

TONY BOSTOCK'S LOCAL HISTORY NOTES:

LITTLE BUDWORTH

DODD'S ALMSHOUSE



On 2 March 1720 Dame Isabella Dodd made her will and in it she bequeathed a sum of money by which lands might be purchased to benefit the poor people of Little Budworth. She was the wife of Sir Samuel Dodd who at one time served as Lord Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer at Westminster. But who was she and what was her connection with Little Budworth?

At one time in the church yard there was an altar tomb at the east end of the south aisle to which was fixed a brass plate containing the figures of a man and a woman in winding sheets, and the following inscription.

“Under this stone lyeth buried the bodies of Randall Dod, of this parish, and Elizabeth his wife, who lived together in holy wedlock about sixty years, and at the time of their several deceases were about the age 90 years. Radulphus Dod filius p’ d’ct. Civis et pellio Lond. Posuit 22^o die Julii, a^o D’ni 1634”

Isabella’s husband was Sir Samuel Dodd (1652-1716) son of the Ralph Dodd, citizen and furrier of London, who had the memorial to his parents placed in the church yard. Samuel, who was born in London, entered the Merchant Taylors' School in London on 11 September 1664 and then the Inner Temple in 1670, and was called to the bar in 1679, becoming a bencher in 1700. On 11 March 1686 he married Isabella, daughter and co-heir of Sir Robert Croke of Chequers, Buckinghamshire, and had two sons, only one of whom survived their father. When King George I was being advised on the appointment of judges at the start of his reign it was remarked that for the court of the exchequer ‘Mr Dodd, an ancient practiser of this court, is the fittest person to supply the place of Chief Baron’. For his services Dodd was knighted on 11 October 1714, appointed a serjeant-at-law on 26 October, and created chief baron of the exchequer on 20 November. He died on 14 April 1716 ‘after a long indisposition,

leaving behind him the reputation of a learned and eminent lawyer, and a plentiful fortune to his only son'. He was buried in the Temple Church on 20 April.ⁱ

Isabella's bequest to those less fortunate starts with the sum of £50 for the poor of the parish of Budworth and a further forty guineas for the infirmary in Westminster, London. She then goes on to give the sum of £2,500 to certain trustees that they, or their survivors, purchase free hold property, be it manors, messuages or lands in order that the yearly rents and profits be applied to the purchase of a piece of ground in Little Budworth and build an almshouse. The home was to house 'six poor old men (two men in each apartment) and six poor old women (two women in one apartment) lame or blind or of the poorest inhabitants of the said parish of Budworth or near thereton dwelling'. The men and women were to be housed in apartments containing two individuals and receive a weekly allowance for their subsistence. Further, every two years the poor people were to be provided with 'gowns'. A codicil dated 8 November 1721 ordained that on each Christmas morning 2s 6d be paid to each resident.ⁱⁱ Her will was proved on 26 September 1722. In addition to being charitable to the poor of Little Budworth, Isabella did the same for those of her home parish of Ellesborough, Buckinghamshire.

During the first week of December 1731 negotiations were completed for the transfer of a piece of land in Little Budworth to the trustees Mr Justice Denton, Alderman Hankey and Benjamin Hall.ⁱⁱⁱ The original owners were John Knight and his widowed mother. Then in April 1736, seventy acres of lands in the northern part of Wettenhall, known as the Townfield Tenement, were acquired to provide the necessary annual income. The following year John Houlbrooke, Thomas Walker, Hugh Billington, all of Little Budworth, along with John Billington of Spustow and Joseph Pigott of Warrington, the feoffees (trustees) entered into an agreement with John Becket of Duddon. It seems that the trustees had purchased Green Meadow and Mill Meadow in Duddon for the use of the poor in Little Budworth and had agreed to rent the two meadows to Becket for £5 a year for the next eighty years – should he live that long. Further Becket was required to pay a further £5 a Cheshire acre each year if at any time he plough up the meadow land for arable purposes.^{iv}

Lady Dodd also ordered that the trustees be responsible for the government and management of the Almshouse. John Houlbrooke was appointed as the first accountant or treasurer. It was his responsibility to receive the rents, pay the bills for maintaining the almshouse and pay the poor people their weekly allowance, for which service he received £4 a year. A copy of his accounts for the first 20 years survives together with a partial account for the 1760s.^v

A number of resolutions were agreed upon by the trustees: Thomas Walker, John Houlbrook, William Kirkham, Rev. Thomas Williamson (the vicar), William Manley, John Knight and Joseph Challenor, on 25 March 1797. These were:

“1st. That as, by the Will of the donor, the sole management of the charity rests in the hands of the trustees, they shall meet twice a year, viz., at Lady-day, 25th March, and Michaelmas, 29th September, to inspect and settle the accounts of the treasurer for the time being; that he shall give the trustees seven days' notice that his accounts are ready for their inspection, to meet at three o'clock, at the Bear's Paw, in Little Budworth, within a month after Lady-day, or Michaelmas, and the trustees then meeting shall be a sufficient committee to pass the said accounts.

