by which it was laid down that a Man having Three , Four , or Five

Children should receive such Relief ; he received Relief according to the View the Parish Officers took of all the Circumstances of his individual Case .

The Parish Officers were the only Persons who could judge of that ?

There were Four Overseers , Four Churchwardens ; and , to obtain in addition as much Information as we could do , we had the Names of the Paupers written out quarterly and exposed , with an Invitation to the Parish ioners to give Information on the Case of any Pauper they considered improperly placed on that List .

Probably the Allowance you gave was with reference to the Number of Children , though not upon any exact Scale ?

Certainly it would have reference to that , for the Necessity would generally be according to the Number of the Family ; but I consider it a very bad Rule to lay down that any Man should have a Claim to Relief founded on the Number of his Family .

You mean to say there was no Magistrates Scale ?
Yes .

When this was fixed did the Four Overseers and Churchwardens meet and consult upon that Subject , or was it done by you ?

During the whole Time I was Overseer there was an Assistant Overseer ; he was also Collector of Rates . The Overseers , as many of them as could make it convenient , attended the Parish Pay Table ; and they , with the Assistance of the Assistant Overseer , determined the Rate of Relief .

Generally speaking , how many were there there ?

I should think generally Three or Four ; but if there was any doubtful Case it was referred .

They relied principally on the Assistant Overseer for that Information ?

I do not think they did ; there were Eight Persons residing in the Town scattered here and there , and they knew the People themselves .

Every one of them was interested in keeping the Rates down ?

Yes . I do not mean to say they were never deceived ; they were some times .

Perhaps you will make the same Observation with respect to the Guardians ; do you think they were sometimes deceived in the same Way ?

They must be , to a much greater Extent .

Why must they be ?

Because the Guardians of the Parish may not be present , and the Board of Guardians may determine the Amount of Relief without

knowing any thing of the particular Case .

Will you stale any particular Instances in which they have been deceived ?

I cannot .

You come to that Conclusion from the Supposition that they might be deceived , not that they have been ?

It is an Answer growing out of the Course of Things .

It is good in Theory , but you do not know how it is in Practice ?

It is the Case , I conceive .

Are you of opinion that the making the Workhouse the Test of Pauperism has not the Effect of preventing those Mistakes upon their Part ?

Any Test might have that Effect , but it may produce more Mischief than Good .

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Do not the Relieving Officers bring the Case before the Board , and state to the Board the Result of their Inquiry ?

I might state that the Assistant Overseer was present at our Deliberations as Overseer . It is impossible for the Relieving Officer to have more Knowledge of the District than the Assistant Overseer has ; taking the Assistant Overseer to be a Set - off to the Relieving Officer , the Guardians of the individual Parish may or not be in Attendance .

What did you pay your Assistant Overseer ?

£100 a Year .

Was he prohibited from doing any thing else ?

He did not do any thing else .

Was he prohibited from doing any thing else ?

There was a Contract drawn up by a professional Man , and I believe it was to that Effect .

Had he 1001 . a Year besides his Residence in the Workhouse ?

He had 1001 . a Year as Assistant Overseer , and the Residence of the Work house in consideration of his residing within the Workhouse ; and his Wife acting as Matron , and receiving no Salary , they had their Living in the Work house .

He had plenty to do in the Workhouse in keeping Order and Cleanliness , had not he ?

No , I think not ; it was very easy to manage Thirty Persons upwards of Seventy Years of Age , and Thirty or Forty others ; there were a Number of Children .

Who taught those Children ; did they receive any Instruction there ?

They were taught by a Pauper in the House.

Were they regularly taught by this Pauper in the House ; was there a regular School established ?

They were as regularly taught under the old System as they were under the new for the First Year ; but I am afraid it was not very regular in either Case .

Are they better taught now ?

I believe they are .

Had not your Assistant Overseer to collect the Rates ?

Yes . The present Relieving Officer has not ; but he has much more onerous Duties to attend to ; has a much larger District to attend to .

What is the Population in the Nine Parishes of your Union ?

28 , 000 .

You have Four Relieving Officers for 28 , 000 ?

Yes .

You had before One Assistant Overseer for a Population of 8 , 000 , whose Duty it was to manage the Workhouse and collect the Rates ?

Yes .

At present the Relieving Officer has nothing to do but to inquire into the Circumstances of the different Persons who apply for Relief ?

No .

How many Guardians have you for the Parish of Bridgwater ?

Five .

Do you suppose there has ever been a Meeting of the Board of Guardians without having One Guardian out of the Five present ?

I do not say there was ; but I think that the Application from some Parish may be brought under Consideration without One of the Guardians for that particular Parish being present . Bridgwater is only One Parish out of Forty ; but I would beg Leave to say , referring to the Duty of the Assistant Overseer and the Relieving Officer , that the Assistant Overseer is compensated for in the Parish by , the Relieving Officer , except that they have to go to a great Extent .

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Do you conceive the Relieving Officer , having only the Duties of the Relief of the Poor to attend to , is not quite as well qualified to do that Duty as the Assistant Overseer , who had to manage the

Workhouse ?

Certainly not . The Assistant Overseer was always at his Post , where the Paupers could get at him , whereas the Relieving Officer of the District has to go to different Parishes in the Neighbourhood ; and allots certain Days in the Week for that Purpose . I believe he is in Bridgwater only One Day besides the Board Day .

Do you know how many Parishes he has under his Care ?

I do not recollect .

You conceive that the Assistant Overseer acted then the same Part that the Relieving Officer does now , — that he made the Inquiries ?

Yes ; I am perfectly aware of the legal Distinction .

The Question is as to the Fact ?

The Assistant Overseer was told it was an essential Part of his Duty to make himself well acquainted with the Circumstances of each Person of the Parish who applied for Relief .

Then the Churchwardens and Overseers , in allotting Relief , depended upon his Information , and not upon their own Knowledge ?

No ; they depended on both .

Each of those Persons was well acquainted with Bridgwater ?

Yes .

In case at the Board there are not Guardians from Bridgwater they can know nothing about the Applicants from other Parishes ; they must depend on the Information of other Persons ?

Yes .

There are Five Guardians for Bridgwater ?

Yes ; but the greater Part of the Parishes have only One Guardian from each ,

From the Parish of Bridgwater there are Five Guardians ?

Yes .

Are there not at the present Time Four Churchwardens and Four Overseers in the Parish of Bridgwater ?

Yes .

Are you not aware that the Act of Parliament allows those Churchwardens and Overseers , in case of Necessity , to give Relief ?

I am aware of the Fact , but I believe they very seldom act upon it .

It would be their Duty to act upon if they thought fit , would it not ?

There is a great Misunderstanding of the Law .

You have no Doubt of the Fact ?

No ; I should act ; but when I have desired the Overseer to act in some Cases , he was all trembling , afraid of the Board of Guardians and the Poor Law Commissioners .

Who is the Relieving Officer of Bridgwater ?

His Name is Newman .

At present the Poor of Bridgwater have Four Churchwardens , Four Overseers , Five Guardians , and One Relieving Officer to apply to ?

Yes .

