

Five articles transcribed from  
The Epsom and Ewell Advertiser  
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# **THE POOR**

## **History of Epsom Union**

### **A Century of Change.**

#### **Customs – Dress – Food – Tasks – Schools – Discipline**

#### **How Parishes Have Developed**

The Poor Law Act of 1834 put a stop to indiscriminate poor relief, set up Boards of Guardians, established unions and workhouses and instituted the system of administration of relief to the poor which has existed for nearly a century.

During that long period vast changes have taken place in the popular attitude towards the poor, in the treatment of the aged and young, the infirm and crippled, the honest and vicious pauper. By permission of the Epsom Board of Guardians and through the courtesy of Mr. Alick G.Ebbutt, their Clerk, it has been made possible for the records of the Guardians to be searched and extracts taken.

As a result much interesting matter has been unearthed from the carefully preserved minute books, information on conditions, customs, dress, discipline and treatment, the erection and development of the workhouse, the men who through 93 years have kept the work going and the growth of tiny villages into towns of importance.

This information will appeal to all our readers and the records will be published in these columns during the next few weeks.

But first of all it will be necessary to see what were the conditions of the county and what was the method of relieving the poor up to the passing of the Act which brought Unions and elected Guardians, workhouses and Local Government Board control of the Poor Law into existence. That can only be shown by a brief survey of the growth of pauperism, which dates back five and a half centuries and which runs like a sinister thread through the whole fabric of English social history. The

#### **BIRTH OF PAUPERISM**

began in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Before that the feudal system had prevailed under which the labouring classes were serfs, holding no property and themselves being the property of a master by whom they were housed, fed, clothed and protected. With the decay of the feudal system large numbers of serfs were struggling towards freedom and that meant widespread destitution. No longer dependent on the barons for maintenance they wandered about in search of work and food. The roughest among them gathered together in bands, crime became rampant and the vagrants became a menace in a country of widely scattered population and of extensive forests and lonely wastes. Law after law was passed for

the suppression of vagrancy and while these efforts had little effect on the roving bands they helped to swell the numbers of vagrants by the very nature of the measures employed. The labourer was tied down to his place of birth and if he wandered from it in search of work he was subjected to severe punishment. He was compelled to work for wages fixed by local justices who were also the local employers. If there was no work for him to do he starved or stole - and the punishment for theft was often death. Then came the Agrarian revolution, which led to large areas of arable land being put down to pasture. That diminished the number of workers needed on the land and sent additional families on the perilous career of vagrancy.

### **THE MONASTERIES.**

And religious houses were rich and noted for their charity. They fed multitudes but they were widely scattered and the unfortunates who lived remote from them could only wander through the desolate countryside, avoiding towns and begging or stealing when opportunity occurred. Thus the armies of desperate and hopeless or crafty and reckless nomads grew until they became a terror to the remaining inhabitants. In 1388 an Act was passed making still more severe the code of punishment for wandering.

### **"STURDY BEGGARS**

and valiant rogues" were whipped for the first offence of wandering from the place of their nativity. They lost their ears on a second conviction, and with that disfigurement it was not long before they were convicted of the heinous offence a third time. They were then hanged. Still more stringent laws were passed a century later, but there was little choice between death by starvation and by hanging, and the numbers of those forming bands of desperadoes grew. Then in 1536 King Henry VIII made an attempt to deal with the trouble. Under that Act justices were empowered to issue licenses to beg within a prescribed area. If a beggar wandered outside that area he was whipped and put in the stocks as a shocking example. If he had no license the punishment was the same and he was then given a license and an area in which to beg. Any man or woman being "whole and mighty in body" who was found begging was whipped through the parish and then sent to his or her last place of abode. Undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge were not exempt from this Act. If they were found begging without a license they were subject to the same penalties. Anyone harbouring or giving alms to able-bodied beggars was fined. But while Henry VIII strove to diminish vagrancy he also made the evil much greater. He

### **DISSOLVED THE MONASTERIES**

and thus deprived large numbers of their only source of maintenance. Many starved to death and the trouble became more acute in spite of much humane, if indiscriminate, charity. Effort after effort was made to lessen the evil but without avail until the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Then was passed an Act known ever since as the Model Act, upon which all Poor Law administration that has proved effective has been based to the present day. That Act recognised only two classes of poor - those who would not work and those who could not work. The former were given employment and if they refused to work they were sent to prison. The children of indigent parents were taught to work and were apprenticed to a trade. The sick, infirm, aged and blind were placed in poor houses and their near relatives were made responsible for their maintenance. Each parish was made responsible for its own poor and churchwardens and overseers levied compulsory rates. The three underlying principles of the Act were

### **RELIEF, REPRESSION AND REMEDY,**

and they have remained the guiding principles, with the exception of one period, to this day. The result, coupled with greater national prosperity, was so marked that pauperism was diminished to a wonderful extent. Then came ill-advised tampering with the Poor Law by well-meaning but foolish people. The pernicious law known as Gilbert's Act was passed in

1796 and almost resulted in the ruin of the country. It made legal the giving of out-relief to able-bodied persons and put unlimited powers into the hands of overseers. The cost of Poor Law relief rose to unprecedented heights. The poor were fed better than the unfortunate people who had to foot the bill. Farmers were forced to employ pauper labourers whether they had work for them or not and sometimes had to discharge old servants to make room for lazy and indifferent workers. Labourers were sure of pay whether they worked or not. Women refused to tend aged parents and sick children unless they were paid for it. Landlords whose tenants were in arrears with rent went to the vestry and voted them out-relief with which to pay their bills. Small tradesmen voted relief to customers who were in their debt. Married Couples went direct from the altar to the workhouse where they received good food or shelter, or to the overseer and demanded out-relief. Medical relief was claimed as a right and the inhabitants of whole parishes were medical paupers. These are merely a few of the effects of this ill-advised Act and when early in the 19th century the country was groaning under an intolerable burden and the workers were demoralised to a fearful extent a Royal Commission was set up. This eventually reported so strongly that the Act of 1834 was passed This set up

### **AN AUTOCRACY**

in the shape of three commissioners, afterwards succeeded by the Local Government Board It revived the Act of Queen Elizabeth with salutary additions. It created unions of parishes with one workhouse for the union instead of a poor house in each parish. It made all relief to able-bodied persons, except in workhouses, illegal, and it established Boards of Guardians, popularly elected, to control the unions, whose accounts had to be submitted to audit by officials of the Central Board. Thus came into existence the

### **EPSOM BOARD OF GUARDIANS**

with whose early efforts the next article will deal. The records will show how the new system was set up, how the poor houses were gradually closed and the nucleus of the later institution in Epsom was formed. They will deal with the discipline of the house, the treatment of smallpox - then a very prevalent disease - the dress and diet of the inmates and the gradual evolution of humaner laws and usages which at last built up a self-respecting and industrious body of workers.

## **II. FORMATION OF THE UNION**

Epsom Union was formed by an Order of the Poor Law Commission dated May 5th, 1836, and consisted of all the parishes included in the union in 1927 with the exception of Headley, which was added later. Guardians were elected at the parish vestries and they, with the ex-officio justices, turned up in strong force at the first meeting of the Board which was held on June 2nd, 1836, when Baron de Teissier was asked to preside as senior magistrate. Among the justices were Mr. E.R. Northey, squire of Epsom, grandfather of General Northey.

Agriculture was the staple industry and most of the elected Guardians were farmers. They may not have known much about the conduct of public business, but they had been chief sufferers under the Relief Acts and were very keenly interested in reform. The area was then

### **MOST RURAL.**

Epsom was the largest in population and returned three Guardians. Carshalton came next and Leatherhead, Ewell and Cobham were more important, at least in a Poor Law sense, than Sutton, although that shared with them the distinction of having two members, one being

allowed to each of the remaining parishes. Epsom returned Henry Milles, independent; William Butcher, builder; and T. Whitbourn, a farmer. Banstead was represented by D.C. Porter, Ewell by James Andrews and Benjamin Mallern, both independent. William King, farmer, was the first representative for Ashted, Chessington returned J. Parker, Cuddington R. Lewen and Fetcham W. Gibbs, all farmers. Leatherhead had B. Chitty, a farmer, and C. Sturgess, a victualler. The Bookhams were represented by a farmer and a landed proprietor. Carshalton sent the Rev. Edmund Turner Beynon and John Taylor to the Board Sutton's Guardians were Henry James Stubbs and John Grace, a farmer, and Archibald Palmer was Cheam's representative. Cobham and Stoke d'Abernon were represented by farmers.

At this first meeting the foundations of the new system were apparently well laid Henry Gosse, a justice, was appointed chairman, with Archibald Palmer of Cheam vice-chairman. The Board appointed W. Everest of Epsom first clerk at a salary of £150, discussed the means whereby they could best start on their herculean task of cleansing the Poor Law stables and then adjourned for a fortnight to prepare their plans.

### **NEW WORKHOUSE.**

The first business at the second meeting was to take steps to get rid of the parish poor houses. It was unanimously agreed to erect a central workhouse at Epsom to accommodate 300 persons. A committee was appointed and advertisements were issued to the 'Times', 'Morning Herald' and 'Morning Chronicle' asking for plans. Then it was decided to prepare one house for able-bodied men and boys over thirteen. Epsom Poor House was reserved for the aged and infirm who could not with propriety be removed. Carshalton and Ewell houses were adopted by the Board - the former for girls under sixteen, boys under thirteen and most of the children under seven. Leatherhead was set apart for the reception of aged and infirm women, whilst able-bodied women were temporarily to be distributed in the three houses. All other poor houses were to be closed.

No time was lost in those days in preparing plans and submitting them to superior authorities. A week later seventeen tenders for the new workhouse were submitted; that of Mr. Mason, of Ipswich, for a house for 300 to cost £4,800 was accepted and it was decided that the land in Dorking Road at the rear of the old poor house should be utilised, the purchase price being about £900. The existing house was reported to be able to accommodate from 80 to 100 persons. It is interesting to note that the committee reported "There is little freehold land to be acquired in the parish and it all bears a very high price".

### **SALARIES AND PRICES**

The Board appointed John Trower governor or master of the Epsom House at a salary of £40 a year and his daughter matron without salary! Moss Lyon was made governor of Carshalton Workhouse at £40 a year, his wife to receive £20 as matron and the same salaries were fixed at Leatherhead. Three medical officers of health were appointed - one for Sutton, Cheam, Carshalton and Banstead; one for Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, Chessington and Cuddington; and the third for the remaining parishes. Two superior health officers were appointed at salaries of £110 a year. A labour master was appointed at 16s a week. At the third meeting of the Board tenders were received for the goods needed in the workhouses, an entirely new departure from the haphazard and often corrupt supply under the old system. Bread was 14s a cwt., flour 38s a sack, ox beef 6s.8d a stone, Irish butter 8½d a pound, cheese 5¼d, Wallsend coals 30s. a cwt., Congou tea 3s.8d a pound, oatmeal 20s a cwt., salt 1s.9d, pepper 1s.6d a pound, ginger 1s.4d mustard 7d, vinegar 2s.4d a gallon, candles 5s.6d a dozen pounds, and Scotch barley 22s. cwt. Even at that distance of time the Langland family was to the fore of Epsom and their tender of 17s.6d and 7s.6d for elm coffins for adults and children was accepted. Leather shoes ranged in price from 2s.4d a pair for children to 3s.10d for adults. Worsted hose were 12s.6d a dozen, men's hats 9s. a dozen and men's fustian suits cost 11s.7d each. Linsey Wolsey was in great demand for women at 1s.0¼d a yard, Welsh

flannel was 1s. a yard, blue handkerchiefs 6½d each and women's Dunstable bonnets 22s. a dozen.

### **WORKHOUSE AND DIET.**

Amendments were made in the new workhouse plans, fresh tenders were asked for and that of T. Butcher of Guildford for £4,742 was accepted, two years being allowed for the completion of the building, which commenced on October 12th, 1836.

