



**Friends of Berwick & District  
Museum and Archives  
Newsletter**



**NUMBER 21 – DECEMBER 1998**

**[Selected articles]**

1998 December

## ORDERS TO BE OBSERVED IN THE WORKHOUSE OF THE PARISH OF BERWICK

In May 1806 Good published in his directory of Berwick a list of orders to be observed in the Workhouse in Berwick. At that time, responsibility for the upkeep of the poor fell upon ecclesiastical parishes who could run a workhouse and also provide some "outdoor" relief to those unable to maintain themselves.

The Poorhouse and School were situated in the High Greens "on account of free and wholesome air". They were completed in 1803 and run by a Committee consisting of the Overseers of the Poor and some Parish Gentlemen. Joseph Fleming was the Master of the House, whilst his wife was the Governess. Mr Easton was the Chaplain and also the Schoolmaster.

In 1806, there were on average about 100 poor people in the House at any one time and if they were sick, there was even a Surgeon to attend them.

The school attached to the House had about 50 children whom Mr Easton taught Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. The pupils were dressed in brown and were marched to a Church Service at the High Meeting House every Sunday.

The following are the list of orders that the inmates had to observe during their stay there:

*I That every poor person's name, upon their admission, be entered in a register book, signifying, in proper columns, the time of their coming in, their ages, and from what Parish they were sent; and also the time of their leaving the house or their deaths. And that every person shall deliver up what household goods and cloaths they are possessed of, to the master, in order to be cleaned and made useful for the service of the house; and that they have their proper apartments assigned by the master.*

*II That if any poor person choose to go out of and quit the house, they shall have the goods they brought in, or such part of them as are remaining, delivered to them again.*

*III That there be a book wherein to enter all wearing apparel brought into the house by each person, which is immediately to be cleaned; and that they be furnished with what further necessaries they want, at the expence of the parish. This book to be ruled with so many columns as to express every species worn both men and women; who are to be examined once a month to see they have embezzled nothing.*

*IV That nor poor person be received into this house, till their Settlement be proved to the satisfaction of the Church wardens or overseers of the poor; and it shall be lawful for one of the church-wardens or overseers, to give a note of admittance, directed to the master, to be filed by him for the inspection of the monthly meeting.*

*V That a bell be rung every morning, in summer at five o'clock, and in winter at seven o'clock, for the healthful people to rise; and to go to bed in the summer at nine o'clock, and in the winter at eight o'clock at night; and that the master, or his deputy, see all the candles put out.*

*VI That the grown people in the house have their respective offices or employments appointed them, to be suited to their age, capacity, and sex.*

*VII That a catalogue of the names of everyone in the house be called over every morning, at six o'clock in summer, and eight in winter, and at two in the afternoon; and if any be missing, to be noted, in order to be reported to the acting trustees.*

*VIII That every person in health shall be kept to proper labour, according to their several ages and abilities, from Lady-day to Michaelmas, from six in the morning till six at night; from Michaelmas to Lady-day, from eight in the morning till five at night, (meals excepted). And if any grown person refuse to work, to be kept on bread and water till he or she takes to their work.*

*IX That the children be moderately tasked, and if they be idle, and do not perform their tasks, that they go sometimes without their meals, or have some corporal punishment, at the discretion of the master.*

*X That the master of the house take care that none of the several manufactures be wasted or spoiled; and that the labouring poor do carefully lay by their work and materials, every evening, in proper places, to be assigned them by the master, so as they may be readily find them in the morning following to go to work again.*

*XI That no spirituous liquors be brought into the house, whereby the poor may disorder themselves; and that if any person is clamorous, or makes disturbance to the disquietude of the rest, or shall deface the walls of the house, or break the windows thereof, or wilfully commit any such disorders, they shall be put into the dungeon, or else lose their meals, at the discretion of the master, or acting trustees.*

*XII That such persons of idle habit of body as shall pretend themselves sick, lame, or blind, to be excused from labour or service in the family, and shall be discovered by their stomachs, or otherwise, such persons so offending shall be severely punished as impostors, and wicked dissemblers with God and man.*

*XIII That the poor children be washed and cleaned by eight in the morning; and then to attend the School; and that they be taught to labour and work as their several capacities will bear, and not permitted to play until they have performed their tasks.*

*XIV That prayers be read in the house, by the master, or some fit person, every morning before breakfast and every evening before supper, and that a chapter in the Old or New Testament be read discreetly before prayers; and that grace be said before and after meals by one of the children or some proper person. And all those who are able and are absent from prayers without leave, to lose their next dinner.*