How many Magistrates having Jurisdiction reside within the Parish of Bridgwater ?

I do not think there are more than Two .

Those Two also have Power , in Cases of Emergency , of attending to the Complaints of the Poor , and have the Power , whenever they think proper , to visit the Workhouse ?

Yes . Your Lordship knows much better than I do that that Power is so limited , and liable to be so differently read , that some even of the Metropolitan Magistrates have refused to interfere ; and I do not know that our Magistrates have ever ordered Relief .

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Where does Mr . Newman live ?

It was a Condition , on his Appointment , that he was to reside at Bridgwater .

Does he reside at Bridgwater ?

He does .

What else has he in his District besides the Town of Bridgwater ?

I do not recollect ; the Books will show .

Does he attend more than One Day in Bridgwater ?

I understand he attends there One Day besides the Board Day .

Is not he there every Day ?

He is there Morning and Evening .

Have not the Paupers the Means of applying to him every Day ?

Yes , if they happen to be in Distress in the Morning or Evening .

Though he may be absent some parts of the Day , they have the Means of applying any Morning or Evening ?

Yes .

Do you mean to say that all the other Five Days he is out of the Parish ?

His Duties were , as I believe , pointed out to him , that he was to be there One Day in the Week , and the other Days to go into the other Districts .

Can you state where the Instructions which the Relieving Officer received are to be found ?

I cannot .

One of the Conditions was that he was to reside in Bridgwater , and you know that he does reside in Bridgwater ?

Yes .

Then he is every Day in the Week accessible to every Pauper in Bridgwater ?

Yes .

He is there One Day besides the Board Day , which is the Day for paying the Paupers ?

Yes ; he is Two Days in the Week in Bridgwater , to the best of my Recollection .

What does he do upon those Two Days ?

I suppose on the First of those Two Days he pays the Poor , but I do not know that he does , and the other Day he attends the Board .

Under the old System how were the Poor better off with respect to obtaining Relief when they wanted it with only the Assistant Overseer ?

They had the whole of the Churchwardens and the Overseers .

May not they apply to the whole of the Churchwardens and Overseers now ?

Yes , no Doubt they may .

And if a Person is in urgent Distress may not the Churchwardens and Overseers give him Relief ?

Yes ; but they read the Word " urgent " very differently .

Suppose they do not give it , and the Relieving Officer is resident in Bridge water , would it not be possible for them to say Mr . Newman lives in Bridgwater , you must go to him ?

Yes .

How far would they have to go ?

Perhaps Half a Mile .

How far is Chedzoy from Bridgwater ; that is in the District ?

Perhaps Three Miles to the Extremity of the Parish .

The nearest Part of the Parish ?

A Mile and a Half .

819

Is there a Village there ?

There is a Church and a Village .

How far is it to the Church ?

I really cannot say ; about Two Miles ; perhaps a Quarter of a Mile more or less .

Wembdon Church , how far is that ?

Perhaps a Mile and a Half .

Durleigh ?

The Church of Durleigh is a Mile and a Half .

Chilton Trinity ?

One Mile .

Cannington ?

I should not say that many Houses about the Village originally had been inhabited by Paupers ; I think they are likely to be on the outskirts of the Parish .

Where had the Paupers to go to Petty Sessions of the Magistrates to complain that the Overseers would not give them Relief , did not they go to Bridgwater ?

Yes .

Is not the Master of the Workhouse authorized to admit any Person who is in an urgent State of Distress ?

Yes .

The Poor of the Town of Bridgwater , under the old System , had the Means of applying to the Overseer , who was the Governor of the Workhouse ; under the present System they have an Opportunity of applying to the Relieving Officer every Morning and every Evening , and Two Days of the Week during the whole of the Day ?

Yes .

Then what Difference , in point of fact , can there be with respect to the Poor at Bridgwater , as far as respects the Means of obtaining Relief , from Want of Access to the Relieving Officer ?

The Overseers under the old System considered themselves under the Law responsible for attending to every Request which ought to be attended to ; the present Overseers do not .

Does not the Relieving Officer consider himself so bound ?

The Relieving Officer brings the Case before the Board of Guardians if he chooses to do so .

The Relieving Officer is liable to be dismissed from his Office if he does not give Relief in Cases where it is necessary ?

I never heard of his being subjected to any Consequence .

Do you not know that he would be dismissed if he did not give Relief in Cases where it was necessary ?

It would require a very strong Case .

The Appeal would have been formerly from the Overseer to the Magistrates ?

Yes .

With respect to the Difficulty of stating any Case of Distress ; what Difference is there now the Relieving Officer is resident in Bridgwater to what there was before when they had to apply to the Overseer ?

A Case may be stated just as readily to the Relieving Officer as to the Overseers under the old System ; but the Mode of dealing with it , I believe , is different .

That is to say , the Relieving Officer is not so ready to give Relief as the Overseers were ?

The Relieving Officer may be convinced of the Necessity , and the Guardians of the Parish may be convinced of the Necessity , but they have been in some Instances outvoted by the Board .

820

Under the old System , supposing the Assistant Overseer had relieved a Man and reported to the Overseers , were not the Overseers a Check upon the Assistant Overseer ?

Yes ; but then it was within their own Experience ; under the new Law they have been out - voted by the Board , who may know nothing of the particular Circumstances of the Applicant .

Then your Objection to the Relieving Officer is not as compared with the Assistant Overseer , but to the Board of Guardians as compared with the Overseers ?

That would belong to the Guardians , they having more to do .

The Board of Guardians have at present to decide in giving Relief , whereas the Church wardens and Overseers did it before ?

That is the Difference .

Is there not this Difference , that there is no Appeal from the Board of Guardians , whereas from the Churchwardens and Overseers there was an Appeal ?

I have already stated that the Knowledge of the Churchwardens and Overseers was the best ; they knew the People .

Are you not aware that a Man must get Two Magistrates to interfere before , but that now One Magistrate can do it , in case of Medical Relief ?

I am aware of that ; but I am aware of the Difficulties which they feel in that way .

Are you aware that the Relieving Officer at Bridgwater has constantly given Relief from his own Inquiry , without having applied to the Board ?

I am perfectly aware of that .

With respect to Bridgwater , you say there are always some of the Guardians present at the Board of Guardians ; has that been the Case with respect to the Guardians of the distant Parishes ?

That cannot be the Case , because the actual Number of Guardians attending is materially within the whole Number of Guardians , therefore some must have been absent .

Then the Poor of those Parishes had no Persons attending who were acquainted with the Circumstances , the Churchwardens and Overseers not being present ?

They are not admitted .

Then all the Information they have is from the Relieving Officer , who , instead of having the Charge of One Parish as the Overseers and Churchwardens and the Assistant Overseer had , has the Charge of One Fourth of the Union ?

In point of Population , more than One Fourth , but not One Fourth in point of Superficies .

Have the Board of Guardians in many Instances any Knowledge of their own , as you must have had , of the Circumstances of every Case ; and , in the next place , have they the same Degree of Information as you had ?

It is impossible for them to have , unless the Guardian of the Parish is present .