Indiscriminate out-relief had been the greatest source of trouble and the Guardians resolved in every case in which this exceeded a value of 1s.6d a week half of it should be given in kind They established a dietary table for inmates and ordered that half a pint of common table beer should be given only to people over sixty and women employed in laundry work. The Medical Officer of Health for Carshalton reported in November that a low fever had broken out in that workhouse, and the Board agreed to the giving of a little meat and beer daily to the inmates. The Medical Officer of Health for Ewell pleaded that an allowance of beer to aged females was necessary in the winter and it was left to his discretion to prescribe it. Apparently all the poor had not been reformed, for the workhouses had only been in operation five months when that at Epsom was broken into at night and goods were stolen. A reward of £10 was offered, but there is no record of an arrest.

### **THE RATES.**

Up to the institution of the union each parish had borne the cost of its own poor which necessarily varied. Now the cost was to be made a common charge over the whole union and the Guardians had to make some basis of assessment. It is not clear how they arrived at the conclusion they did, but at their third meeting they assessed the parishes and also decided the sums which would be required from each to cover the cost of administration for the first three months. As this formed the first assessment and rate demand the figures are reproduced They give a very fair indication of the relative population and importance of the parishes at that time:

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Call</b>
	£	£
Epsom	1796	190
Carshalton	1605	180
Leatherhead	1115	120
Ewell	1063	110
Cobham	1002	100
Cheam	790	150
Banstead	681	110
Sutton	599	90
Ashted	580	60
Great Bookham	512	70
Stoke d'Abernon	236	55
Cuddington	223	50
Chessington	118	20
Fetcham	99	14
Little Bookham	91	30

This was only about twelve per cent of the assessment and apparently it did not suffice for at the end of six months a call of twenty per cent of the assessment in each parish was made.

### **OLD POOR HOUSES SOLD.**

A short-sighted policy was followed by overseers of parishes with the consent of the Board. This was the sale of premises no longer used as poor houses and of other property belonging to different parishes. Small sums were received for land which today would be of great value. The workhouse and premises at Ewell were sold for £315. That at Leatherhead was put up to auction and realised £680. In turn premises were sold at Banstead for £419, Great Bookham £245, Carshalton £469 3s.11d, Cuddington £318, Epsom £980, Ashted £262, more land at Ewell for £270 7s. and at Stoke d'Abernon for £306 19s.8d. Epsom Vestry sold a piece of land on Epsom Common. The proceeds were allocated towards the cost of the new workhouse, but the value increased enormously when the district developed and the public lost valuable freehold rights.

### **VALUATIONS**

Trouble arose over the assessments and the Board found it necessary to order surveys and valuations of parishes. The first was the parish of Epsom, fees paid being Is. 6d per acre for the survey and £1 per cent on the annual value of all houses and buildings. Ewell followed and Great Bookham, the fee for the latter parish being £64. Ashted valuation raised a storm and was referred back to the surveyors. Epsom Overseers protested that the re-valuation of the parish was, from the personal knowledge of the Vestry, so inconsistent with the true value that neither they nor the parish officers would undertake to make a rate upon it. The assessment was referred to the Poor Law Commissioners to determine. They declined to make an order for the work to be done again. The survey of Sutton cost £140 and the land and tithe owners paid half the cost in return for the right of using the books. The cost of the Leatherhead survey was £210 14s.9d and of Ewell £199 9s.2d Banstead cost £288 6s. and Little Bookham £64.

## **III THE NEW WORKHOUSE**

On the 21st. March, 1838, the contractor tendered the keys of the new workhouse. They were refused as the Board contended that the contract had not been completed. They made a claim of £300 for details omitted but after much controversy they accepted half that sum, and in September of that year the work of furnishing the new building was put in hand. The total cost of furnishing this home for 300 people was £150. That appears to be a ridiculously inadequate sum when the furnishing of a cottage would cost as much today. But in those days prices ruled very low. Knives and forks were bought at 10s. a dozen, spoons cost 1s.10d a dozen, and iron fenders were 2s.6d and 5s.6d each, with other articles in proportion. New officers were appointed A porter was engaged at £35 a year, his wife to give her whole time to the duties without pay but with rations and candles. A schoolmaster and mistress received £35 a year and were required to give their whole time. Mr. William Dorling, of Epsom, was appointed Registrar of Births and Deaths, and his son Henry was appointed his deputy.

### **THE CHAPLAIN**

A member of the Board moved that an honorarium be given to the Rev. Lewin Glyn (Ewell), the Rev. Vernon (Carshalton) and the Rev. J. Derby (Epsom) for discharging the duties of chaplain at the three workhouses for two years and four months. The Chairman refused to put the motion and the parsons apparently went unthanked. A chaplain was appointed for the new workhouse at a salary of £100 a year. "He was to preach one sermon every Sunday morning at 11. to hold an afternoon service at 3 o'clock, to administer sacrament every three months at least and to examine the children on the Catechism at least once every week and to record the moral and religious state of the paupers generally each week". A few months later the first Master and Matron were dismissed for incompetence. There were 81 applications for the offices and the Guardians interviewed selected candidates

at the Half Moon Inn, High Street, Southwark, their choice falling upon Mr. and Mrs. J.T. Gratton, whom they appointed at £70 and £30 respectively, allowing them to have their two children in the House. They held office for ten years but trouble soon arose between them and the Chaplain. This went on for some time and at last the Commissioners called for the resignation of the Master, but the Board vigorously opposed the order. Later the Commissioners ordered the two officials to live in amity or to quit and a few weeks later the Chaplain resigned. The Rev. George Lewen Glyn, Rector of Ewell, filled the breach for a time, the Master being instructed to read the lessons morning and evening.

#### **INMATES DRESS.**

The Board spent a considerable time in agreeing as to the uniform dress which should be adopted by inmates of the new workhouse. Finally they agreed that old and infirm men should wear flannel waistcoats, striped calico shirts, worsted stockings, fustian suits, smock-frocks and shoes, and hats or caps. Able-bodied men and boys were to wear the same minus the flannel underwear. Old and infirm women were dressed in blue print or striped gowns, linsey wolsley petticoats, chequered aprons and neckerchiefs, chequered muslin caps, and bonnets for outings. Able-bodied women were dressed in the same fashion but less warmly, whilst girls were to wear striped frocks, stockings and shoes, and bonnets.

#### **TASKS.**

It was found impossible to find work for all the able-bodied men who were driven into the house by the suspension of indiscriminate out-relief. So tasks were made for them. Broken glass was purchased and the men were set to work grinding it to powder by the aid of iron pestles and mortars. A small mill was set up and corn was ground by hand, not only for use in the house but for outsiders. Anybody could take corn to the house and have it ground, the charge made for the service being 2d a bushel. Those competent to do so were employed in the repair of shoes. Women were engaged in laundry work and the older girls were also expected to spend part of their time at the wash-tub. A tailor was employed who made use of the labour at hand as far as possible. The Medical Officer of Health reported at the end of the first month that it was absolutely necessary that washerwomen should be allowed on the first day's washing each week one pint of beer, with 3oz. of bread and 1oz. of cheese as extra diet. This was allowed for a time to see how it operated and the Board at the same time agreed to allow all inmates of sixty half a pint of beer on meat days. There were complaints as to the insufficiency of the dietary and the Board decided to experiment by allowing inmates an extra 3oz. of bread on days when dinner consisted of soup. At the end of the first winter it was resolved that children in the Infirmary should be supplied with fresh greens or turnip tops, but apparently there was no idea of supplying other inmates with any vegetable with the exception of potatoes. At the end of the first year the Board purchased a corn mill on which six to twenty men could work at once grinding corn or barley or cracking oats and peas. The Board declined an offer from outside to supply constant work to the inmates in picking coconut junk fibre for which the Guardians would be paid 8s. per cwt.

In 1840 the Board accepted a tender of £23 10s. for the erection of a mill house with better accommodation for the work. Sixteen years later the question of finding tasks was acute and the Board gave permission to the Ewell Bleach Works to take away eligible girls under twenty for employment in those works. As time went on other tasks were invented. In 1873 the Board ordered that the girls in the school should be brought into the kitchen to learn the system of cooking. Six years later it was decided that the old men should be employed in wood chopping and fifty fathoms of yellow deal and batten ends were bought at £6 5s. a fathom. In 1884 the Board resolved that able-bodied men should work every day except Sundays. That the daily task of each man should be the breaking very small of 5 cwt. of stone or alternately eight men should turn the crank of a saw mill and saw half a fathom of wood.

## EARLY TROUBLES.

The starting of an entirely new system was not an easy task. The sweeping away of a corrupt and extravagant mode of procedure was very much resented by those who had made profit out of it, and there was not always concord and agreement among the Guardians. Some trouble arose in 1838 with reference to Ewell Guardians and both of them resigned. The Board directed the Clerk to take proceedings by indictment against the parish officers of Ewell for a misdemeanour in making a false return of the Guardians elected for the parish. Unfortunately the result of that action does not appear in the records but it would look as if the old place and perquisite hunters relinquished their hold very reluctantly. It is interesting to note that one of the two new Guardians elected was Mr. James Martin, a name which has been honourably associated with Ewell ever since that date. This was the father of Mr. E.W. Martin, at present a Guardian for Ewell, which he has represented for very many years. His father came to Ewell when the present member was a baby six months old, having formerly farmed at Headley and other parishes in the union.

The Guardians were bothered over the re-valuation of Cobham and at last they ordered a perambulation of the parish so that doubts as to the boundaries might be removed. The Board had to deal with a number of imbeciles and lunatics. Arrangements were made to send the latter to asylums at Hoxton and Bethlem. Relieving officers had to be appointed and although there were numerous applications for the post at £1 10s. a year those appointed did not stay long.

As far on as 1847 the overseers gave trouble and the Board decided that an information be laid against those of Epsom for grossly neglecting their duty in allowing females to remain in the house instead of getting them removed to the place of their settlement, whereby Epsom had been subjected to heavy expense.

## CHAIRMAN.

In March, 1839, Mr. Henry Gosse, the first Chairman of the Board, resigned to the regret of the members. He was succeeded by Mr. Henry Seawell, of Great Bookham, and the Rev. E.T. Beynon, of Carshalton, was elected in the vice-chair. But the new chairman died suddenly in June, 1842, and the Guardians and officials attended the interment of a man who had shown singular fitness for the office. The Rector of Carshalton declined the chair and the Board elected Mr. Joseph Bonsor, of Great Bookham, Messrs. Wallace and Dickens being elected vice-chairmen. Two years later Mr. Bonsor resigned, being succeeded by Mr. Dickens, who hailed from Leatherhead, but on his death a few months later - he had been a member of the Board since its formation - he was succeeded by Mr. R.T. Wallace. The records state that in December, 1848, the chairman and the vice-chairman resigned "through circumstances arising out of the proceedings of the Board". That led to the appointment of Mr. W.S.H. Fitzroy as chairman, a gentleman of great personal charm, eloquence and piety. (Mr. O.W. Gardner was his first deputy.) He resided at Banstead Place. Under his guidance the Board made very sound progress. So popular was he with the Board that in January, 1856, they presented him with a handsome testimonial. He acknowledged it in a letter of great length and the following extract from it is interesting as showing the attitude of the Board to the poor at that time:

*"The union of sentiment and of action between us all is perceptibly felt in the surrounding district, for whilst on the one hand it checks imposition, on the other hand it gives confidence to the destitute that, in the hour of necessity, their wants will be supplied. It encourages industry. It suppresses vice." He concluded: "If we continue on our course, though man may revile us here God will assuredly reward us hereafter."*

The second year of work in the new house was not an eventful one. A rate of 25 per cent of the rateable basis was levied. A proposal was made for an order authorising the Board

to appoint a paid collector or an assistant overseer for Carshalton, Cheam and Sutton. But Sutton objected and at length it was decided that each parish should have its own paid collector. That was the first rift in the lute which ultimately led to these parishes being made quite distinct in matters of local government.