*XV That all the beds be made in the morning by nine; and that great care be taken to search for vermin twice a week, or oftener, if occasion; and that every room and passage be swept and cleaned by ten. That all the passages and rooms be washed every Wednesday and Saturday; that the windows be kept open at meal-time in all the rooms (except where the sick lie) to air them, except in very rainy weather. The dishes, and also tables and forms, in the dining room, to be washed after every meal; and the forms and benches in the working room, and all the house, to be washed once a week at the least. That every person in the house to be kept as clean as possible, and every part of the house likewise.*

*XVI That none presume either old or young, to go out of the court-door, without leave from the master, or his deputy, and to return, in good order, at the time appointed, or to be denied going out for three months afterwards.*

*XVII All that are able and in health, to go to church every Sunday, Forenoon and Afternoon, and that they return home as soon as divine service is over; and if any be found loitering or begging by the way, to lose their next meal. That after evening service a chapter of the Bible, and a section of the Whole Duty of Man, or such like good book be read.*

*XVIII That all the children appear constantly before the overseers and trustees every first Sunday in the month, or whenever they shall be called on, to shew the condition of their clothes, and to be examined in the progress they make in their learning; that the master and scholars may have their due commendations, and the benefactors all the satisfaction they propose to themselves by encouraging their design.*

*XIX That if any person steal, or is heard to swear, curse, or miscall another, or is seen to play at church, etc., for such crimes, the first time, to stand on a stool, at one corner of the working room the whole day, with a paper, expressing crime, pinned to their breast; for the second offence, to have half a pound of bread, and a quart of water for that day; for the third offence, he or she to be ordered by a justice of peace to be publicly punished.*

*XX That the master, or his deputy, make a memorandum in a book for that purpose, of any disorder etc. which shall happen.*

*XXI That none of the poor presume to ask money or drink, either directly or indirectly, from any person whatsoever, who may come to view the workhouse, there being a Box for them.*

*XXII That the nurses, at the death of any person under their care, do deliver up to the master, all the money and goods belonging to such persons; and that those nurses who take care of the children, when a child dies, is discharged, or put out an apprentice, do bring forth and deliver the clothes of such child, to the master of the workhouse, to dispose of as occasion may require.*

*XXIII That all the bed-linen shall be changed, and clean bed linen put upon each bed or beds in the house once every month; and that every poor person in the house shall change their wearing linen once every week, on the Sunday morning before they go to church.*

*XXIV That for the encouragement of all such as shall do their work\* with care and diligence, it is ordered that a penny fro every shilling's worth of work, shall be allowed them, in such manner as the overseers and trustees shall think convenient, and which allowance, the overseers may if they think proper, increase to threepence in the shilling; but if any lay out their money in liquors and disorder themselves, they shall be punished.*

*XXV That these orders be read once a week by the master in the hearing of all the poor people in the house, that none of them may pretend to be ignorant thereof.*

*\* Last season was spun in the house, and bleached in the garden, three hundred and forty five years of linen cloth; besides a great quantity of the fine lint taken in, and spun for Housewife use, both for town and country. The old men are constantly employed in teasing oakum; the children attend*

*Mr Easton on school hours, at the school; and assist in teasing oakum when the school is dismissed. All the profits of this manufactory is for the use of the house, and a saving to the parish.*

*Linda Bankier*

## **CUSTOMS, EXCISE AND SMUGGLING**

Brief definitions of Duties during early days would be:-

Customs Duty - levied on imports from foreign countries

Excise Duty - levied on goods & commodities produced or sold at home

Although no records seem to exist, it is thought that an imposition of Taxes goes back to at least the Roman era in Britain. There is evidence, however, of Customs Duties collection in the Saxon period of about 742.

It was during the Medieval Period that a large increase in Tax collection took place because of the large quantities of wine brought into the country by the Norman nobility after the Conquest. Wine was imported on a large scale and ships had to be specially built to bring it in. It was usually carried in barrels, known as 'tuns', and the capacity of a vessel at that time was measured by the number of 'tuns' she could carry; hence the words 'tons' and 'tonnage' still survive in ship size measurement. The following example of a cargo shipment is given:-

On 15<sup>th</sup> October 1604 the ship "Le Charitie de Chepstow" arrived at Chepstow from Bordeaux with the following cargo: '20 tuns of Bordeaux wine for Thos Penne of London; 2 tuns Bordeaux wine and 2 hhd prunes for William Gittins, 8 tuns Bordeaux wine and 4 tuns Rosin for John Pinner, 2 tuns, 1 hhd Bordeaux wine and 1 tun vinegar for Thos Mors, 2 tuns Bordeaux wine for Thos Strincter, 2 tuns Bordeaux wine, 1 tun Rosin, 1 tun vinegar for Rich Grane'.