Have you not known Inconvenience result from that ?

I have known the Board repeatedly reject the Recommendation of the Guardians of the Parish.

Those who had no Information rejected the Recommendation of those who had ?

Yes ; that is a very common Instance .

In point of fact , where a Pauper is coming from a distant Parish , is it not the Fact that the Guardian is aware of it , and attends the Board ?

I do not think it is usually the Fact ; it is the Fact , of course , frequently ; but , perhaps , there are quite as many Cases where the Guardian does not attend ; indeed I have heard Guardians say they would not attend the Board , because Persons whom they had recommended for Relief had not received it .

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Is it not the Course for One Guardian of a small Parish , if he cannot attend the next Board Day , to see another Guardian , his Neighbour , and tell him the Facts of the Case ?

I cannot speak to that .

Is not the Guardian of a small Parish very well aware of the Paupers in the neighbouring Parish ?

It might be so frequently in small Parishes .

Do you think the Poor of the Town of Bridgwater are worse off than the Poor in the Country Parishes in the District ?

I think that they must be better off in respect of their Case being presented , for the Relieving Officer may be seen in the Morning or in the Evening , than the Paupers of Parishes where the Relieving Officer attends only once a week .

May not they go to Bridgwater , or send a Message ; are not the Paupers in the other Parishes in the habit of coming frequently into the Town ?

A poor Man on 7s . a Week has very little Time to run into the Town .

Does not he come to the Relieving Officer when he is in distress ?

No Doubt that if a Man is in deep Distress he comes to the Relieving Officer ; but if a Man can come into the Town he may be disappointed at last . I have seen a Person of Eighty Years of Age walk Eight or Ten Miles , and wait Three or Four Hours on the Steps till he could get Relief .

That was to attend the Board ?

Yes .

He might have called on the Relieving Officer ?

The System of the Bridgwater Union is a very bad one ; they have never given a sufficient Discretion to the Relieving Officer . The Person comes forward and tells his own Story , and the Board talk it over , and do not deter mine it upon the Account of the Relieving Officer .

When you were a Member of the Board of Guardians did you attempt to reform that Practice ?

I never made a Motion upon it ; but I have frequently told the Relieving Officers to speak out themselves . Being known to be opposed to the Principle of the Law I determined never to make a Motion , conceiving that a Motion from a Person inimical to the Law would not be well received . I have said at the Board that I would

assist in carrying the Law fairly into execution , but that I would not originate a Motion ; and I never did .

When a Case of Distress has been reported to the Board by the Relieving Officer , if the Guardian of the Parish was not present , has Relief not been given to the Pauper , and the Guardian been desired to attend at the next Meeting of the Board , the Case to be reported again ?

I do not remember such a Case ; but I have not the smallest Doubt such Cases must have occurred frequently .

Have you not heard frequent Complaints of Paupers not being able to get at the Relieving Officer ?

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Yes .

Have you heard that they have suffered from not being able to meet with the Relieving Officer ?

Yes . Persons working on very low Wages must give constant Attention to their work , while Men earning Double Wages might be able to give up a little Time to see the Officer .

Have you heard Persons complain of not being attended to by the Relieving Officer ?

Yes .

And that he came to their Parish only once a week?

Yes .

Can you state the Name ?

I am not prepared to state the Name of any Pauper who has received Relief at the Board .

822

Are you prepared to state the Name of any Pauper who stated to you that he could not get at the Relieving Officer ?

They have complained to the Board ; but I have not made Memoranda of their Names . I have relieved many who stated the extreme Difficulty had in obtaining the Ear of the Relieving Officer .

Can you state their Names ?

I cannot .

Were they Persons in or out of Bridgwater ?

Some in Bridgwater , some out .

Were they Persons whom you knew before ?

Some of them I had seen before .

What were their Names ?

I do not know .

Cannot you give the Name of any one ?

I cannot . I have determined not to register the Names of any such Persons , as I could not protect them against the Consequences of Complaint . I do not know what the Consequences may be .

Have not they been Persons residing in your own Neighbourhood ?

Not always . I really am not prepared to state the Name of any Pauper .

You are ignorant of the Name of every one ?

Yes .

Have you ever known a Case where the Board refused Relief in consequence of a Complaint made by the Pauper ?

· No , I have not .

Or that they have stopped Relief in consequence of Complaint made by the Pauper ?

No ; I am quite satisfied that the Board , however they might act , could not give any such Reason for their Action .

You conceive that they have refused Relief , but not assigning that Ground specially ?

They have often refused Relief .

You think they have refused Relief on the Ground of Complaint made by the Individual , and not the Circumstances of the Case ?

I cannot trace a Case of that Kind ; but I would not wish to expose an Individual to the Chance of it .

It is from the Knowledge that they would be exposed to the Chance of that , that you wish not to state any Names ?

Yes .

Have you ever known a Case where the Board have refused to hear a Case from the Wife , the Husband being working at low Wages ?

Yes .

In what Case ?

I have forgotten the Name , but I remember a Woman coming to apply for Relief for her Family ; her Husband worked for Mr . Bouverie of Cannington . The Chairman repeatedly desired the Husband to come ; " Why does not your Husband come ? "

Do you know what Wages the Husband earned ?

He was earning 8s . a Week , or rather he had been earning 8s . a Week ; but he was then not earning any thing .

Do you mean to say that when the Wife stated the

Husband was ill the Board refused to grant Relief until he came ?

I believe they did order Relief , but the Chairman repeatedly asked why the husband was not there ,

Then, being answered that it was in consequence of the Illness of the Husband , they did grant Relief ?

I believe he was not so ill but that he might have attended .

823

Then the Board granted Relief ?

I cannot say they did not grant Relief .

Do you know the Name of the Pauper ?

I can bring it To - morrow ; but what I remember of that particular Case was , that I considered it a Case of very great Hardship . The Relieving Officer knew the Man , and stated him to be an industrious respectable Man , the Guardian of the Parish said the same , they both agreed in the Woman ' s Tale , and still the Chairman complained that the Husband was not there himself .

If there existed no Objection to the Husband ' s Attendance that he could not walk , do not you think it was very right for the Board of Guardians to require him to attend ?

That is Matter of Opinion .

As Overseer of the Poor , supposing a Man ' s Wife had applied to you , would you have given her Relief permanently without seeing the Man ?

I would not permanently ; but I would have given the Woman instant Relief until I had visited the Man and seen whether he was ill or not .

You say the Board of Guardians did give her Relief , but ordered him to come the next Day ?

I do not remember having given that Answer to the Question put by the Noble Lord .

You were understood to say that when the Woman applied to the Board she obtained Relief , and she was told her Husband must come ?

Yes .

What Difference is there between the Overseer giving instant Relief and saying the Husband must come , and the Board giving Relief and saying that ?

In the first place , the Board would not meet for a Week , and the Man would be dragged Four Miles from Home , and must lose a Day ' s Work , in case he was at Work .

But you say that he was not at Work ; this was the Case of a Man who , you say , could not work ,

but not so ill that he might have attended the Board ; is that so ?

I believe it to be so .