Before leaving this period it may be mentioned that for the first complete year the union accounts contained the following figures, a comparison of which will show the relative importance attached to different articles. 'Beer in the workhouse cost £24 19s.6d, tea £15 16s.1d and meat £7 19s.7d, whilst the grocery bill came to £7 3s.6d and the bread bill to £17 19s. 9d For out-relief the bread given cost £156 and meat £12.

## IV MONEY TIGHT.

Money could not be borrowed readily in those days for the country had been almost ruined by war, unemployment, bad trade and vagrancy. An echo of the wars is to be found in the application of a pensioner from the 56th. Regiment for assistance. His pension was 1s. 4d a day and the Board decided to receive him into the house. When a loan was needed to meet the cost of the new workhouse none was found willing to lend it on reasonable terms. So the first chairman and the second chairman agreed to advance £2,500 each at 4½%, and the money was repaid in twenty annual instalments. Guardians drove or rode horse-back to the meetings and as they found it difficult to put their horses up near the house they decided in July, 1839, to erect stables for the purpose on the premises. These cost £98. Towards the end of that year it was found that relief and administration were more costly and a rate was made of 40 per cent on the basis of assessment or treble the amount of the first rate levied The calls on the parishes were : Ashtead £133; Banstead £186; the Bookhams £152; Chessington £32; Cheam £147; Cuddington £55; Carshalton £229; Cobham £211; Epsom £316; Fetcham £1 68; Leatherhead £21 3; Sutton £1 13; and Stoke d'Abernon £60. Ewell overseer was fined £5 for being in arrears with his payments and others were warned that they must be prompt in their contributions.

### THE POLICE.

at this time the police were very few in numbers and in this area outside the Metropolitan Police limits they were evidently somewhat lax if kind hearted. Thus it came about that in October, 1839, that two men in the house were handed over to the local police for some offence. They appeared before the local Bench not too sober and on inquiry it was found that the beer had been supplied to them by their genial custodians after they were received in custody. History does not say what the justices said or did to the local constables. A little later the Board had a letter from the local justices asking to be informed of the opinions of the parishes in the union which were outside the Metropolitan Police area as to the formation of a rural police force - the progenitors of the present county police. Later the Epsom police asked for payment for catching two absentees from the house and were indignant when the Board refused the request. When a woman suspected of infanticide was taken into the house a Metropolitan police constable slept in the house six nights in order to "keep his eye on her". The Master reported it to the Board, who expressed their indignation to the Commissioner of Police at what they considered was "an illegal and unwarrantable action". In 1850 the governor and porter of the house were sworn in as Metropolitan Police constables so that they could arrest at any moment.

### SANITATION.

Soon after the house was erected the medical officer of health complained strongly to the Board of a sewer outside the workhouse gates which was so bad that it was injurious to the inmates. The Board requested the overseers of Epsom to remedy the nuisance, but they

replied that drains were not part of their business and the Board must apply to the waywarden of the parish. Three months later the nuisance was so serious that the Guardians decided to cover in the drain, using pauper labour for the purpose. They refused to contribute towards the cost of closing in another drain near the turnpike gate, but they lent six paupers to the contractor, who kept them working upwards of a month. Fifteen years later the Board prepared plans for draining the house, but as the local authority, then the owners of the water supply, were not prepared to lay on water to flush the drains the matter was abandoned. In January, 1849, there was much sickness in the house and the Board decided to make all improvement in the house drains, at the same time giving each adult four ounces more bread and each child a third of a pint of beer at 1s. a gallon! In April, 1856, Mr Dorling, who was chairman of the Local Board of Health, attended before the Guardians with plans for the drainage of the workhouse. The Board resolved "That the state of the workhouse premises, both as regards the health of the inmates and the total absence of all nuisances, renders the introduction of any system of drainage under the Epsom Board of Health unnecessary and the Board hereby protests against the union and the ratepayers being burdened with the expense of works which they consider not only useless but which may become positively injurious." Mr. Andrews, who was local surveyor at the time, estimated that the cost would be £200. In 1874 the Board awoke more fully to the advantages of cleanliness. They ordered four hot water baths to be supplied and a separate one for patients suffering from the itch. Six tin basins for boys to wash in and a hot water supply to the infirmary, the original provision having broken down long before. It was true that the health of the inmates was not exceptionally bad in 1856, but there were occasions when the Board had plenty to think about in that respect.

### **SMALLPOX**

was not regarded as a plague in the days when nearly everyone had it at some period of their lives, but in the Thirties the authorities were beginning to take action to prevent its spreading. For many years no particular provision was made for the isolation of patients with this disease, but in 1860 Mark Bristow, of Epsom, was proceeded against for exposing in the public streets of Epsom, where smallpox was very prevalent, a male servant who was suffering from the disease. The Local Board of Health was appealed to to stop the disease and were told if they would provide a place of residence for patients the Guardians would pay all their expenses. It was not until 1862 that definite action was taken. Then the Board held a special meeting to take into consideration the provision of a pest house in every parish in the union. In August, 1863, the Board resolved that a cottage in the workhouse gardens should be used for "urgent" cases of smallpox. In 1871 the medical officers of health wrote urging the establishment of pest houses. In May, 1877, an outbreak occurred at Sutton and the vaccination officer had to give a reason why so many children had not been vaccinated. A Mr. Brightwell, living in George Street, was fined 10s. for not having a child vaccinated. The Local Government Board wrote giving the Board instructions how to cope with epidemics of the disease. The difficulties were made more acute by reason of people refusing to horse the ambulance for moving patients any distance. Two months later Leatherhead had an outbreak and the Board refused to compensate a man for loss of time because he had been disbarred from work while smallpox patients were nursed in his house. In March, 1881, several outbreaks of the disease occurred in the union, and in January four cases were reported in the house. The first led to the idea of an

### **ISOLATION HOSPITAL.**

The medical officer reported that more accommodation was badly needed for infectious cases and it was decided that a house near Banstead Station belonging to the railway company should be used as an isolation hospital. This was done at a rent of £75 a year and formed the forerunner of the present joint hospital there. Of seven cases in the house two died

and the others were moved, Dr. Coltart was then the house medical officer and he reported that he had re-vaccinated all inmates whom he thought likely to catch the disease. Epsom Board of Health was urged to make provision for the disinfection and treatment of cases in the town. A year later the Board took into consideration the advisability of recommending the Epsom rural sanitary authority to purchase this house as a permanent hospital. In December, 1881, the master of the workhouse caught the disease and was sent to a hospital at Highgate. At Leatherhead there was an outbreak at the same time and some of the patients were nursed at home, the parents, a road man and a washerwoman, being advised not to go to work. Two cases were sent to Highgate and the doctor had to pay £5 each before they were admitted to the hospital. In June, 1885, outbreaks occurred in the house and at Belmont. The difficulties were finally overcome by the establishment of the hospital at Banstead and isolation and saner treatment reduced the risks of the disease spreading.

Of ordinary fevers the earlier Guardians took small notice unless anything exceptional was reported to them. Low fever raged in the house from time to time and was generally met by a small alteration or addition to the dietary table.

### **SCARLET FEVER**

appears frequently in the reports of medical officers. Four years after the workhouse was built the medical officer of health reported that the disease had twice appeared, but no other complaint had caused the slightest anxiety. The healthful appearance of the children in the house had continued to be the admiration of visitors. There were then (1842) 271 inmates and the infirmary and fever wards had fifty beds. Great attention was paid to cleanliness and he particularly stressed the need for isolation wards. At that time he had eighteen persons too ill to work and five subject to epileptic fits. The only other reference to this disease which calls for record is as late as 1886 when an outbreak occurred in George Street, Sutton, and the new Sutton Local Board urged the Guardians to provide an infectious hospital. The Guardians offered Sutton the use of a wooden hut in the workhouse grounds.

In 1877 the Board were tempted to invest in a patent disinfecting chest invented by Dr. Roberts, of East Retford, but apparently thought better of it. In that year the Board began to send fever patients to Metropolitan Asylums Board hospitals at a fee of 5s. a day.

## **V**

### **VAGRANCY**

It is interesting to note how vagrancy, the chief reason for the passing of the Act, was affected by its operation. At first Guardians had to move very slowly. It was soon made manifest that to stop at once the giving of out-relief to those who could not find work, even though they were classed as able-bodied, would have meant great suffering for dependants. So they were given an order for the workhouse and there they found the conditions were altogether different to what many of them had been accustomed to. There was the daily task and this was by no means an easy or always a pleasant one. They were not fed sumptuously and they had few comforts and little freedom. Gradually the greater number of those who had lived on parish relief were either absorbed into the ranks of the honest workers or they preferred to adopt the open road as a profession and to wander from union to union as casual paupers. The latter class grew in numbers until it became a serious problem as to how they were to be accommodated. The Board was sympathetically inclined to the genuine labourer who wished to emigrate. To give typical instances. In 1840 the Board voted £16 to assist a Carshalton family to emigrate to Australia, £10 to a Ewell family also desirous of going to the Antipodes and £31 to an Epsom family of large size. Later a man and his wife and ten children were given £15 to allow them to proceed to Ontario and it is quite possible that these families laid the foundation of highly respectable citizens in those colonies today. But the

weeding out process that at last divided the poor into honest triers and ambitionless tramps took time and it was ten years after the workhouse was built before the Guardians began to find the casual problem serious. In November, 1848, they decided to use a loft over the stables for male tramps and two rooms in the house for female vagrants. The Master had instructions to separate the more respectable casuals from those who were tramps by profession or who were in a filthy state. That led to a big influx and in January of the following year the Board gave instructions that no vagrants should be admitted except the Master was satisfied from his own personal inspection that such tramp was unable to proceed on his or her own journey

#### **THROUGH EXHAUSTION AND HUNGER.**

No relief was to be given to tramps by overseers or relieving officers except in the case of illness or extreme destitution and all able-bodied vagrants were to be given into custody if found asking for alms. The clerk was ordered to present a petition to Parliament urging the suppression of vagrancy. A notice was put on the gate of the workhouse to the effect that after April 4th., 1849, no vagrants would be admitted to the house and any vagrant causing a disturbance or breach of the peace would be immediately given into the custody of the police. It was reported later that these arrangements had been attended with satisfactory results and the police had rendered most efficient aid in carrying them into effect.

The Board expressed their appreciation of the steady and temperate conduct of the inspector, sergeant and constables and trusted that the benefits of the Metropolitan Police would soon be extended through the whole union.

They asked the Guardians of Croydon, Kingston, Reigate, Guildford, Chertsey and Dorking unions to pass similar resolutions for the stern suppression of vagrancy. In June that year the Poor Law Board wrote expressing their satisfaction at the manner in which the Epsom Guardians had taken steps to prevent vagrancy.

#### **COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL.**

Nine months later the Board reported that the steps adopted had been completely successful, the result being that vagrancy had been entirely suppressed in the Epsom Union "without the occurrence of a single case of hardship or inconvenience to casual applicants for relief". The Board hoped that the dealing with vagrants would be made the sole charge of the police. At the end of the official year the Chairman (Mr. Fitzroy of Banstead Place) wrote to the Board and in his letter on other matters occurred this paragraph referring to the suppression of vagrancy:

*"While our rates are lightened the morals of our own poor are freed from the pollution of these outcasts of society whose lives are fraught with every vice - too indolent to work they batten upon begging and thieving. Many respectable tradesmen of Epsom have told me that they can now leave their shops unprotected when formerly it required the greatest vigilance to protect their property."*

Clearly Epsom stood high in the black list of tramps but they were not entirely driven away for in 1855 the Board had to resolve that any tramp applying for admission and refusing to depart at once should be given into the custody of the police. Then for ten years very little appears on the records relating to vagrancy. In July, 1865, the Board resolved to remove the harsh notice from the gates and to consider the question of the establishment of

#### **VAGRANT WARDS.**

It was also resolved that the police be authorised to relieve vagrants in Epsom and Ewell for one year, but this was afterwards rescinded. Evidently arrangements were made for the accommodation of vagrants and later it was decided that tramps admitted for a night's lodging should be detained until 11 o'clock the next morning. Each was to be given six

ounces of bread for supper and six ounces of bread at seven o'clock for breakfast, children and the sick and infirm to be fed at the discretion of the Master. After breakfast every tramp was to pick two pounds of oakum and if any refused or misbehaved they were to be given into custody and brought before the magistrates.

