

Clophill through the years

The history of Clophill Charities

As well as providing Poor Relief, as an alternative to the workhouse (Spotlight October 2013), Clophill had many charities that provided for the poor.

In the March 2011 issue of Spotlight is an article entitled "Clophill United Charities". It listed the following charities and the dates that they were founded:-

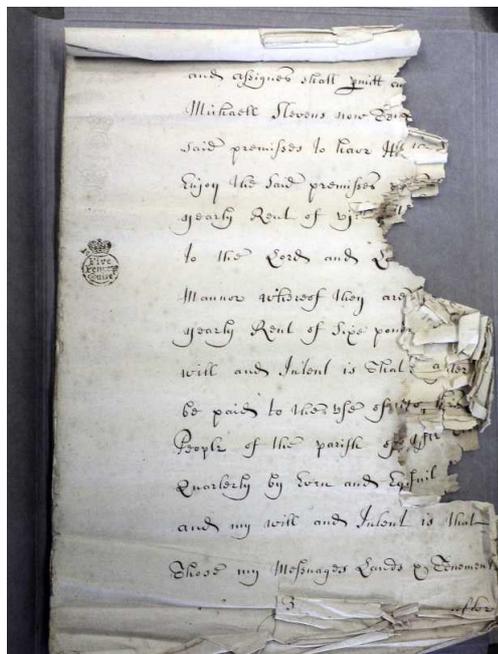
Thomas Dearmer	Will proved at Northampton 1630
John Bryan	Will and codicil dated 1655
Poor's Estate	Founded before 1707
Fuel Allotment	An award of 1826 pursuant to Inclosure Act
Marl allotment	- ditto -
Sand and gravel allotment	- ditto -

Bedford & Luton Archives & Records Office holds a selection of documents from the Charity Commission which are the 'Annual Statement of Accounts' which cover the period 1900 to 1955. They give details of the receipts and payments for each charity.

Thomas Dearmer's Charity (later spelt Dearman)

Thomas Dearman died in 1630 and is buried in Old St Mary's church yard. In his will he left "2 acres and 2 allotments of 6a, 3r, 29p and 1a, 3r, 2p". (One acre = 4 roods. One rood = 40 poles). The rent from this land was to be used "For the benefit of poor labourers not receiving parish relief". Why it is referred to as "Dearmer's Gift" when his name was Dearman is not known.

<photo 'dearmanwill.jpg', caption "The will of Thomas Dearman (Bedford & Luton Archives & Record Office [P45/25/01])">



The will of Thomas Dearman (Bedford & Luton Archives & Record Office [P45/25/01])

In 1912 this charity received £30 10s in rent from property and land that it owned. It also received £7 6s 8d interest on East India stock that it held. It spent £27 8s of this distributing 4s each to 137 needy villagers. It also paid Corn Rent and Poor Rates. The Corn Rent was a tithe that was paid with money (rather than produce) and was linked to the price of corn (index-linked). The Poor Rate was a tax on property levied in each parish, which was used to provide poor relief, an alternative to the workhouse.

John Bryan's Charity (later spelt Bryant)

This charity's receipts came from 'Consols', originally short for 'consolidated annuities', which is a form of British government bond (gilt) dating originally from the 18th century. In 1907 a holding of £250 10s 3d yielded £6 5s 4d interest per year.

£1 10s 0d was spent on dress material from Mrs Mead who was a grocer and draper. Young Lilian Shotbolt (a dressmaker living at the Flying Horse) made up four dresses for 12s and Emily Upton (another dressmaker in the High Street) made up two more

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The epitaph written in a quaint manner on the gravestone of Thomas Dearman. (Victoria County History)

dresses. Five pairs of boots were purchased from George Chapman, a shoe maker and gardener, for £2 10s and Samuel Perkins, a market gardener, was paid 9s 6d for one pair. These dresses and boots may have been for poor young girls to wear to Sunday School. Also 10s was distributed to widows on St Thomas day (December the 21st).

In England on St Thomas day, poor women and children went from door to door "a-Thomassing". They would beg for the ingredients or 'goodenings' for a Christmas feast, such as wheat for frumenty and flour for Yule bread.

The Poor's Estate

Another charity getting income from the properties and lands that it held. In 1911 £27 8s was given as Clothing Tickets (worth four shillings each) to 137 needy villagers. £6 was given to the Picture Trust.

Fuel Allotment (includes Sand gravel and marl allotments.)

This charity collected rents from allotments that it owned and let to market gardeners. It also let three marl pits and a sand and gravel pit. Lord Lucas (Wrest Park) made an annual gift of £4.

£28 6s 8d was spent on coal for the needy, 137 recipients getting 4 cwt each. The charity also paid the Poor Rate of £2 15s.

Library and Picture Trust

This charity did not appear to have any assets but receive money from some of the other charities or from bequests.

In 1907 Books were purchased from S.P.C.K. and pictures from Mansell & Co. A Librarian was paid £2 a year and the books and pictures were insured. James Whittamore (carpenter) was paid £5 15s 6d to make a bookcase.

The library may have been in the Reading Room or attached to the school or be part of a Sunday School. The books were from a religious source as may have been the pictures.

Between the wars there was an annual Eisteddfod held in Bedford and in 1921 £4 7s was spent in transporting Clophill children to attend it.

Clophill Church Estate & The John Mendham Charity

These two charities owned property including cottages and meadows. The rent that they received from them was didn't go to the poor but was spent by the churchwarden on maintaining the fabric of the church.

In 1907 Mr W. T. Sharpe was paid £15 18s 5d for 'repairs to the church' whilst in 1946 £36 6s 9d was spent on 'Parish Room roof repair' (which was thatched). They also had to pay a 'corn rent' of 10s 8d.

All property belonging to the Church was sold at or about Lady Day 1923 and the money invested in 3 ½% Stock.

Clophill United Charities

The Charity Commission accepted a scheme that finally united the charities so that they all come under the title of Clophill United Charities.

An additional item that was paid by the United Charities was Queen Anne's Bounty. A sum of £1 10s 4d was paid twice a year. Queen Anne's Bounty was a fund established in 1704 to augment the incomes of the poorer clergy of the Church of England. The bounty was funded by the tax on the incomes of all Church of England clergy.

The existence of the above charities show just how many poor families there were in the parish and what efforts were made to reduce the poverty.