The Woman , you say , obtained Relief for a Week ?

Yes .

Were the Board of Guardians desirous that he might come the next Week ?

No ; they complained of his not coming then .

Still they gave the Woman Relief ?

I do not know , but I believe they did .

What Difference is there between that Case and the Case of an Overseer ?

The Overseer would ascertain it upon the Spot .

Should you have gone as Overseer to the Man , or have required him to come to you ?

I should have gone to the Man .

Would it not have been improper , or perhaps injurious , to the Man , being ill , to have brought him there ?

I should , in Cases of Illness , take for granted that it was so .

Did you not state in your Answer that he was not so unwell but that he was capable of coming ?

I believe he might have been , but I never saw the Man in my Life .

In what Relieving Officer ' s District was this Man ?

In Mr . Newman's District .

The Man might have come to the Board ; they complained that he did not come , but they gave Relief in the meantime to the Woman ?

824

Is it not a Hardship to a Man who is ill to desire him to come to the Board ?

A very great Hardship . I have seen a Man come to the Board in a Fever . I have seen a Man with his Arm bandaged up , whose Arm had been broken ,

Is not it a very good Thing for a Man who has his Arm bandaged up to take a Walk on a fine Day ; is not he ordered by the Doctor to do so ?

Whether it be a fine Day or not it would be the same .

What Distance would he have to go ?

He would have to come from the Parish of Cannington , I believe ; that would be Six Miles , and Six Miles back .

You do not know , in point of fact , that the Man with the broken Arm was forced by the Board to come there ?

I know that he did go . You do not know how long it was after his Arm was broken ?

I do not .

You do not know whether he was desired to come to the Board , or whether he came voluntarily ?

I know he was desired to come .

Was it by the Board ?

Yes , it was .

When was this ?

I believe it was in April or May 1837 .

Were you at the Board ?

I was .

Was that Labourer one of those who have come to complain to you on the Subject of the Difficulty and Distance of coming to the Board ?

I never saw the Man at any other Time in my Life to my Knowledge .

Did his Wife ever come to you ?

Certainly not .

Did any Person on his Behalf ?

No . I knew nothing of the Case but what I heard at the Board .

Did you make any Application to the Board , or Complaint to the Relieving Officer , for having desired the Man with the broken Arm to come to the Board ?

I conceive I did ; but I do not recollect , there were so many such Cases .

Can you recollect enough of the Circumstances to be able to say whether they did say that the Man ought not to have been brought there ?

I think there was such a Feeling .

Was the Relieving Officer told so ?

I do not recollect that he had any Instructions on the Subject . Did he give any Reason for bringing him there ?

I do not recollect .

The Relieving Officers visit the Sick in their own Houses ?

They do .

Do you not think that on some Occasions it is right for the Board to hear the Story of the Man , and that it is safer in general that the Man , if he can do so without Inconvenience , should come to the Board ?

With the Limitation your Lordship suggests , if he can do so without Inconvenience , I think it desirable .

If that were not the general Rule would it not lead to Fraud , inasmuch as the Men who had got into drunken Habits , and were perhaps bruised in some Riot , would send their Wives instead of going themselves ?

Yes ; but my Answer applied to a Case where the Guardian and the Relieving Officer were present and knew the Person .

825

Do you mean to say the Guardian had been to visit him , and the Relieving Officer had visited him ?

I presume in a small Village like Cannington they know generally the Character of every Person .

You do not mean to say that the Guardian had that Morning visited the Man , and knew he was ill ?

No .

Had this Man been visited by the Medical Officer ?

I presume he had .

Was not it the Practice of the Medical Officer to report the State of every Man on his List as to his Health ?

Yes .

Do you remember that the Doctor ever made an Observation to the Board of Guardians that it was improper for the Man with the broken Arm to have attended the Board ?

No .

Would he not have been very likely to do so if he had thought there was any Inconvenience likely to arise to the Man ?

I suppose he would draw a strong Line of Distinction between Inconvenience and considerable Danger .

What was the Name of the Man ?

I would rather not speak from an indistinct Recollection ; Name To - morrow .

Do you know any Instance of the Board having refused to listen to the Complaint made by the Wife of any Pauper ?

No ; I know no one by Name . I am not desirous of evading a single Question . If I had had the least Idea that the Examination would have taken this Turn I would have taken the same pains to prepare myself on that Case as I did on the Case of the Death of the Patients by Diarrhæa .

Do you consider that the Relieving Officers you have known are respectable Men ?

I think they are respectable Men , but that they have not sufficient discretionary Power .

You think they are respectable Men ?

I have not the smallest Hostility to either of them ; I think they are respect able Men .

What is their Salary ?

£80 a Year , I think .

Are you not of opinion that it is very desirable , in every Case , that the Head of the family should make the Application himself for Relief rather than send his Wife to do it ?

Generally speaking , it is . Generally speaking , the Board have a Right to avail themselves of the best Means of obtaining Information .

And you think that they get it best from the Husband ?

Yes ; but it seems a Hardship to drag a Man Eight Miles for the very uncertain Chance of obtaining Relief .

Has each Parish One Overseer and One Churchwarden ?

I cannot speak to my own Knowledge , but I should conceive so .

Formerly was it not the Case that those Persons were obliged to go to Two Justices of Bridgwater if they had any Complaint to make ?

Not if the Overseers did their Duty .

Were not they in the habit of attending the Petty Sessions ?

Very little ; we had very little Petty Sessions Business in our Country ; and I am afraid that has led to some Difference as to these Matters in different Places . During the Four Years I was an Overseer there was only One Instance of a Pauper summoning the Overseers before a Magistrate in Bridgwater . I positively undertake to swear that during the Four Years I was connected with the Parish there was only One single Summons issued against the;

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Overseers ; that was in the Case of a drunken Barber I found in the House when I came into Office and had him turned out .

Are the Overseers always to be found in the Parish ; do not they go to a Distance to attend Fairs , and on private Business of their own ?

Of course every Man must do that .

The Question refers to the Out Parishes as well as Bridgwater ; do not they occasionally leave Home ?

Yes ; but the Difference is this , their Absence

was only occasional , their Presence was general ; whereas now Absence is the general Rule , and Presence the Exception .

Did you never hear of an Overseer going away Three Weeks ?

If he left , and his Duty was neglected , he was responsible .

Do you say that the Absence of the Relieving Officer is rather the Rule than the Exception ; is not he present One Day in every Week ?

Yes .

Were there not generally Two Overseers in each Parish in your Neighbourhood ?

I should not like to speak to that .

Do you conceive that nothing has been substituted for the System of Allowances such as you formerly described ?

I am not aware of any such Substitution ; but I beg to be understood not to have One Word to say in favour of the Magistrates Scale of Allowances ; I think nothing can be worse than that .

Do you mean to say that nothing has been substituted for the Scale of Allowances you have described ?

On the old System the Paupers were relieved; according to the existing Law they are now relieved at the Will of the Board of Guardians , and it is possible the individual Case of a Pauper may come on without there being any one present acquainted with his Habits ; and if there should be any person in the Board well acquainted with him , though that Guardian may be in favour of the Relief , the Majority of the Guardians may vote against it and reject it .