At the end of 1868 the Board passed a resolution that owing to the large increase in the number of tramps and casual poor the cost ought not to fall upon Boards of Guardians but should be made a national charge and that the duty of looking after tramps should be handed over solely to the police. In November, 1872, plans and specifications for new casual wards were laid before the Board and later the tender of Mr. Ware, of Croydon, for erecting them was accepted, his price being £276.

The Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulation Act, 1871, had one effect. Up to that time the police had given orders for the admission of tramps to the workhouse and after the passing of this Act the Metropolitan Police had instructions not to continue that work. For several years the Board were harassed by the loss of this valuable help but although they offered to make payment the Commissioner of Police firmly declined to allow constables to have anything to do with the giving of orders. Since that date vagrancy has ebbed and flowed. It practically disappeared during the war, but has become common again now and Epsom Union being one of few unions in Surrey which take in tramps its casual wards are very generally patronised. Quite recently the Board joined with that of other unions in an appeal for vagrancy to be dealt with more sternly. Thus does history repeat itself.

#### **WAGES.**

As showing how difficult it was for a working man to maintain a family in the early days of the Poor Law reform an instance may be quoted. In 1840 a labourer in Banstead fell on evil times. His wife and children were sick and although he had the parish doctor the purchase of unusual articles was necessary. He had his wife and ten children to maintain and his wages were 12s. a week so he appealed to the Board who were prepared to grant him relief. But he was an able-bodied man, in work and they could not help him. They were so impressed by these facts that they urged the Poor Law authorities to make an exception in this case. The Poor Law Commissioners refused to depart from the rule and but for private assistance this honest worker would have been driven with his big family into the workhouse. It is a curious coincidence that about this time the Board raised the wages of their porter to 12s. a week with rations, fire and candles.

## **VI SCHOOL v. CHURCH.**

Very interesting details are available from the records as to the instruction of children in the workhouse school and of the inmates generally in the chapel attached to the building.

When the workhouse was opened the Guardians asked the Managers of the National School to allow the children from the house to attend there for instruction on conditions to be arranged. The Managers replied that by way of experiment they would take twelve boys over eight years of age at a charge of £5 a year, the boys to bring their own books. That was agreed to. But the other children had to be educated and so a school master and mistress were appointed, the former being a pauper inmate who was tempted by the offer of 4s. a week and double rations. He was ordered to accompany the girls on their walks outside the house boundaries as a protector.

A few months later the Guardians considered it incumbent upon them to ascertain that the children were properly instructed in reading, writing and religious duties. They had the children before them and "were much gratified at the progress they evinced" In 1841 they decided to pay the school master 12s. a week with lodging, fire and candles. Two months

later they varied the terms by deciding to pay him 15s. a week without any perquisite or allowance whatever and told him that he could live out of the house. Six years later they appointed a successor to this humble pioneer, giving him 15s. with rations and quarters. In 1849 there was selected for the post of school mistress a lady whose name deserves to be perpetuated as one of the most

### **FAITHFUL SERVANTS**

in the history of the Guardians. This was Miss M.A. Horsman, who served in that capacity until June, 1880, a period of 31 years, when her successor was appointed at a salary of 14s. a week; Miss Horsman was paid £15 a year, and had an allowance of 10s. a week for lodgings and rations. She received little more during her long service and when she resigned the Board insisted on her receiving the maximum superannuation - £30 a year - for which she wrote them a grateful letter of thanks.

The conditions were not ideal. The children were billeted in close quarters and the school room was small and uncomfortable. As late as 1868 a committee of inspection reported that in the infants' school there were thirteen infants who were washed in one pail with one towel which was changed weekly. More pails and towels were ordered and it was also decided that the school equipment should be increased. The following were ordered - Testaments, the Miracles, collect books, Faith and Duty, sheet alphabets and spelling cards! Very little attention seems to have been paid to their physical development although thirty six years after the workhouse was opened the Board ordered that the children in the house should be taken out for exercise three times a week.

### **SCHOOL TREATS**

In 1857 the Guardians arranged for the children to be taken to the Crystal Palace. The cost was £4 5s. and the auditors disallowed the payment. The Guardians protested that as the maintenance, education and health of the children was entrusted to them and as it formed part of their system to give the children occasional kindly recreation external to the workhouse, combined with instruction calculated to improve their mental powers, they were of the opinion that the expense had been legally incurred. The Commissioners allowed the item but warned the Guardians that it must not occur again.

Eight years later the school children had another day at the Crystal Palace, this time as the guests of an Epsom resident. It may be mentioned that the obvious delight which this brought prompted the chaplain to take the old men for a day in the country and he received enough financial support to take all the inmates of the workhouse twice to the Crystal Palace in the summer of 1869. Three years later the Rev. T.P. Phillips, chairman of the Board, entertained all the inmates at Stoke d'Abernon, of which parish he was vicar, and they were conveyed there and back in waggons lent by Mr. Agate, a Guardian.

It was in 1876 that the Guardians first interested themselves in the 1870 Education Act. It was because the Government Auditor decided in future to disallow relief given to persons whose children did not attend school regularly. A school attendance committee was formed and two school attendance officers were appointed for the Union to see that this order was carried out.

Three years before this the Board had asked permission of the Local Government Board to board out children in homes in the Union but nothing came of it.

### **LORD ROSEBERY'S WEDDING**

day, March 20th, 1878, was a red-letter day for the inmates for they were given a special treat through the agency of the Rev. G.E. Willis, of Christ Church, and the Rev. Charles Snapp, curate of the Parish Church, Epsom. In the following year the Rev. B.B. Bockett sent £10 to the Guardians to give a treat to the inmates on the occasion of his golden wedding. Thus there were a few occasions in the history of the Guardians when the whole of the inmates were able to spend a day away from the walls which sheltered them.

In 1878 Epsom, Ashted and Leatherhead School Managers declined to take children from the workhouse into their schools. In 1881 the Board again increased the equipment of the school by supplying the maps of the world, Europe and England and Wales. In that year the Board came to the conclusion that the school should be removed to a separate building and the resolution was moved by the late Captain Farmer, of Nonsuch Park, and seconded by Mr. E.W. Martin, who first became a Guardian of the parish of Ewell in April, 1869, and who is still its faithful servant on the Board, which was for long helped by his father before him. The Board further decided to remove the children to a separate building in the grounds and to educate them if possible in the local schools. But the late Rev. E.W. Northey wrote that the Epsom school was so full that they could not take any of the children. The Chairman of the Board (Mr. Phillips) offered £150 to increase the accommodation of this school if the Governors would then take the children. In 1885 the school master asked the Board to find the instruments for a drum and fife band, and at the same time a Penny Bank was started in the school and the children were given a day's outing on Box Hill. Better quarters for the children were found and eventually the difficulty of both accommodation and education was solved by boarding out and sending children to special schools.

#### **THE CHAPEL.**

From the opening of the workhouse the Board attached the greatest importance to the regular and orderly attendance of the inmates and the staff at church services in the building. The chaplain was ordered to report the non-attendance of any officer at these services "without comment" and not to delay the services for their appearance. But as the years went on the Guardians were not as keen to spend money outside their own realm and in December, 1869, they resolved that the church rate be not paid by the Board, whilst two years later, in spite of appeals, they came to a like resolve. Chaplains, officials and inmates came and went, flitting across the stage and being succeeded by others whilst week after week the services were held in a tiny building very unfitted for the purpose. Then forty years from the opening of the building Mr. Phillips, a very zealous chairman for many years, intimated his desire to build a new chapel by voluntary subscriptions. His offer was unanimously accepted and on December 1st, 1879, the chapel still in use was opened. It was dedicated by the Bishop of Guildford, who preached to a distinguished congregation and to the inmates. On the first Sunday afternoon the Chairman of the Board preached and the choir from his own church at Stoke d'Abernon led the singing. The old chapel went to increase the accommodation of the house.

Lord Rosebery gave a handsome stained glass window for the chapel which the Board specially insured. In 1883 Mr. Isaac Braithwaite, of Epsom, gave the Board £20 to cover the cost of setting up the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Belief on the wall over the communion table in the chapel, and in August, 1886, the organ in the building was purchased by money raised by public subscription. Within the last few years additions and improvements have been made to the building but the inmates still gather in the walls erected nearly fifty years ago by the generous gift of Guardians and their friends.

## **VII BEER AND BURIALS.**

Brief mention has already been made of the importance attached to beer as an article of diet. One of the earliest resolutions of the Board when first called together was on the recommendation of the medical officer of health that in consequence of the state of health of the old men in Leatherhead Poor House a pint of table beer should be allowed them daily. In the first year's expenses of the new workhouse there was an item of 404 gallons of beer which cost 7d a gallon and this, with bread at 7¼d for a 41b loaf, constituted the cheapest form of

food and drink. Twenty years later beer cost the Guardians 9d a gallon and milk was supplied to the house at 2¼d a gallon. For nearly fifty years beer was supplied to the inmates very generously. Then in 1884 a return was called for as to the cost of beer, wines and spirits and the Guardians were astonished to find that the bill came to £207 2s 9d, the greater part of the account being for beer. In May, 1885, the Local Government Board Inspector visited the house and reported that he found ninety seven men were receiving an allowance of beer and four able-bodied wardsmen were receiving both beer and a meat diet which was contrary to the regulations. The Board decided to keep the beer in the cellar and to draw it through a beer engine which they installed at a cost of £8 7s 6d. Six months later the inspector reported that £100 a year for beer was exceptional and that such a quantity was not necessary for the health of the inmates. A resolution that the practice of giving beer indiscriminately to old, infirm and crippled inmates should be discontinued was lost.

#### **AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY INDICTED.**

A very interesting reference to Epsom's century old agricultural society is found in the records of 1851. In October of that year the Board ordered a letter to be sent to the secretary of the Surrey Agricultural Society calling attention to the great increase of drunkenness among the labouring classes at the anniversary meeting of the society and hoping the regulations would be revised so that the painful scenes witnessed on the previous day might not occur again.

A resident wrote to the Board pointing out that the society professed to reward good conduct and then put temptation in the way of the labourers.

It is also interesting to note that in March 1858 the Board informed the Epsom Magistrates that they had no objection to a house outside the workhouse gates being licensed as they considered that a fully licensed house there was preferable to a beer shop.

Gradually the use of beer and stimulants was reduced and today the expenditure on these items is almost negligible.

#### **BURIALS.**

The burial of paupers led to considerable trouble in the course of time and the records are dotted with references to this subject. The earliest was in July, 1837, when the Rev. Lewen Glyn, of Ewell, protested against the interment of a child in Ewell Churchyard, he having died in Cuddington parish. He claimed two guineas fee for the vicar, one guinea for the rector and a half for the clerk. In 1841 Mr. Langlands was the contractor for Epsom and he complained to the Board that a rope broke at the burial of a pauper. The churchwardens of Epsom were warned that they must use better ropes in future.