The Excise Tax was imposed during the reign of Charles I and it has been considered that the King's differences of opinion with the Long Parliament contributed to the ensuing Civil War. The Excise Tax was intended as a temporary tax, for the duration of, and to fund that war. However, the war had involved so much expenditure that the repeal of the Tax was delayed. At first Excise duties were imposed on a few items such as beer, cider, perry, spirits, soap and salt but, as time went on many other articles were added, the tax being levied on imports as well as on goods produced at home, and in addition to any Customs duties.

The development of the revenue services followed upon definite lines; Collectors, Controllers and Searchers of Customs were appointed in the main ports, and Patent Officers appointed deputies to act for them in the many rising ports. Thus we find Tide Waiters who boarded vessels, dealt with health, searched and guarded vessels to their discharging berths; Land Waiters who checked cargoes against entries and Searchers who checked export cargoes and ensured that all duty had been paid.

Large ports, such as London, had enormous staffs of both permanent and temporary officers with all sorts of titles viz:- Land Surveyors; Tide Surveyors; Land Carriage Waiters; King's Waiters; Preferential Tide Waiters; Glutmen; Piazza men and many others. Many of these officers

received only a nominal salary and were expected to gain a livelihood by receiving fees for various jobs carried out.

Good's Directory of 1806 gives the details of the Berwick/Tweedmouth Customs & Excise staff:-

1 Supervisor	1 Collector
2 Excise Officers	1 Comptroller
3 Riding Officers	1 Searcher
6 Tide Waiters	1 Surveyor
1 Tide Waiter (at Spittle)	1 Weighing Porter
2 Land Waiters	

In 1688, and in order to finance large scale war fare involving the Dutch, extra revenue was raised by increasing Customs duties on spirits and tea. Duties until then had been relatively low and smuggling, apart from the export smuggling of wool, had not been a serious problem. Would be smugglers in square-rigged ships were hampered also by the difficulties of arriving at places, with a cargo of contraband, and being unable to leave because of the lack of favourable winds, leaving them liable to capture by revenue officials.

The great increase in duties meant that there were substantial profits to be made from the smuggling trade, and the development of the fore-and-aft rigged vessels facilitated the rapid turn-round of smuggling vessels. This 'heyday of smuggling' was known as the 'Free Trade Era' with the smugglers being called 'free traders'. Many engaged in this traffic did not consider that any moral offence was being committed and local business magnates, magistrates and trades people surreptitiously assisted the smuggling gangs. The Customs service ultimately built up a fleet of well armed and manned vessels to cope with the smugglers, whilst on land hundreds of countryfolk, armed with cudgels and firearms, would come to the coast at prearranged times to collect contraband and carry it away whilst the tide-waiters looked on helplessly. There were often pitched battles on land and on sea which resulted in casualties to the Customs Officers, and often to the supporting navy ships.

Eventually the revenue services gained the mastery, being helped by a public change of attitude towards smuggling for, in a number of areas, local people banded together to help the revenue officers fight the smuggling gangs, most of which were eventually broken.

The work of revenue officials in those days was greatly complicated by the fact that both Customs and Excise duties were levied on many imports and the services operated independently regarding the collection of duties, resulting in frequent conflicts of interest.

The following Petition, dated 16<sup>th</sup> February 1825, appears in the Berwick Guild Book B1/27:-

"That your Petitioners have long witnessed the evils occasioned in this town and its neighbourhood by the operation of the Revenue Laws as they affect the use of Spiritous Liquors made from the grain of this country. According to the present state of those Laws, as they are informed, the spirit called in Scotland Whiskey

cannot be made and used in England, nor can it be carried from Scotland by permit or in any legal manner, either by sea or land to be used for private consumption in England.

This prohibition to the People of England is considered on the Border as so unfair that persons in every rank of life make no scruple to use Scotch Whiskey when they can do it without danger. A great temptation to smuggling is thus afforded, and the Boundary between England and Scotland being in many places only a low Ditch or Wall, the transportation of it is a matter easily accomplished and, notwithstanding the severity of the punishment, smuggling is carried on to an enormous extent and is daily increasing and your Petitions believe no exertions or vigilance of the Revenue Officers can ever in any Material degree check it. Besides the expense thus brought upon the Country by the employment of a large establishment of Officers otherwise unnecessary, the practice is attended with the most demoralizing consequences to the very many persons and leads them to commission of more heinous offences.

Your Petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable House will take this subject in your serious consideration as one materially affecting the interest and welfare of a large portion of His Majesty's subjects and will adopt such measures as will put a stop to the evils complained of and allow your Petitioners and the People of England the same Privileges as their neighbours in Scotland enjoy".

Dennis Nicholson

Hon Editor