Which , you say , has actually happened ?

Yes .

You say you have known a Man in a Fever ordered to attend the Board of Guardians ?

I did know a Man attend , but I do not know as to his being ordered .

Was he ordered by the Relieving Officer ?

I cannot say .

Who was the Man ?

I cannot say . I saw the Man come into the Room .

How do you know he had a Fever ?

I judged from his Appearance , and not only that , but he received Medical Relief as a Man in a Fever .

In what Parish ?

I think from the Parish of Bawdrip , but I am not quite certain .

How far is Bawdrip from Bridgwater ?

About Three Miles .

Do you think he would have attended the Board at that Time if he could have had Relief from the Medical Officer ?

Certainly not . If he could have had Relief from the Medical Officer he would have had no Inducement to attend the Board .

Did he get Relief from the Board ?

Yes .

You did not know him ?

No .

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He was , at the Time he was there , in a State of Fever ?

I recollect his being treated by the Medical Man as for Fever .

Subsequently to his Appearance at the Board ?

Yes .

Was any Observation made that a Man in a State of Fever ought not to be obliged to apply to the Board ?

I do not think there was .

It was generally known in the Board ?

It was . I felt extremely disgusted at it .

Was his Appearance such as to make it Matter of Notoriety that he was in a Fever ?

Yes ; it was a Matter of Notoriety . I am sure there is nothing on Record on the Subject . There was some little Conversation upon it ; but I cannot charge my Memory with it .

You do not know whether it was an Intermittent Fever , -- an Ague ?

No ; the Man was not in a cold Fit of the Ague ; he had the Fever upon him at the ' Time .

Is it within your Knowledge that he had been receiving Medical Relief previously ?

No ; but that he was subsequently .

Did he come to apply for Medical Relief , or for other Relief ?

I think for other Relief .

If he has been relieved as for a Fever , you must recollect the Man ' s Name ?

I do not recollect the Man ' s Name , or I should have stated it .

Did it strike you as Matter of great Impropriety ?

It was a Part of the System . I had no Idea of marking one Person more than another ; those Things occurred every Day . If I had expected to

be asked these Questions I would have refreshed my Memory .

Is the Difficulty of obtaining Relief such as to make it necessary for Persons at a considerable Distance to attend the Board ?

It undoubtedly is ; but I have heard that the Board has of late been much more disposed to grant Relief , in Cases of Illness , without the Appearance of the Pauper , than they were formerly .

They have altered their System ?

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Yes .

Did you ever hear of any Person who suffered any serious Injury from attend ing the Board of Guardians ?

I cannot name any Person , but I have not a Doubt of the Fact .

With respect to the Facilities given by the Board of Guardians lately ; that is a Matter of Fact which would be shown by the Minutes ?

I cannot speak to the Fact ; but I have heard that the Board has not insisted on the Attendance of Persons as it did formerly .

Did it frequently happen that Persons went to the Board to solicit Relief who were not in a State , in your Opinion , to go ?

Every Day I sat at that Board . I never sat at that Board without being satisfied , on Conviction , that Persons were compelled to attend the Board who ought not to have been .

What was the Nature of the Objection which you felt ?

The People were subjected to a Variety of Grievances ; the Complaints were different at different Periods . There was not any large Class. I am not aware of any leading Complaint.

Did you ever hear any Complaint among the People of their being obliged to attend the Board of Guardians when in a State of Illness

I have heard them complain before the Board; but I have always avoided conversing

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with the Persons themselves , as I conceived it a very dangerous Thing .

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Why did you consider it dangerous ?

There is a Measure of Endurance beyond

which I think People cannot be expected to go . I have always avoided and trust I shall always be able to avoid Conversations with Persons under such Circumstances .

Have you heard them complain of their having been brought to the Board in a State of Illness ?

Yes . There was a single Case which I can state that will elucidate this beyond any other I can bring forward ; it is in the printed Paper 177 , at Page 24 ; it is in a Letter signed " R . P . Caines , Coroner . " That Letter will show the Practice of the Board much more than any particular Case I can bring forward .

Will you state the Circumstances of the Case ?

It is a Letter from the Coroner to the Board of Guardians of the Bridgwater Union . It is in these Words : " I am actuated by Motives of Humanity to solicit their Attention to their unhappy Situation . On the 25th Ult . I held an Inquest on a Child of theirs who was accidentally burnt ; and it appeared from the Evidence that the deceased , aged about Four Years , and a Sister (an Idiot) aged Fifteen , had been left alone in a Room in which there was a Fire , and that the Clothes of the former became ignited , and she was instantly enveloped in Flames , and was so much burnt as to cause her Death in a few Hours . I thought it my Duty to remark to the Parents how extremely reprehensible they had been in suffering Two such helpless Objects to be so left . I then learnt that the Father is a Labouring Man , whose Earnings amount to 7s . a Week , and that the Wife contrives to get a little by selling Fruit in the Market ; that they were so employed when the Accident happened ; that they had Three other Children , one an Infant Six Months old , another Six and another Twelve Years old , altogether Five Children ; and that they had no Means of paying any one to take care of them , except as to the Infant . At having this Statement confirmed I said I thought if the Board of Guardians were made acquainted with the Circumstance the Parents would get some Relief , and I advised the Bearer to make Application accordingly . She now tells me that she has applied , and was told by the Relieving Officer she could not be allowed any thing unless she brought a Note or some written Statement ; and , to add to her Distress , after having gone from Taunton to Bridgwater and back (Twenty four Miles) , she found that in her Absence the poor afflicted Child (the Idiot) had fallen into the Fire , and must have shared the Fate of her Sister if the Father had not rescued her from the Flames . I hope and trust I shall be excused for having made this Statement ; an Answer by the Bearer will oblige , Gentlemen ,

yours respectfully , R . P . Caines , Coroner . "
An Application was made by the House of Lords to the Clerk of the Union for the Proceedings on this Case . In order to show how the Board treated such a Case the Clerk of the Union says , "*I herewith send , agreeable to your Letter of the 16th Instant , the Information required by an Order of the House of Lords bearing Date the 14th Instant ; and beg to inform you that there was no Answer given to the Letter of R . P . Caines , Esquire , Coroner , of the 21st of November , nor does there appear on the Minute Book any Entry of Proceedings thereon ; nor was there any Answer given to Mr . John Bowen ' s Letter of the 9th of September on the Subject of the Windows in the Union Workhouse , nor can I discover in the Minute Book any Proceedings that took place in consequence thereof ; nothing further appears on the Minutes than that the said Letter was read (on the 13th September) . "* I saw the Coroner on this Subject , and he told me that Woman had walked Seventy - two Miles without the Board giving her any Relief .

How could she have walked Seventy - two Miles ?

Three Times from Taunton to Bridgwater and back .

She was not residing within the Union ?

No .

Was not it her Business if she wanted Relief to apply to the Relieving Officer of the District ?

I cannot enter into Reasoning ; I only state that Case as showing the Manner in which such Applications were received by the Board .

