

## **Gnosall Workhouse before the Union** *(from Cutlack's work and Stafford Record Office)*

Before 1836, Gnosall Workhouse was independently run by the churchwarden and elected overseers for Gnosall, Knightley, Moreton and Cowley. The minutes of their meetings in the church vestry were written in large books, which were stored in the "Greate Coffe" (the ancient oak chest still in St Lawrence church). These books are now in Staffordshire Record Office on Eastgate Street, Stafford.

In 1936 Mr S.A. Cutlack went through them and published some of their details and his summary is in the William Salt Library.

The first known Workhouse at Gnosall (1733) was a converted Barn, whereabouts unknown. Blankets were bought for it in 1734. By 1738 it was too small, and they were sending some of the poor to Penkrige.

In 1774 the workhouse accommodation was split between the Barn, another unknown building and Penkrige. It was agreed that year to build a new Workhouse on the site of "Ann Butler's residence" [at the bottom of the High Street, where the Stafford Road almshouses are].

In 1783 it was agreed to buy "the New House, late the property of Mr Thomas Foster Gnosall" near the church, and a garden wall was built round it. This was on the site of the later school.

After sixty years the Stafford Road buildings from 1774 were no longer fit for use and in 1832 it was decided that "Whereas certain Buildings called the Old Workhouse situate in Gnosall adjoining the Stafford Road ... were in so dilapidated a state that they [Parishioners and Trustees] directed the same to be taken down and three cottages be erected upon or near the same place where the Old Workhouse stood for the use of the said Parishioners." [Only two almshouses were actually built.]

From about 1780 there had been a paid Governor for the Parish Workhouse, and in early 1823 Thomas Bettelley was elected Governor: "at the same time he agrees to Farm the poor finding every necessary at 2/6 per head per week excepting clothing and carriage of coals for the use of the Poorhouse." Mr Bettelley continued to hold this post until 1836 when Newport took over and he seems to have been responsible for the Moreton and Knightley overseers. He was present at a lot of the Vestry meetings, with the then minister, the Rev. Fearon Jenkinson, and he also went to those in Cowley. He is buried in St Lawrence churchyard (north side) with his first wife Ann and daughter Sarah Ann. The north-east inscription reads: "To the memory of Thomas Bettelley, for many years Govenor [sic] of Gnosall Workhouse ..."

### ***Some extracts from the pre-Union Gnosall minutes held at Stafford follow:***

*1829: applications for a shirt, shoes, "a coffin for his wife"*

*17 March 1830: Paid Henry Low for being Sworn Constable*

*28 March 1831: Bastardy money of £76-7-6 received by Mr Bettelley*

**1834:**

26 February: *paid a navigator [navvy] £4*

9 April: *"Sarah Buckley wants clothing – to be left to Mr Bettelley"*

2 July: *"Thomas Bithel wants some straw to repair his house – nothing"*

16 July: *"Mary Hodgkiss whose Husband is in goal [sic] for violently assault her to be allowed 1/-"*

27 August: *"Sarah Harper wants something for her Bastard child the Father a navigator being gone"*

3 December : *"James Titley wants a house to live in. Left to Mr Bettelley"*

*"John Hampshire's wife wants a little flannel"*

*"Thos Davies wants a smock frock his small clothes mended and a hat. Allowed."*

17 December: *"David Jones wife asks for something for washing for her husband's family Peter Anslow – 6d"*

**1836:**

13 January: *"Joseph Sansom, Stephen Dyke, John Adderley in the House and John Plant (not in the house) to have a smock frock each, Mr Bettelley to buy them"*

8 April: *"Elizabeth Gates wants some potatoes for seed"*

22 April: *ditto*

6 May: *"Elizabeth Gates wants potatoes to seed her garden"*

6 August: *"Elizabeth Gates wants a pair of shoes for her lad"*

10 August 1836: *"To sweeping the Poorhouse chimney – 2/-"*

21 September: *"Joseph Barratt wants work, to be taken into the Poorhouse"*

5 October: *appeal against the removal of Widow Wilson and her 6 children from the parish of Utkinton to the parish of Gnosall*

17 October: *"Honor Jones wants a Bed gown"*

*The last entry is 30th November 1836, signed by F Jenkinson. Thomas Bettelley signs up to 10th August 1836.*