

Research Space

Lecture

Sheppey and the Poor Law

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Sheppey and the Poor Law



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Tudor System

- Elizabethan Poor Law of 1597 and 1601
- First mandatory system of public relief
- Parishes charged with raising money and administering relief – cash and work
- Annual appointment of Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor, by local Justices.
- Effectively run by local farmers and householders – ‘middle class’ ?

Settlement

- Act of Settlement 1662 – regulating settlement status and liability for relief
- Removal for 40 days non-residence or in premises worth £10 per annum
- Continuous adjustment of settlement e.g.

Poor and Workhouse

- 1601 Poor Law ‘places of habitation’
- Obligated local ratepayers to provide somewhere to live for the aged and sick, whose families could not support them – Poorhouse.
- Workhouses for the able bodied developed randomly - 1601 Act required the fit and idle to be set to work - more available in urban than rural parishes.
- 1723 Act - Parishes able to build workhouses or outsource to private institutions for the indigent. Poor relief removed from those who declined to enter.

Outsourcing

- Outsourcing popular with parishes, reducing their financial and administrative burdens. Private establishments not always of a high standard.

Outdoor Relief

- Outdoor relief – payment to those who lived outside poor or workhouses , represented the bulk of recipients – aged, sick and children. Long term payment of 1 shilling per week typical and quite insufficient.

Gilbert Act 1782

- 1776-77 over 2,000 parish workhouses
- Gilbert Act authorised adjoining parishes to combine resources to provide workhouses for the old, sick and infirm
- Act required a two-thirds majority of local ratepayers to consent to Union
- Individual parishes could also take advantage of the Act
- 1785-1835 100 Gilbert Unions

Gilbert Administration

Poor Law Reform

Minster Workhouse

- 1630 a poor house established on land of Sir John Haywood, continuing as a legacy charity. Old and homeless accommodated.
- Parliament reported in 1777 that there were 2 parish workhouses on Sheppey, Minster for 26 inmates and Eastchurch 40.
- 1784 – New workhouse built at Wards Hill Road. Destroyed in a fire and rebuilt 1789/90

Minster Workhouse



Sheppey Poor Law Union

- Population in 1831 Census: 9,847

Minster Workhouse



Sheppey Poor Law Union

Minster Workhouse



End of Union

- 1930 Formal termination of unions

Sources