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Was it not the proper Course for this Woman , if she wanted Relief , to apply to the Relieving Officer of the District in which she was residing ?

I do not know that ; I think under those Circumstances she was justified in acting under the Recommendation of the Coroner .

Do you not feel that the Coroner gave her a very bad Recommendation ?

No , I do not .

Do you not know that by Law the Board of Guardians are prohibited relieving a Pauper living out of their Union ?

I consider that the Recommendation of the Coroner under the Circumstances was very proper .

You consider that the Recommendation of the Coroner would supersede the Law ?

Certainly not .

Do you not know that they cannot by Law relieve an able - bodied Pauper living out of the Union ?

Certainly .

Where does the Board of Guardians for that Union sit ?

At Taunton .

That Woman resides at Taunton ?

Yes .

Would she not have been saved all this travelling Seventy - two Miles if she had complied with the Regulations of the Law and applied to the Board of Guardians of the Place in which she resided ?

I do not know that she did not apply to them ; she might have done so .

Was not it her Duty to do so if she wanted Relief?

Yes .

Would she not have been saved all those Seventy - two Miles ?

She might have been saved all those Seventy - two Miles .

Then all the Hardship was brought upon her in consequence of her not complying with the Provisions of the Law , was it not ?

I have not the least Objection to answer the Question , that those Hardships were brought upon her by her not understanding the Provisions of an Act of Parliament which very few Persons do understand .

Has it not been the Practice before the Poor Law Amendment Act , that when Persons required Relief they have applied to the Relieving Officer of the Parish in which they resided ?

It was the general Practice , but not universal.

Though she perhaps might not have read the Act of Parliament , and have understood the Act , was she advised by the Coroner , who probably had read . the Act , and was able to explain it ?

He ought to be .

Did he not give her Advice contrary to that Act of Parliament in advising her to go to Bridgwater ?

That is a legal Point I cannot answer .

Might he not have known that the Guardians of the Bridgwater Union could do nothing for her ?

He might have known that it was not likely .

Under the old Law , supposing this Accident had happened to her , to whom would she have applied for Relief ?

She would have applied most probably to the Overseers on the Spot .

Would she have applied herself to the Relieving Officer upon the Spot ?

Yes .

Then if she took those Journeys of Seventy - two Miles she neglected to do that which she might have done ?

If the Board of Guardians had made her distinctly acquainted with the Law

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on her first Application it is not at all probable she would have come over again .

How could they make her cognizant of the Nature of the Law ?

They could , when she first came to Bridgwater . What did they say to her when she first came to Bridgwater ?

I do not know .

Did they refuse her Relief ?

They did .

Did they say that they would not relieve her because she lived in another Union ?

I do not know ; I take it only from her own Account .

Do you know that she did not apply to the Relieving Officer at Taunton ?

I do not know ; I only bring that forward as an Instance of the Sufferings to which the Poor are exposed .

When you say " the Sufferings to which the Poor are exposed , " should you not also say that this Suffering was brought upon her by the State of the Law , and not by her own Choice ?

I do not conceive under the old Law she would have been thing of the Kind .

Under the old Law would she have applied to the Parish Officer at Taunton or to the Parish Officer at Bridgwater ?

She would have applied to the Parish Officer at Taunton to be passed Home .

Should not she equally under the new Law have applied to the Relieving Officer at Taunton ?

o any

Yes .

Then where is the Difference ?

That she would at once have received a satisfactory Answer , and she would have been probably saved the Removal . In consequence of an Understanding between the Parishes the Removal was frequently not insisted on ; the Over seer at Taunton applies to the Parish Officer at Bridgwater , and says , there is a Person who can get 4s . or 5s . a Week ; and if

you will allow her a few Shillings a Week more we will not remove her.

What is the Difference between applying to the Relieving Officer and the Assistant Overseer in the first instance ?

I think in the first instance there is very little Difference .

It would have been the Duty of the Relieving Officer to come and see the Woman ; and then relieve her ?

Yes .

Suppose the Parish in which she was relieved her , it would have a Claim on her own Parish ?

Under the old Law those Cases were frequently made Matters of Arrangement between the Officers of the Two Parishes .

What is the Difference between the Relieving Officer and the Parish Officers being applied to that should make it necessary for that Woman to walk those Seventy - two Miles ?

Their own Conception of the Law , and their being in a very unsettled State of Opinion respecting it .

Is there any unsettled Opinion as to the Application to the Relieving Officers in the Place where they live ?

I conceive there may be ; but I have found among Overseers and Church wardens a considerable Degree of Doubt as to their Powers.

Do you know of any Difficulty being felt by Relieving Officers ?

I do not .

How is your Position proved by that Case ?

There is no Doubt that great Hardship did arise in particular Cases .

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Would not the Hardship have been prevented of her going a Second and Third Time , by their telling her at Bridgwater what Course she might - pursue ?

Certainly .

How do you know that they did not ?

That I cannot say .

Does not the Letter state that she was told by the Relieving Officer that she could not be relieved unless she brought a Note or some written Statement?

Yes . .

What Relieving Officer is meant by that ?

I should think that is the Bridgwater

Relieving Officer .

Then that has nothing to do with the Relieving Officer of Taunton ; is it not the Relieving Officer at Bridgwater to whom she was to bring a Note from some Person at Taunton to state that her Story was true ; is not that the Meaning of the Paragraph ?

I think it may be ; but I cannot undertake to put a Meaning upon it beyond the Words of it .

What is Mr . Caines the Coroner ?

I cannot tell ; he lives at Langport .

How far is Langport from Taunton ?

Langport , Taunton , and Bridgwater are each about Twelve Miles apart .

He could have known nothing about the Circumstances of this Woman , coming from Langport to hold an Inquest on the Child ?

The Coroner has perhaps under those Circumstances the very best Oppor tunity of ascertaining the Circumstances of the Case .

If you were told after walking Twelve Miles that you could have no Relief without bringing a Note , should not you suppose that if you brought a Note you should be relieved ?

I suppose that was the Case ; this Woman would not have walked Twenty four Miles unless she supposed she should have received Attention .

Do you not suppose that she was subjected to great Hardship in being brought those Twenty - four Miles , and not getting Relief ?

I think she was subjected to very great Hardship .

You do not know that the Note she brought was satisfactory ?

I conceive that the Coroner considered his Note and his Investigation of the Circumstances of the Case sufficient .

Did she carry that Note ?

She must have carried that Note , or it would not have been on your Lord ships Table .

Is it not possible that that Note might have come by some other Means ?

It is possible ; but it says he gave her this Letter .

From the Note referred to it would appear that she must have been to Bridgwater before the Writing of that Letter ?

She must have been ; she asked for the Note in consequence of her Disap pointment .

She must have previously to that gone to Bridgwater ?

Yes , she must .

Then she was told , " We cannot do any thing for

you unless you bring a . written Statement ? ”

Yes .

Are you of opinion , or not , that that was a proper Discretion on the Part of the Relieving Officer of Bridgwater ?

I should have relieved the Woman for One Week , unless I saw strong Reasons to doubt her Statement .