In 1841 a child was burned to death in the house. The chaplain, finding the infant was illegitimate, refused to go into the chapel for the service but went straight to the grave. The Board appealed to the Bishop of Winchester whether he did not consider this conduct "calculated unnecessarily to irritate the poor against the new Poor Law and wound the feelings of the relatives without producing any corresponding good results". They thought the whole of the service should be read at each interment as the Guardians had never refused to pay the accustomed fees.

#### **AGGRIVATION.**

Then came a pauper to the Board with the story that the Rector of Epsom in conversation with him had said that the Bishop had commended his action and that he should not look to the Guardians to tell him how to do his duty. The report was forwarded to the Bishop, who replied that he was surprised but had communicated with Mr. Bockett, the chaplain. Later the Bishop wrote a long letter to the Board and said he had requested that in future the psalm and lesson should always be read in these cases, either before or after the interment.

Then the vicar of Leatherhead complained that his parishioners went into the workhouse, died there and were buried at Epsom. The Board promised him that in future they should be sent back to their own parish for interment.

#### **EPSOM VICAR AGAIN**

In March, 1848, the Vicar of Epsom refused to bury a pauper who had no settlement in the parish. On the advice of the Poor Law Commissioners the Board decided in all future cases to take the body to the churchyard if the vicar declined to act it was to be taken elsewhere for burial and a mandamus was to be applied for to compel him to do his duty. Two years later Mr. Bockett refused to allow a body to be taken into the church before interment and he replied to a request for an explanation. The Board resolved that, as he had shown so much want of courtesy to the Board the Bishop be asked to institute an inquiry. The Bishop wrote that in his opinion the vicar exercised a very sound discretion at the funeral.

Then a Burial Board was established in Epsom and in 1870 they declined to bury any paupers who had not a settlement in the parish.

In 1880 the name of the late Mr. Ockenden, of Cheam, occurs in the minutes, who, it will be remembered, was associated with the parish in many ways for some fifty years. His tender for funerals was accepted, the prices being: Banstead 35s., Carshalton 19s., Sutton 22s., Cheam 22s.6d, Cuddington 27s.6d, Ewell 24s. Other prices were: Epsom 23s., Chessington 50s. and Leatherhead 27s. Up to this time registrars could give orders for burials without a medical certificate on the evidence of a relative or a landlord, and the Board expressed the opinion that the law should be altered. In January, 1881, a member complained that contractors were using heavy carts for the removal of the dead from the house and the Board gave orders that greater respect should be shown to the dead.

In 1884 came a complaint that mourners waited two hours for a funeral at Banstead and the body did not arrive until the next day. It was a misunderstanding and was smoothed away, but a few months later the same contractor buried a pauper at Carshalton instead of at Benhilton, Sutton, where the vicar, clerk and sexton waited for hours in vain. The vicar made no charge but thought the officials should be compensated and this was done.

#### **DIFFICULTIES AT SUTTON.**

Sutton parish churchyard was closed for burials in 1887, but for some years before that the churchwardens were very jealous of the few remaining spaces in it. Benhilton churchyard was accordingly used by the Guardians for the burial of Sutton poor. But that had been given for the use of the parishioners of the parish of Benhilton in perpetuity and on August 23rd, 1883, at a special vestry meeting it was resolved that the right of burial there should in future, until a cemetery for Sutton was provided, be limited to parishioners of Benhilton and those who already held graves. This was communicated to the Guardians by the churchwardens, Messrs. T.C. Crump and W.S. Flack. The Guardians in turn called the attention of the churchwardens to a section of the Burial Act, 1879, which provided that where the burial ground of a parish was closed it was lawful for the Guardians to cause the burial of poor persons in a neighbouring parish. Epsom Burial Board were asked to help but they declined to bury Sutton paupers in Epsom. The Guardians were in a dilemma. They wrote to the Local Government Board pointing out that Sutton being the largest parish in the Union it was most important that something should be done with reference to the paupers in St. Nicholas parish. The Secretary of State for Home Affairs wrote that he could give neither advice nor help in the matter.

But before any very serious difficulty arose the cemetery now in use was opened and since then the Guardians have had very little trouble in any of their parishes.

Not until 1865 did the Board take steps to see that pauper funerals were conducted with decorum and some measure of outward respect. Then they gave instructions that black cloaks should be provided for inmates deputed to follow the bodies of deceased inmates to the grave.

In the same year it was decided that graves in Epsom churchyard should be 6ft. deep and that they should always be filled up.

### **LUNATICS.**

While recording the darker side of workhouse management a few words may be added with regard to this sad phase. At first these unfortunates were sent to Bethlehem and Hoxton. Soon after the workhouse was built the county authorities provided an asylum and the Board informed the County Committee in 1841 that "considering the amount proposed to be charged they could not, in common justice to the proprietors of the asylums where pauper lunatics are now confined, consent to their removal to the county asylum until the charges are materially reduced". Whether the charges were reduced does not appear but six months later the patients were transferred. By July, 1843, the new County Asylum was full and the rate for maintenance of patients was reduced from 9s to 8s 3d a week.

In June, 1846, the Guardians petitioned Quarter Sessions not to agree to plans for a new or enlarged county asylum "as the Guardians could very well look after a large number of harmless lunatics in their workhouses, especially at Epsom". There is a tragic note two years later when it was reported that there were fifteen of these imbeciles in the house and one of these, a woman of 65, had drowned herself in the pond in the adjoining field - obviously that near the present cricket field. In 1870 there were 45 lunatics from Epsom in the County Asylum at Wandsworth.

Epsom and Guildford Boards joined in 1877 in a protest against the purchase of land at Stoats Nest for a third lunatic asylum for the county. This was not successful and Cane Hill Asylum was opened on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1883.

### **THE COST.**

A very few figures will show the constantly increasing cost of treating this unfortunate class of pauper. In 1850 the Guardians paid £946, in 1860 the cost had risen to £1,613, and ten years later to £2,463. In 1879 lunatics from the Union were being treated at Wandsworth and Brookwood County Asylums at a cost of £2,913, and at that time there were 2,900 in the whole county. In 1925, after a period of ninety years from the passing of the Poor Law Act, there were 238 lunatics in the Epsom area and they cost £10,138. In sixty years the number had increased by 190 and the cost by more than £8,000.

## **VIII**

### **EARLY WORKHOUSES IN SURREY**

Soon after the Epsom workhouse was built the Guardians' attention was called to the fact that they had to pay rates on it. They objected to the assessment and directed that an inquiry be made as to other Surrey unions, their workhouses and assessments. It was found that Chertsey had provided a workhouse costing £6,000 and had enclosed with it five or six acres of common land. The house would accommodate 230 inmates.

Croydon Guardians' paupers were housed in a building erected in 1727 which held 350 people.

There was a workhouse at Clapham, having four acres of ground, costing £18,800 and accommodating 550 paupers. Dorking workhouse stood in five acres of ground, had accommodation for 230 and cost £8,000.

Guildford's Union stood in four or five acres of ground and would accommodate 345. It cost £9,233.

Kingston workhouse cost about £10,000, had accommodation for 334 paupers and had five acres of land.

Richmond workhouse was a building erected by George III. It had only an acre of ground but could accommodate 250 inmates.

### **AN APPEAL.**

Surrey Quarter Sessions were then held at Reigate and were respited to Guildford. The Guardians successfully appealed there against their first assessment and the Epsom overseers, "owing to certain informalities in the making out of the rate which had been pointed out to them" did not appear against the appeal. Their counsel moved that the rate be quashed and the Guardians had to agree to this, although they had intended to ask for the rateable value to be reduced to £200. The court fixed it at £250 and at a vestry meeting held afterwards Epsom residents agreed to the figure.

The Board then decided to rent twenty acres of land, in front of the workhouse from Mr Northey for twenty one years at £20 a year.

### **COUNTY RATES – PROTEST.**

The first county rate levied over the union called for a total of £677 7s.4d. In 1849 the county rate was ½d in the £ and for the first half of 1850 it was 1½d in the £, producing £530 18s.10d That led to a protest and on April 10th, 1850, the Guardians passed the following resolution: "That the Guardians have heard with deep regret that at the Quarter Sessions yesterday the salary of the County Treasurer was increased from £400 to £500 a year when the cost of articles of consumption has been so much reduced and for which increase there can be less reason inasmuch as the appointment has been recently made and there were several candidates of high respectability ready to accept the office at the salary then offered. The above proceeding fully justifies the complaint so generally made as to the

### **LAVISH EXPENDITURE**

of the county rates and bears out the statement made in the petition sent by this Board to Parliament praying for the establishing of a County Financial Board".

Quarter Sessions refused to appoint a committee to inquire into the matter, whereupon the Guardians held that "the appointment by the County magistrates of a member of their own body to an office of profit is highly objectionable and further that as the Board despair of obtaining any redress from the magistracy or any reduction of the

### **OPPRESSIVE RATES**

inflicted on the county, they petition both Houses of Parliament for the establishment of a County Financial Board".

On February 26th, 1851, the Board passed another indignant protest and resolved "That the magistrates of the county, notwithstanding the complaint so generally made of the lavish expenditure of the county rate, having determined to elect a numerous staff of officers, with extravagant salaries for the

### **NEW COUNTY PRISON,**

a memorial be prepared and presented to the magistrates at the next adjourned Quarter Sessions urging them to suspend the proposed election of officers until the question of County Financial Boards is disposed of by Parliament and that in any case they will consider the proposed salaries with the object of reducing them by about £600 or £800 a year". The petition was presented by the Chairman of the Board and the four county M.P.'s were asked to support him. The appeal was unavailing and the "lavish expenditure" of the 4½d county rate continued, but even in 1884 it only demanded £855 of the Epsom Union.

One other protest is of sufficient interest to be recorded. It emanated from the Farnham Guardians and was supported by the Epsom Board. It was a protest against the proposal to give the site of the old Newington gaol as a recreation ground. The Boards thought it should be sold for the benefit of the county as a whole and not sacrificed for the benefit of the wealthy metropolitan parish in which the property stood. No record of the result appears in the minutes of the Board This was in 1880 when the late Sir (then Mr.) R.H. Wyatt was Clerk of the Peace for the county and Mr. T.W. Weeding was his deputy.

While considering these vigorous protests against "lavish expenditure" by the county it is as well to note how far the Guardians could escape similar censure with regard to their own demands on the pockets of the ratepayers.

### POOR CALLS

varied as figures already given show. They rose in the first year or two from 20 per cent of the basis of assessment to 40 per cent, at which figure they remained until 1840, when a rate on that basis realised £2,161 12s. The next call was a 50 per cent basis. Parish by parish were re-valued and in March, 1852, Messrs. Lewin and Penfold's tender for £250 was accepted for the re-valuation of Epsom. Two years later this was operative and Epsom's contribution to the cost of the workhouse came to £51 1s., whilst Carshalton came second with £315, Ewell paying £295, Leatherhead £292, Banstead £195, Sutton £188 and Cheam £187.