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If you had had no Acquaintance whatever with Taunton , and a Woman came from Taunton , and told that Story , would you have thought it a wise Discretion on your Part to have laid out the Parish Money , and given her Relief , instead of telling her to get a written Statement ?

I would have incurred the Responsibility under these . Circumstances , on the Principle of giving that poor Creature the Benefit of the Doubt .

As Overseer of Bridgwater , if a Woman had come and told you that Story , and you knew nothing about the Story , should you have thought it a proper Exercise of Discretion to have given her Relief ?

Yes ; I should have relieved her for One Week .

Without knowing whether she belonged to Bridgwater ?

Yes .

Should you not have referred her to the Overseers of Taunton ?

No ; for that would in many Cases be equivalent to a Sentence of Death .

Do you think that would have been doing your Duty under the old Powers of an Overseer ?

Yes ; it would have been meeting the Exigencies of the Case .

You would not think it necessary to inquire into the Truth of the Case , but on the Statement of the Person himself you would give Relief ?

I should think it necessary to inquire into the Circumstances of all Cases , but if I could not obtain instantaneous Proof of the Truth , I considered myself bound , unless there was some strong Reason to the contrary , to give Relief , and to make Inquiries afterwards .

You think if a Person was living in Taunton , and you did not know whether she belonged to Bridgwater or not , if you did not know whether her Story was true you would still think it a proper Exercise of Discretion to pay the Parish Money to that Woman ?

I would for a few Days .

Is there not a Duty to the Poor as well as to the Parish ?

The Overseer I take to be responsible for the Care of the Poor , and not to be responsible for the Consequences of raising Money , except as far as the Chancellor of the Exchequer is responsible for the due Expenditure of any Sum voted .

You would have used due Diligence to make Inquiries as to the Circumstances of the Case ?

Certainly . I do not mean to express a legal Opinion of the Case ; I take the Overseer to be legally answerable , and liable to Punishment if any Accident should arise from his Neglect , and therefore the safe Course for him to take is to err on the Side of Mercy to the Poor .

Would he have been responsible under the old Law if any Accident had happened to that Woman ?

Yes , I think he would .

Would he have been responsible if any Accident had happened to a Person not residing within the Parish ?

Yes .

That is your Interpretation of the Law ?

Yes .

So that this Woman living at Taunton you would consider yourself responsible , she coming to ask for Relief at Bridgwater ?

Yes ; I consider the Overseer responsible for any Accident which happened from his not affording Relief , even if the Woman turned out to be an Impostor on Inquiry .

Was not the Responsibility on the Overseer of the Parish in which she was living ?

The Overseer of the Parish in which she applied for Relief . If she had , in the Case put , come to me ,

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I should relieve her Hunger . when she applied.

Being at Bridgwater , she might have perished for Hunger , when she applied to you , and you would under those Circumstances have relieved her ?

I should .

How do you know she was perishing for Hunger ?

I did not know that .

Was that the Ground of her Application ?

I cannot say .

Was not the Ground of her Application that she wished to have somebody to look after her Children ?

Yes , it was , decidedly ; but I was asked how I should have treated the Case of an Application for Relief by a Person residing out of the Union . I should have taken the safe Course .

But you say that was the Consequence of the Responsibility attaching to you . Was any Responsibility attaching to you in relieving a Woman who came to ask you for an Addition to her Means in order to provide herself with a Nurse or a Person to take care of her Children ?

That is a distinct Case from immediate Necessity , I admit .

Was there any Obligation on the Parish Officers of Bridgwater under those Circumstances ?

I think not .

Was there any Appearance of Distress when she came to the Relieving Officer of Bridgwater ?

I never saw the Woman .

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There was no Accident occurred in consequence of the Woman ' s Absence when she came ?

The Coroner states that on her Return she found that the Idiot had fallen into the Fire .

Would she not have been out selling Apples if she had not come over to Bridgwater ?

Very probably

Do you know that she did not make Application to the Board of Guardians at Taunton ?

Certainly not .

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Or that she might not have been relieved ?

Yes .

This paper was moved for in consequence of your Suggestion to the Chair man of this Committee ; at whose Suggestion did you apply that this Paper should be moved for ?

Not from the Suggestion of any Person whatever .

How did you know of it ?

I saw that Paper on the Records of the Board . I have never received any Suggestions on the Subject from any one .

If this poor Woman was in error in not applying to the Relieving Officer at Taunton , was not she confirmed in her Error by the Relieving Officer at Bridgwater telling her to bring back a Note ?

Yes ; and that was my principal Reason for wishing that Paper to be moved for .

Do you know what was the Answer the Relieving Officer gave her ?

No ; I know that only which is stated in that

Paper .

It is there stated that she was led to take this Course in consequence of the Advice of the Coroner ?

Yes .

834

Is it not natural she should take the Advice of the Coroner ?

Certainly .

The first Objection you make in your Pamphlet to the Proceedings of the Board of Guardians at Bridgwater is with respect to the Funerals of the Poor ; you object to the Ninth and Tenth Rules passed upon the 31st of May . The Rules to which you object are , " That in all Cases where Persons require Assistance towards burying their deceased Relations the Board determine that they will in no Case give partial Assistance , but that they will in such Cases have the entire Management of such Funerals ; and that Arrangements shall be made forthwith for the Purpose of establishing one uniform System of Pauper Funerals throughout all the Parishes in the Union . " The Tenth , " That in a Pauper Funeral the following Articles shall be provided : a Coffin and Shroud ; (no Pall ;) Men to carry the Coffin ; all legal Fees . " ?

Yes .

With respect to the Ninth ; what Objection do you make to the Board undertaking for the whole , if they are required to contribute towards it ?

I think there is nothing which the Poor are so desirous of as seeing their poor Relatives decently buried .

Do you feel yourself an Objection to that Rule , establishing that Description of Funeral , a naked Coffin , without a Pall ?

I think it no little Hardship .

Why ?

Because if a Funeral is not to be conducted in a decent Manner , poor Persons may frequently take upon themselves the whole Expense of the Funeral , to prevent their Friends being buried without a Pall , or in any peculiar Way that they may consider degrading . To prevent this they may be induced to sell their Furniture to pay the whole Expenses of the Funeral rather than submit to that Kind of Degradation .

By the Resolution of the 23d of August that Part with respect to no Pall was done away with ?

It was .

Suppose the Pall allowed , then what is there in the Ninth Resolution , which only goes the Length of

saying , that if they are to contribute towards the Funeral it shall be conducted entirely by the Board of Guardians , which you object to ?

Nothing but this , that I think in every Case the Party may be desirous to conduct the Funeral from their own House , and to bear a part of the Expense , without being able to take the whole Expense upon themselves . I know that Persons on the old System sometimes received 10s . or 12s . , on the Condition of taking the Expense of the Funeral upon themselves , and the Funeral was then conducted in the same Way that the Funeral of any respectable Person would be ; it was not marked by any Kind of Peculiarity .

Suppose the Pall and the tolling the Bell to be allowed , as it was by a subsequent Resolution , what Difference was there between a Funeral as conducted by the Parish and from their own Houses ?

In the one Case the Funeral would proceed from the House of the Relative , and in the other from the Poorhouse .

Under the old Law was the Body removed from the Poorhouse to the House of the Relations ?

It was frequently given up ; in some cases it was not . I would beg to observe , my Objections to the Ninth Rule grew out of the Provisions in the Tenth Rule .

Those are your principal Objections ?

Yes .

Then the Resolution of the 23d of August did away with that ?

It did . What I particularly wish is , to show that the Board of Guardians passed these Rules,

835

**made
to it**

not on any Examination into the Subject , but in consequence of their having been introduced by the Assistant Commissioner . They were moved at the Board , and adopted without Discussion . If they had been discussed in the Board we should have known on what Footing they took it ; but the Assistant Commissioner got Two Gentlemen to move and second the Rules , and they were not considered Matter of Discussion

If those Gentlemen thought those Rules ought to be discussed , why did they not discuss them ?

They stated that they considered them as not presented to them for Discussion ; that they considered them as Regulations . This took place at the First or Second Meeting of the Board

of Guardians ; but the Poor Law Commissioners received the Rules as emanating from the Board of Guardians , and thought fit to express their Approbation of Rules as passed by the Guardians , which absolutely emanated from their own Body .

Implying that they had emanated from the Board of Commissioners ?

Yes .

Was there any thing to prevent the Board of Guardians discussing those Propositions ?

No ; but it is to the Fact that I wish to call your Lordships Attention , that those Rules were passed without Discussion , in consequence of being introduced I should say surreptitiously .

Was it not open to the Board of Guardians to rescind them ?

No .

How happened it , that having passed , that respecting the Bell and the Pall was rescinded ?

It was not open to the Board of Guardians to rescind it by a bare Majority , but it was necessary to obtain the Votes of Two Thirds of the Guardians present ; therefore , if the Guardians had been betrayed into an imprudent passing of any Rules , it would be necessary to obtain the Votes of Two Thirds of the Persons present , on Notice . .

Would that prevent their making a Motion , and having a Discussion upon the Subject ?

No , certainly not .

Did those Guardians who had so passed these Rules make any Attempt previous to the 23d of August to have the Rules rescinded ?

Those Two Rules were rescinded on the 23d of August .

Have any Attempts been made by any Guardians since to rescind any other Rules ?

Yes .

With what Effect ?

They have failed .

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Did you move , when you were a Member of the Board , to rescind any of those Resolutions ?

I moved nothing in the Board ; I never proposed a Resolution .

Did any body while you were there ?

No ; but it has been since done .

How do you know that it has been since done ; is it on the Minutes of the Board ?

As a Member of the Board of Guardians I received this Circular , dated 6th of January

1838 . « *Sir , I am directed by the Board of Guardians to inform every one of its Members that the Rev . Henry Parsons gave Notice on the 5th Instant of his Intention on Friday the 19th Instant to move that the Resolution passed at the Board on the 31st of May 1836 , adopting certain Rules for general Relief , be rescinded so far as regards the Fifth , Eighth , and Eleventh Rules . "*

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Did you attend in consequence of that Circular ?

I did not ; I had declined long before that attending the Board ; but your Lordships , by reference to the Minute Book , will find the Result of that Motion .

It appears upon the Minutes , that on the 19th of January 1838 a Resolution was moved to the Effect stated in that circular Letter : " Agreeable to a Notice given by the Rev . *Henry Parsons on the 5th Instant , for rescinding a Resolution passed at the Board on the 31st of May 1836 , adopting certain Rules for general Relief , so far as regards the Fifth , Eighth , and Eleventh Rules , it was moved by the Rev . Henry Parsons , and seconded by Mr . James Culverwell , That the Fifth Rule , agreed to by the Board of Guardians on the 31st of May 1836 , relative to general Relief , be rescinded , and that the following be substituted : That those Paupers who are able - bodied shall not receive Relief but through the Operation of a Workhouse or by way of Loan , except under the particular Circumstance of a large Family , and also that it be made appear satisfactorily to the Board that the Parties applying are sober and industrious , and that their ordinary Wages are insufficient to provide them common Necessaries . Upon a Division , Two Thirds of the Guardians present not being in favour of the Motion , as required by a Resolution passed at the Board on the 12th of May 1836 , it was lost . Eighth Rule . - Moved by the Reverend Henry Parsons , and seconded by Mr . James Culverwell , That every orphan Child whom the Board thinks it necessary to assist shall be taken into the Workhouse ; but that any orphan Child of sound Health maintained wholly in the Workhouse may be permitted to leave it , at the Request of the Guardian of the Parish to which it legally belongs , and receive weekly Relief from the Board sufficient for Subsistence , together with his or her Earnings , whenever constant Work can be procured for such Orphan . Carried unanimously . Eleventh Rule . - Moved by the Rev . Henry Parsons , and seconded by Mr . James Culverwell , That a Man or Woman*

wholly aged and infirm be allowed not exceeding 2s . 6d . a Week out - door Relief , and a Man and Wife under like Circumstances 4s . 6d . , except in cases of great Necessity , or when from some unusual Rise in the Price of Provisions or Fuel it shall appear advisable to the Board to increase their Allowance during such temporary Pressure . Moved , as an Amendment , by R . K . M . King , Esq . , and seconded by

, That a Man or woman wholly aged and infirm be allowed not exceeding 3s . per Week , and a Man and Wife under like Circumstances 5s . , excepting in extreme Cases , when such Relief shall be given as the Board shall from Time to Time direct . Upon a Division the original Motion was carried , and the Amendment negatived " ?

The first Proceeding establishes the Fact that a Majority of Two Thirds was necessary to rescind an adopted Resolution .

That appears to be under the Bye Law of the 31st of May 1836 : " *That no Resolution agreed to or adopted at any Meeting of this Board shall be rescinded or altered without Two Weeks previous Notice being given , which shall be entered on the Minutes on the usual weekly Day of Meeting at which such Notice shall be given , which Entry shall state the Alteration proposed to be effected by such Motion ; and that within Three Days the Clerk shall on all such Occasions give to every Guardian and to the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner of the District Notice thereof , and of the Day on which the proposed Alteration is to be brought under Discussion ; but no Resolution shall be rescinded without the Consent of Two Thirds of the Guardians present at such Discussion . "*

In pursuance of that Bye Law that Motion of Mr . Parsons could not be carried ?

It could not . I was asked whether there was any Instance of a Resolution to rescind adopted Resolutions having been prevented by that Bye Law , and I have been able to point out an Instance ; there may be others .

It was not rescinded in consequence of there not being the Two Thirds required by the Bye Law ?

It was not ; there may be other Instances , but that immediately occurred to me .

837

You attribute those Bye Laws , not to the Board of Guardians , but to the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner ?

Decidedly .

*He suggested them to the Board of Guardians ,
and they adopted them ?*

They were suggested by him to an individual
Member of the Board .

*An individual Member moved them , and they
were adopted ?*

Yes .

The Witness is directed to withdraw .

Ordered , That this Committee be adjourned
to Thursday next ,

Twelve o ' Clock .