These figures show that very little difference had taken place in the relative importance of the parishes and it was not until 1860 that the whole union was placed on a new and uniform basis of valuation. In 1869 there was a considerable difference. Epsom still came first but Sutton had taken second place, Carshalton being third, Leatherhead fourth, Cobham, Ewell, Cheam and Banstead being next in that order, and the call was for £3,389. Cobham and Fetcham parishes were re-valued and there was a distinct move forwards in several parishes, notably Sutton, which had been opened up for development since the coming of the railway. In 1872

### SUTTON WAS TOP

of the list of contributory parishes for the first time, its quota to the cost of the Poor Law administration being £645, or £10 more than Epsom. Carshalton, Leatherhead, Cobham, Ewell and Cheam followed in the order named, and from that date Sutton has been the principal contributor. Three years later Cobham was re-valued by Messrs. Fuller and Moon at a fee of £200 and in that year we get the first real rateable basis established. The figures are important as showing the development which took place during the next fifty years and for purposes of comparison the rateable value of each parish for the years 1875 and 1925 are set out:

Parish	1875	1925
	£	£
Ashtead	4,847	35,161
Banstead	10,271	51,840
Bookham (Great)	5,583	17,587
Bookham (Little)	1,420	3,918
Carshalton	21,813	116,871
Cheam	9,231	72,595
Chessington	2,143	4,034
Cobham	13,095	43,433
Cuddington	6,960	17,530
Epsom	34,792	195,365
Ewell	13,023	34,957
Fetcham	3,830	7,614
Leatherhead	15,617	48,996
Stoke d'Abernon	3,234	12,197
Sutton	<u>37,436</u>	<u>186,434</u>
	<b>184,304</b>	<b>848,532</b>

Headley had not then come into the Union. It was first suggested in 1857 that both Headley and Walton-on-the-Hill should be transferred from the Reigate Union and in 1864 the Board decided to raise no objection to the transfer of Headley to their area. The actual transfer was not effected until September 29th, 1879. A valuation of the workhouse and its contents was then made and it was estimated to be worth £16,146. The overseers of Headley agreed to pay £153 as their quota of the value on coming into the union. The call at Michaelmas that year totalled £8.068, or a rate of about 1½d in the £ for Poor Law purposes, plus county charges.

In 1883 special valuations were made of the Epsom Grandstand, the old and new M.A.B. schools at Sutton and two large houses recently erected in Sutton, one for Mr. W.E. Chambers, who will be remembered as a magistrate, the other for Mr. E. Richards, later a county councillor.

## IX MEDICAL OFFICERS

These were first appointed when the union was formed. In 1841 Banstead was added to the district that was covered by the Epsom doctor, Cheam, Carshalton and Sutton being made one district. Six years later Dr. John Burman was appointed medical officer for Banstead alone, though having the most scattered population. His fee was £20 a year. There were many complaints during the next few years, and in 1854, "considering the peculiar isolation of Banstead" the salary was increased to £50. A year later the Poor Law Board directed that medical officers should be continued in their posts for life unless dismissed by the superior authority. The Guardians unanimously expressed the opinion that this order would be most mischievous and subversive to the good working of the Poor Law and they would not willingly act upon it. Later, in appointing a medical officer for Cobham they made it a condition that the doctor appointed should agree in writing to resign on three months' notice being given. The Poor Law Board held that this condition was illegal but the doctor agreed and nothing more was heard of the absurd order.

In October, 1856, Dr. William Creasey was appointed medical officer at Carshalton at £27 10s. a year. In 1869 Dr. Stacpoole, of Epsom, was made medical officer of Banstead as no medical man then resided in that parish. It was in 1873 that Dr. J.R. Bosworth, still remembered in Sutton, was appointed medical officer for that parish and of Banstead, and he held the office for five years, being succeeded by Dr. W.A. Cox. In 1872 one supervising medical officer of health was appointed for the Epsom, Reigate, Chertsey and Dorking Rural Sanitary authorities and the Reigate and Epsom Urban Sanitary authorities - significant of the scanty population of the county sixty years ago. In 1879 the late Dr. W.W. Coltart was appointed medical officer of Epsom workhouse and of the parish, a position he held for many years.

### VACCINATION

first features in the records in 1840, when the work was handed over to the medical officers at a fee of Is. 6d for each successful vaccination. The importance of this operation was pressed home by printed circulars eight years later, when it was found that many were evading the Act and time after time the Poor Law Board urged the Guardians to greater vigilance. Dr. W.W. Coltart was appointed vaccination officer of Epsom in 1874 and a year later the late Mr. James Andrews was appointed to the office, a position he held to the day of his death a few years ago. He first received £25 a year. He had great difficulty in overtaking arrears and was given a gratuity of £13 12s.9d for his good work during the first year. The winter of 1879 was very severe and Mr. Andrews accounted for many cases of non-vaccination by saying that owing to the severity of the weather he had not pressed it but

would catch up arrears in the warm weather. In the next year he reported that in Sutton many working men came into the district for a short time and disappeared before their children were vaccinated. In Cheam the vaccinations were made in the national school but in 1882 they were transferred to the Parochial Hall.

At that time the growth of Sutton was rapid and the medical officer's surgery was not large enough to hold all the people bringing children to be vaccinated, temporary arrangements being made at West Street schools.

#### **OUT-RELIEF**

was always causing trouble but it became acute in 1884, when the Board held a special meeting and formed a basis of pay. Under this all adults under sixty five years were granted 2s 6d a week and over that age 3s. a week. Married couples were given 6s. a week and an extra 1s. for each child, with school fees also paid. Able-bodied widows were relieved for one month only, half in cash and half in kind. In all suitable cases relief was given by way of loan and medical relief was given only on loan. Paupers were then relieved at their own homes and not at relief stations. This meeting was the outcome of a motion by Mr. E.W.Martin, of Ewell, to the effect that "the present extravagant system of out-relief, while a heavy and costly burden on the ratepayers, is demoralising and preventive of habits of thrift by the people".

#### **DISCIPLINE**

in the house was always firm but there are no signs that it was ever harsh. Early in the history of the house three men were charged with misconduct in church. They were kept on bread, potatoes and water for a week. Two apprentices ran away from their employers and made their way to the house. They were handed back to their masters. Five boys on one occasion attempted to mutiny and one threatened the master with a knife. They were whipped before the whole school and given twenty four hours' solitary confinement. The ringleader was kept secluded until arrangements were made to remove him from the house. In 1847 refractory wards for male and female inmates were erected under the supervision of the master at a cost of £65. It is likely that none of the inmates were happy on Wednesday, September 7th, 1857, which was appointed as a public fast day and was rigorously honoured in the house.

In 1873 five boys were charged with insubordination. Two received twelve strokes with the birch rod and one eight strokes, while all had solitary confinement for from five to nine hours. Two men fighting in the house were given a milk and bread diet and solitary confinement. Subsequent fights were punished with a diet of bread and water.

#### **APPRENTICESHIPS**

As early as 1840 a boy from the house was apprenticed at Newcastle. The term was five years and his allowance was £5 for the first year and an additional £1 for each succeeding year, with an allowance of 12s. a year for washing and a gratuity at the end of the apprenticeship of £5. The Marine Society asked for boys for the Bombay Navy and several suitable lads were sent from 1841 onwards for service under the Old East India Company. Four boys went at their own request in 1841. In 1857 a boy was apprenticed to an Epsom tailor, the Board giving him 30s. for an outfit. His employer was to allow him 1s. a week for the first three years and 1s.6d a week for the last two years and to keep him in clothes. Scores of boys were apprenticed in the first seventy years but the practice seems to have almost entirely ceased.

#### **ILLEGITIMACY**

was regarded as an unspeakable offence by the earlier Guardians. In 1855 the Board asked permission of the Poor Law Board to adopt a distinguishing dress in the house for the mothers of illegitimate children. The premier authority refused. Two years later the Board

asked the controlling authority if it had any objection to their posting a list of such women on the gates of the workhouse. Again the Poor Law Board refused to make such a distinction.

### **DIETARY.**

Mention has already been made of the diet fixed for early inmates of the house. This was varied from time to time to meet special circumstances. In April, 1848, 2oz. of bread were given with soup dinners. Sixty nine aged men and women were allowed 1 oz. of tea, 5oz. of butter and 7oz. of sugar a week in lieu of gruel for breakfast and this cost 9d per head. Forty seven children were reported to consume 139 quarts of milk a week at a cost of 9d per head. The master and his wife fared rather well, their table costing £2 2s.10d a week. In 1857 important changes were made in the dietary table. Broth and gruel were given alternately for breakfast. For dinner 3oz. of cooked meat and 12oz. of potatoes were allowed on six days and 16oz. of suet pudding on the other day, women having rather less than man. Supper consisted of bread and 1oz. of cheese with no variation. Children were given half a pint of milk with bread one morning a week for breakfast, meat and potatoes on five days and suet pudding two days with bread and butter and half a pint of milk and water for supper. In 1880 the Local Government Board asked for the number of meat dinners to be reduced but the Board objected and no change was made. In the following year the medical officer reported many complaints, especially at the substitution of two cheese dinners a week and he recommended that tinned beef be substituted for cheese. He urged that it was too long for the children to go between breakfast and dinner (6.30 to 12.30) and asked that they might have 2oz. of bread at ten o'clock daily. The latter request was complied with but the Local Government Board refused to substitute tinned beef for cheese. It is interesting to note that at that time Dr. Coltart reported that theoretically able-bodied men and practically broken down inmates required better diet to keep them in health than usually fell to the lot of the independent working man. His views were sent to the Local Government Board but they were adamant and no change was made. Very few changes of importance have been made in the dietary to this day except that the value of green vegetables has been recognised

On more than one occasion the Guardians decided that it was inexpedient that they should lunch at the house on Board days, even at their own expense. In October, 1885, they decided that the master should provide them with luncheon - cold meat, potatoes and bread and beer at a cost of 1s. a head, or bread and cheese for 6d. Since that date the Guardians have always lunched at the workhouse on Board days, always at their own expense.

## **X**

### **WORKHOUSE EXTENSIONS**

From time to time big alterations have been made to the fabric of the workhouse. It was not until May, 1840, that the infirm were moved from the old poor house into the new building and a ward was set apart for them. Eleven years later the Board decided to abolish that part of the building which had been used as an infirmary and tenders were invited for a new building, the lowest, one for £1,230, being accepted, the chairman at the time lending the money to the Board at 3½ per cent interest. In January, 1882, the Board decided to erect a

#### **NEW INFIRMARY**

for 120 persons on the east side of the institution; further, that the porter's lodge be erected near the Pound in Dorking Road, the Lord of the Manor being asked to remove the Pound. Plans were accepted from Mr. Appleton, of Sutton, and among fifteen tenders received were that of the late Mr. John Potter, of Sutton, for £11,312 and that of the late Coun. R.J. Humphries, of Sutton, for £9,850, the latter being accepted. He agreed to complete the job in nine months, subject to a penalty of £10 a week in default. Mr. Hards, of Ewell, received the order for plant to heat the new building at a cost of £198, and the cost of furnishing the new

building came to £400. In all the extension cost £11,100, and when it was completed the Board appointed a head nurse at £30 a year with two assistants at £20 each. This infirmary was the nucleus of the splendid building which now stands to the credit of the Guardians, the latest addition to which was recently opened by the Lord Mayor of London.

Simultaneously with the above the Board invited tenders for the erection of the present Board Room. Mr. John Potter's tender was £625 and was sent in from 9, High Street, Sutton; that of Mr. R.J. Humphries was £590, but the successful tenderer was Mr. G. Hards, of Ewell, at £559. When finished the room was furnished with a Brussels carpet and Kamptulicon border costing 18 guineas, a horse shoe table £30 15s., three big chairs for the chairmen and clerk costing £13 5s., three dozen chairs for the members costing 28s.6d each and upholstered in Russian leather, together with a hat rail and reporters' seats and tables, these being made by the inmates.

### **THE LAUNDRY**

at first was a very crude affair and for many years it remained just a hand-washing room with clouds of steam and reek which caused periodical complaints from the medical officer for the time being. In 1881 a slate trough was ordered to replace wash tubs and a year later drying apparatus was installed at a cost of £40, at the same time as Benham's patent oven was installed in the kitchen at a cost of £237 10s.

In January, 1883, it was reported that the drying apparatus was too small for the institution and that the inmates had to wash on Sundays. So £126 was spent on a larger drying apparatus. Three years later the Board accepted a recommendation that some of the male inmates should be employed in washing men's clothing and this was continued for a long while. Gradually other changes have been made and the Board are now considering a scheme for the complete re-equipment of the laundry.

It was not until 1880 that the Local Government Board instructed the Board to divide the house into wards and this reduced the accommodation from 276 to 249. In November, 1881, Dr. Coltart reported that the old men's ward and the boys' ward were badly crowded, and he strongly objected to the infectious ward being used for sleeping purposes by healthy inmates. Round about Christmas, 1882, the master reported that the wards on the men's side of the house were full and that twenty men were sleeping on the floor. In October, 1883, an inspector of the Local Government Board reported that the accommodation for children was the worst in any union in his district although the children looked well. In August of the next year he again reported unfavourably, but it was reported that at that date there were fewer young men and women in the house than for many years past. Since then many additions have been made to the accommodation and every department has been gradually brought up to date. This is especially the case with regard to

### **DRAINAGE AND WATER,**

which were not a strong point in the old workhouse. At the end of 1852 the Board inquired of the new Epsom Board of Health when they would be likely to supply water and drainage to the house. These came in time, but both caused trouble. In July, 1887, the Local Board discontinued the supply of water on Sundays and the Guardians had to store a sufficient quantity to tide them over.

In June, 1874, there was a fire in the house and the Board sent their thanks to Mr. Furniss and the Epsom Fire Brigade for their prompt assistance. Seven years after this warning it was reported that there was only one fire plug in the house which could be used and then only on calling out the fire brigade or, if in the night, the waterworks manager. It was suggested that portable hand pumps and fire buckets should be supplied and this was done. It was also decided to extend the main into the workhouse premises and to instruct six inmates into the mysteries of coupling hose. Should a fire occur in the night a man was to be sent for the superintendent of the fire brigade and meanwhile the apparatus was to be got

ready for the water to be turned on when the brigade arrived. Yet the workhouse has never been burned down! Of course the fire prevention arrangements today are excellent.

#### **SOME OFFICERS.**

Mention has already been made of some of the earlier officials. There are others whose names deserve a lasting place in the records, some of whom being well remembered by many readers and a few being still among us.

Mr. Everest, the first clerk, resigned in 1861, and in January, 1862, Mr. Henry T. Aveline was appointed at a salary of £120 a year. He held office until 1874 and in February, 1875, Mr. William Oliver Reader was appointed at a salary of £160 with £40 as clerk to the Assessment Committee and £50 as clerk to the Rural Sanitary Authority, to provide his own office in Epsom. Mr. Reader proved to be a very capable clerk and he held office for about thirty years, being succeeded by Mr. A.G. Ebbutt, who still holds the position. Thus in more than ninety years the Guardians have had only four chief officials.

Masters and matrons came and went much more frequently. The first resigned in 1849 and Mr. and Mrs. Cummings were appointed at a joint salary of £80 with table rations, coal, candles and soap. After twenty three years' service the master was given a month's leave and a gratuity of £10, but he shortly afterwards resigned through ill-health and was given a superannuation allowance of £90 a year. Mr. and Mrs. Chance followed but resigned in 1876 "as it was impossible to work with the porter", and Mr. and Mrs. Laws followed A year later the matron was removed to a mental home and Mrs. Chance, whose husband had just died, came back as matron. Mr. Laws soon resigned, being followed by Charles Cooke, who in 1882 married Mrs. Chance and thus removed a difficulty as the Local Government Board steadily pressed for a married couple as master and matron. Many inmates attended the wedding at Epsom Parish Church. But the bride died a few months later and Mrs. Harriet Griffiths became matron in October, 1883. From that time there were frequent changes until the appointment of Mr. J.T. White furnished the Board with the best master and matron the union had ever had. The late Mr. White will be remembered with affection by many Epsomians and others.

Mention should be made of the appointment of Mr. John Nixon as porter in March, 1883, because he subsequently became one of the relieving officers (in 1884) and still enjoys his old age on his superannuation allowance, as does Mr. W.Collins, who succeeded him and who retired seventeen years ago, but still acts in a temporary capacity when needed (Mr. Septimus Wellings was also appointed as a relieving officer in 1884 and he is still enjoying a well earned rest, whilst his daughter is a competent officer under the Board)

Just a few items should be mentioned before concluding with reference to the chief personalities among the many who have kept the work of the Poor Law going in this area for almost a century.

#### **NEWSPAPERS.**

In 1834 the papers circulating in the Epsom Union were the "Surrey Standard", the "County Herald" (Farnham) and the "County Chronicle". Several times during the next forty years attempts were made to throw the meetings of the Board open to the Press and the closest division on the subject was in March, 1872, when the proposal was defeated by the casting vote of the chairman, the Rev. T.P.Phillips. A year later the Board decided to admit the Press and proprietors were asked to nominate accredited representatives. On March 15th, 1875, the Board officially recognised the "Sutton and Epsom Advertiser", which has faithfully recorded its doings over a period of fifty two years. Other papers admitted at that time were the "Surrey Advertiser", "Surrey Gazette" and "Surrey Standard".

#### **WELL SINKING.**

The Board sank a well on their premises in 1842, payment being at the rate of 3s. a foot for the first 10ft., with an extra 6d for each additional 10ft. At 60 ft. no water was found and

the contractor was instructed to reduce the diameter of the well from 4ft.6in. to 4ft. The records do not mention the finding of water but make it clear that it was ultimately reached. Meanwhile water was borrowed from Mr. Northey's well to tide over a dry summer. This Mr. Northey, grandfather of General Northey, paid £10 for defalcations by a man for whom he was surety but he refused to accept any receipt but one on a 10s. stamp.

#### **COURT BARON**

Reference to this ancient court occurs in October, 1849, when the clerk was authorised to apply on behalf of the Board to the Lord of the Manor of Epsom and pay homage at the next Court Baron for ten acres of land on Epsom Common, as near the workhouse as possible, the land to be used for the better employment and instruction of able-bodied men and boys in the house.

#### **A PROTEST**

Early in 1862 the Poor Law Board insisted on the retention of the services of the Board's treasurer after two successive Boards had asked for him to be removed. Guardians protested very strongly against the order as being "calculated to destroy that trust and respect that should always be entertained towards the Poor Law Board by a Board of Guardians". They also protested against the premier authority "allowing their auditor to descend to the level of a common informer", holding that for him to summon the Chairman and two Guardians before the Bench to decide on a mere technicality was not worthy of the high position of the Poor Law Board.

## **XI**

### **SOME NOTABLE GUARDIANS**

Scores, possibly hundreds, of men have served the Board of Guardians since its formation. Some only stayed for a term and were never conspicuous either for their attendance or their administrative ability. Others were always in the public eye and served their fellows faithfully through long terms of years. Mention has already been made of the earlier chairman. Mr. Fitzroy, of Banstead Place, resigned a year after the Board's present to him, which has already been mentioned, and was succeeded by Mr. R. Lewin, a surveyor living at Cuddington, who had been vice-chairman for several years. This was in 1858. In February, 1864, Mr. E.A.de Grave, of Fetcham, who had been vice-chairman for six years, died at the same time as Mr. H. Gosse, the first chairman of the Board. Two years later Mr. Edward Stone, of Leatherhead, became chairman and in 1870 the Board unanimously elected as chairman the Rev. T.P. Phillips, of Stoke d'Abernon, whose good services have been mentioned more than once. Nine years later they invited him to a complimentary dinner in August. He remained chairman until 1894, when he declined to continue as a Guardian under the new Act. He was succeeded by Mr. C.R. West, of Cheam, who to this day is affectionately known as "the Squire" by old Cheam residents, and although well over the allotted span of life is as tall and imposing, as genial and business-like as ever. He filled the office with distinction for fifteen years and then gave way to the late Mr. Basil Braithwaite, who was shortly succeeded by Mr. J.T. Leavey. Mr. Leavey resigned the chairmanship last March. He has been a Guardian for upwards of thirty years and has made the Poor Law a life study, being one of the most hard working and efficient Guardians in the county. A vice-chairman for many years under the Rev. T.P. Phillips was Mr. James Chuter, one of Epsom's best remembered public men.

As to the rank and file the best way to refer to the prominent members of the past is to deal with the union area in parishes.

### **ASHTEAD.**

The first Guardian for this parish was William King, a farmer, who was followed seven years later by his son, George King. Almost entirely the parish was represented by farmers until 1881, when Colonel A.C. Gleig was elected and another name which will be remembered is that of Mr. J.T. Holgate.

### **BANSTEAD.**

D.C. Porter and T. Harrison, a farmer, were the first Guardians of Banstead, and in 1842 an unsuccessful effort was made to increase the representation of the parish to two members, but this was delayed for a few years. In 1845 T. Hill, another farmer, was elected. Then little was heard of the parish until 1873, when two members were returned - Henry Steer, a farmer, and J. Wood, timber merchant. Six years later A.J. Brown, the well-known farmer, was returned by 201 votes with a brother farmer, W. Hudson, who received 217 votes. In the following year there was again a contest and the vestry returned J.N. Robertson (157 votes) and W. Hudson (131), Mr. Brown securing only 100 votes and the Rev. E.V. Buckle 111. In 1885 Mr. Hudson was still serving and in that year Mr. W.S.J. Brown, baker, was returned, serving as a Guardian for about twenty-two years. The late Mr. Tom Gilbert was first elected in 1892 and was a Guardian until his death, while Mr. C. Beall will be well remembered for his work on the Board.

### **CARSHALTON.**

The first Guardians were the Rev. E.T. Beynon and Mr. John Taylor, the last named being soon followed by Mr. R.T. Wallace, and both the Vicar and the layman did good service as deputy chairmen. There were many changes in the representation after 1845, one efficient representative being Mr. J. Atkin, of Carshalton Park. In 1873 there was the first of a series of closely contested elections, Messrs. T. Clark and W. Greenhill defeating Mr. W.A. Smith (solicitor). In the following year they had a harder fight, for the parish then had three representatives. They were returned, with Dr. J.L. Shorthouse as third man, the defeated being Messrs. Price, farmer, and Jackson, publican. In 1878 Mr. Greenhill was still serving and a year later he was returned with Mr. W.A. Smith. Mr. John Baines, the second founder of the well known business of Morgan, Baines and Clark, was nominated but declined to serve. Mr. Greenhill continued a member of the Board until his death in 1883. In 1885 J.W. Jones headed the poll with 412 votes, C. Sims, jnr., a farmer being second and A. Dyet third. In 1891 Lord Victor Seymour, still well remembered by many in the parish, was defeated in an attempt to get on the Board, but his successor, the Rev. G.B. Vaux, served for many years very conscientiously.

### **CHEAM.**

Mr. Archibald Palmer, to whom reference has been made already, was the first representative of Cheam but later he was succeeded by W. Gardner, of the Ewell Powder Mills and by others until 1871, when John Noakes, a well known farmer, was elected, and an attempt was made to increase the representation of the parish. This was successful and the first additional member was C. Hibbert. In 1874 there was a three cornered fight between farmer candidates, O.W. Travers and R. Bedford being successful over D Rennet. In 1877 Mr. P.C. Kerr was elected and has been a Guardian, with intervals, until the present time, being a regular attendant and consistent member so long as his health permitted. He and Mr. Travers continued to sit for the parish until 1880, when Mr. F. Batchelor, another farmer, was returned with Mr. Kerr. In 1881 the Rev. E.W. Northey, of Epsom, and Mr. W. Thorns were returned as Guardians of Cheam and in 1888 the former was replaced by Mr. C.R. West, soon afterwards to become chairman of the Board. Another name that will be remembered by many is that of Mr. John Fiddymont, who was first elected in 1892 and served for some thirteen years.

### **CHESSINGTON.**

This parish is mainly responsible for supplying Mr. R. Lewin, already mentioned, the Rev. W.C. Stapylton, Mr. G. Hunter and Mr. C. Gould, J.P., to the Board, all being excellent men, while later Mr. W.F. Stuttaford, J.P., was an excellent Guardian, and the parish for many years was represented by Capt. W.R.G. Farmer, J.P., of Nonsuch Park, the first ex-officio Guardian, who was very regular in his attendance until near the date of his death.

### **EWELL.**

Ewell had quite a number of Guardians in the first few years and early resorted to election to decide the merits of candidates, W. Hobman, a farmer, defeating W. Butcher, builder, in 1841 by fourteen votes, three other candidates being nowhere. Four years later J. Gadesden, of Ewell Castle. and G. Stone, a corn dealer, were returned unopposed In 1868 Mr. E.W. Martin was elected a member, his father already having served for a short time. With one break of about a year Mr. Martin has faithfully represented the parish until this day, a record of splendid service extending over almost sixty years. Every Guardian is proud of the "Father of the Board" and his devotion to the work, regular attendance and clear insight into problems are an example to all his colleagues. One colleague who worked with him for six years was Mr. W. Hards, first elected in 1878 and dying in 1884, when the vacancy was filled by the selection of Mr. E. Symes, and for the last thirty years the parish has been served by first Sir Gervas and now by Sir Arthur Glyn among others, including the late Rev. Jos. Shaw, C.C., whose speeches were always a feature of the meetings.

### **EPSOM.**

The electors have shown a great interest in the institution in their midst and as far back as 1841 there were no fewer than nineteen candidates nominated for seats on the Board With such a big field the finish was a close one, A. Wood, corn Chandler, being top with ninety nine votes, C. Stuart, a farmer, receiving ninety three. Four years later Epsom had an additional representative granted. Mr. Wood was a Guardian until 1856 when two representatives of well known families were returned - Messrs. Laurence Langlands, builder, and Henry Dorling, stationer. But a year later they were displaced and among the three new men elected were Mr. J. Chuter, builder, who was to serve on the Board for a very long period, and J. Furness, also a builder. They were both Guardians in 1877 when Mr. E. Morse, the nurseryman, was elected to the third seat and he represented the parish most faithfully for many years. Mr. Jas. Chuter was a member of the Board until his death, serving in all for a period of nearly fifty years, during some fourteen years of which he was vice-chairman.

Mention must be made of Canon Hunter, who was elected in 1892 and served for some sixteen years, and of Mr. Basil Braithwaite and the late Messrs. Geo. J. Beams and W.G. Blomfield, all zealous Guardians for long periods.

### **LEATHERHEAD.**

The Rev. F.E. Utterton was a Guardian for this parish for some years from 1880, but among all the members for that parish none can exceed the record of service of Mr. T.J.Leavey, the late chairman, to whom reference has already been made.

### **SUTTON**

first elected John Grace, a farmer, and H.J. Stubbs, a gentleman, and they continued members for a long period In 1845 Mr. John T.Overton, of Sutton Lodge, was elected. He was the grandfather of Mr. J.T.Overton, of Abbotsford, Sutton, and although many attempts were made to secure his seat he held it election after election and for forty years rendered splendid service, being awarded the cordial thanks of the Board at the end of that period when a bereavement caused his retirement. He had refused to serve in 1844. In 1867 he was partnered by Henry Potter, builder, of Benhill Street, and in 1870 he headed the poll, John Morgan being second and H. Shapland, solicitor, third, the defeated being H. Potter, Barnes, ironmonger, and T. Martin, furniture dealer, a stormy petrel at vestry meetings about that

time. In the next year the three retained their seats and among the defeated were W. Petley, of Stanley Road, and J. Finlay, of Sulgrave Road, both of whom were afterwards successful.

In 1872 John Morgan headed the poll and among the defeated were John Hind, grocer, and W. Coleman, veterinary surgeon. In 1873 Dr. W.A. Hearriden was elected but refused to serve and Mr. Overton was accompanied back to the Board by John Finlay and G.W. Barley, the latter being a miller. Next year Mr. T.A. Amos, well known to many today, replaced Mr. Barley. As showing the popularity of Mr. Overton it may be mentioned that in 1881 he received 749 votes, W. Petley 551 and J. Finlay 529, J.H. Hay being defeated with 484 votes - the number polling was remarkable at that date. That was the last election Mr. Overton contested and for a time the representatives were Dr. H. French and Messrs. Hay and Petley.

In 1887 Dr. French retired and the late Canon H.W. Turner was elected in his stead, the Board at that time expressing an opinion in favour of the election of Guardians by ballot. Two years later the Guardians were challenged with the result that the Rector received 1,270 votes, Mr. Petley 1,072 and Mr. Hay 871. Among the defeated were Mr. A.R. Jackson, father of Mr. Spencer Jackson, and Mr. H.J. Bracey, who received 535 and 380 votes respectively. A year later Mr. Jackson was returned unopposed in place of Mr. Hay. In 1890 there was another sharp contest. The Rector secured 1,402 votes, the Rev. C.J. Baden 1,258 and Mr. Petley 1,060, the figures remarkable at a time when the population was relatively small.

Canon Turner served most faithfully up to near the time of his death and was one of the most respected members the Board had ever possessed. Mr. H.J. Bracey subsequently served on the Board for some years and among others who have rendered faithful service for Sutton might be mentioned Canon Courtney Gale, Canon W. Bartlett and the late Mr. Walter Stevens, together with Miss H.F. Ruck. Space will not permit of reference to those who served the minor parishes, but it should be placed on record that among the most worthy were Mr. W.G. Loxley, Little Bookharn; the late Mr. E.B. Jay, Chessington; the Bennetts, father and son, and Mr. W.F. Finn of Cobham; the late Mr. John Newton Mappin (donor of the Mappin Terraces at the Zoo) who represented Headley; and Mr. J.J. Morrish, of Stoke d'Abernon.

#### **A FEW FIGURES**

are necessary to show how the Guardians conducted their business and how their responsibilities increased with the growth of the parishes.

One item of interest occurs in October, 1841, when the Guardians passed accounts dealing with expenses incurred in taking the census. At Epsom the cost was £18 16s.3d, at Leatherhead £18 12s.3d, and at Carshalton £18 13s. The Superintendent Registrar received a bonus of £6 13s.

In the following year the Guardians resolved to apply to Parliament for an Act to rate owners of cottage property in the union on parochial rates instead of occupiers. They were advised that the Bill would cost them £400. Six months later they decided to postpone their Bill and to petition Parliament to pass a general act on the subject of rating. In 1844 the new Poor Law Act contained clauses on the subject which evidently satisfied them.

In November, 1858, the Board decided to light the institution with gas instead of candles and accepted a tender of £25 for fittings. Eight years later they spent ten guineas on a harmonium for use in the house. In the same year they hired a field from Mr. Northey for use as a recreation ground for the inmates. In 1869 the Guardians first insured the workhouse and its contents, a policy being taken out with the Sun Fire Office for £7,000.

Not until August, 1875, was it made compulsory for a proper demand note to be served on ratepayers. In that year the sums contributed to the Guardians included the following rates by parishes: Sutton £696, Epsom £685, Carshalton £418, Leatherhead £339, Cheam £177, Banstead £189, Ewell £250 and Cobham £293. A year later the contributions from Epsom and Sutton rose above £1,000 for the first time. It was in that year that the Local Government

Board demanded a return from the Guardians as to their expenditure on cod liver oil, quinine "and other costly medicines".

In 1877 the Rev. T.P. Phillips presented the house with an ambulance in appreciation of the courtesy shown to him as chairman. In January, 1878, the War Office directed the Guardians to pay 6d a day to the wives and 2d a day to each child of militia men called up for duty, the money to be paid monthly in advance.

In November, 1879, the Rev. E.W. Northey sold the Guardians five acres of land for £2,000. This was north of the turnpike road from Epsom to Dorking. In 1884 Capt. Farmer induced the Board to spend £10 in starting a library for the inmates. In the same year the Epsom Local Board appealed against the assessment of their waterworks and of the Grand Stand Quarter Sessions dismissed both appeals but the cost of defending the assessment was £169 14s.2d.

In 1863 the total cost of pauperism in the country was £9,512,655, or 8s.4d per head of population. In 1872 it had risen to more than 12½ millions and to 10s. 6¼d a head, but it was pointed out that more than one third of the poor rate was spent on matters unconnected with the poor - police, administration of justice, prisoners, turnpike roads, elementary education and lunacy.

In 1873 Epsom Union poor rates totalled £24,651, of which only £10,575 was spent on the poor. £6,381 went in county and police calls and £4,206 was spent on roads. In-maintenance that year cost the Guardians £2,355, out-relief £5,431 and lunatics £1,365. The cost of Poor Law administration was 5¼d per head of population and in 1863 it was 4½d.

The following table showing the growth in population and rateable value of the parishes between 1871 and 1921 will be of interest to many:

Parish	1871		1921	
	Pop.	R. val £	Pop.	R. val £
Ashtead	906	4503	3228	35147
Banstead	1666	9683	7336	54130
Bookham, Great	1089	5569	1566	18307
Bookham, Little	197	1416	372	3485
Carshalton	3667	21261	14023	126700
Cheam	1629	9195	7848	77520
Chessington	280	1603	630	3160
Cobham	2133	12557	5102	41743
Cuddington	375	6600	1401	17233
Epsom	6276	34229	18803	195700
Ewell	2214	12734	4186	37448
Fetcham	487	3821	410	777
Headley			521	3443
Leatherhead	2455	14912	5821	51086
Stoke d'Abernon	356	3237	847	11406
Sutton	<u>6558</u>	<u>35465</u>	<u>21065</u>	<u>192493</u>
	<b>30288</b>	<b>176785</b>	<b>93159</b>	<b>876772</b>

### EWELL LANDS

Old residents in Ewell may remember the difficulty which at one time arose over land belonging to that parish, part known as "Parish Close". It was early in 1881 that Mr. Hards called attention to the land, and later he reported to the Guardians that the proposal to build

almshouses on it had been abandoned. At a vestry meeting held on January 11th, 1883, the Rev. T. Bliss presiding, the parish decided to consider the best means of disposing of the parish lands. On the motion of the Rev. J. Shaw the Guardians were recommended to let the Parish Close for building purposes and that the Chamber Mead be let for grazing purposes.

At the next meeting of the Guardians Mr. Martin's proposition was carried that the Parish Close be let on building leases of ninety nine years for the erection of small houses, in as many lots as might be consistent with a due regard to securing health and uniformity of design. This brought a letter from Mr. A.W. Gadesden, who offered to purchase Chamber Mead for as much as would, when invested in 3½ per cent annuities, produce £30 a year, the sum at which the field had hitherto been let. The offer was accepted and the Vestry rescinded the resolution passed with reference to this land The Local Government Board consented but thought a right of pre-emption should be reserved so as to be exercisable by the sanitary authority at any later date.

Then a Mrs. Torr made an appeal to the people of Ewell not to build cottages on the Parish Close as that would be a nuisance to her and would affect the value of her property. She offered to give land of equal value and size with an extra half acre of her field on Beggar's Hill in exchange for the Close. On March, 1883, the Vestry accepted this offer, the land received in exchange to be let on ninety nine year building leases. In October, 1884, a deed of exchange by which the parish received two acres of land on Beggar's Hill was sealed and also the conveyance of Chamber Mead to Mr. Gadesden for £1,000. The Guardians made application for permission to raise £200 for making roads on the new land. But the Local Government Board said the parish had no power to raise a loan for the purpose; also that the £1,000 received for Chamber Mead should be applied for "any permanent advantage to the parish".

A few months later Mr. Appleton, of Sutton, was appointed to lay out new roads on the land but in June, 1885, the Local Government Board wrote that it did not appear that either the Guardians or the Vestry had any power to carry out the work of road making on the land. As a temporary measure the Guardians sold the grass on the land for £5 and let it for grazing at £4 a year. Then in October, 1886, the Vestry asked the Guardians to make the ground into allotments, the Rev. J.N. Shaw being the mover of the resolution. But the Local Government Board said that proposal involved legal questions of some difficulty but after much correspondence on March 28th, 1888, the land was cut up into twenty allotments and has been used for that purpose ever since. What useful purpose the invested £1,000 from the sale of Chamber Mead was put to does not transpire from the records.

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