2nd. That, after the death of any two of the trustees, the remaining five shall fill up the trusts with two proper persons chosen by them, or by a majority of them, at a meeting for passing the accounts, which shall next happen after the decease of the two said trustees: and it is agreed that the estate in Wettenhall shall be measured and

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mapped in a handsome manner, which map shall be lodged in the church-chest of Little Budworth aforesaid, along with a copy of the late Madam Dame Dodd's Will.

3rd. That, as the fund is amply sufficient, and, as it appears to be the will of the donor that the almshouse should be always kept full of the properest persons belonging to the parish of Little Budworth aforesaid, on the decease of any person in the said almshouse, a majority of the trustees collected shall be a sufficient number to choose and appoint a proper person or family to succeed to, or come into, the room of the person so deceased.

4th. That, at their half-yearly meeting, the trustees may order their treasurer to pay a weekly stipend or pension to any old person or family, such as shall be sufficient for the support of the said person or family, though they do not reside in the almshouse, provided the parish be not charged with rent for the house they occupy-, but no person shall be entitled to any stipend or pension from the charity who refuses to become resident in the almshouse, when required by a majority of the trustees.

5th. That it is the wish and intention of the trustees to keep and provide the poor people, coming under the Will of the donor and resident in the almshouse, in rather a more cleanly and comfortable manner than is commonly allowed to parish-poor, so long as they behave themselves in a decent and orderly manner, and attend and comply with such rules and orders as shall be appointed and affixed up in the said almshouse. But, on just complaint being laid against any resident in the house not behaving in a proper manner, and neglecting to comply with the said rules, the offender, by order of the trustees, shall be dismissed from the said almshouse, and from any benefit arising from the said charity.

6th. That, on, passing the half-yearly accounts, if more money remains in the treasurer's hands than is necessary for a fund for the said charity, the trustees then may order the treasurer to lay out such sum or sums as they think proper, in clothes and firing, for some of the most necessitous poor belonging to Little Budworth, who are not pensioners on the almshouse; and he shall give the overseer for the time being a list of the persons relieved, and also an account of the sums laid out on them, but no money shall be given to the overseer to distribute to the poor at his pleasure.

7th. That the treasurer, when his half-yearly accounts are passed, shall have an order from the trustees to receive the half-year's rent, due at Lady-day or Michaelmas, previous to the meeting for passing the accounts (allowing the tenant half a year's rent in hand), and his receipt shall be a sufficient discharge for the same.

8th. That, as it is the wish and desire of the trustees to fulfil, as far as possible, the Will of the donor, and to give satisfaction to the poor of the parish of Little Budworth, in the management of this charity, they will make inquiries from time to time respecting the behaviour and morals of the poor resident in the house; and also whether the treasurer does his duty in paying them their weekly pay regularly as appointed, and provides them the necessaries allowed them, on neglect of which, on sufficient proof before the trustees, he shall be dismissed from his office of treasurer, and another appointed in his room."

Resolution five required that the rules of the almshouse be posted in the building, these stipulated that:

"In order that the people resident in this house may live in the fear of God and conduct themselves in a manner becoming their situation, the trustees for the charityrequire them to conform to the following:

1st. That the residents in this house attend the public worship of God, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as constantly as. their health and bodily infirmities will permit.

2nd. That they be regular in their private daily devotions to the Almighty.

3rd. That they abstain from swearing, cursing, lying, and theft; and also from all abusive language to one another, or to any other person.

4th. That they be as serviceable to each other as they possibly can.

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5th. That no bastard-children be kept in this house.

6th. That the residents shall not receive their own children, or grandchildren, or relations, when out of service, into this house.

7th. That the transgressors of these rules shall be expelled this house and lose all benefits of this charity."

The building of the almshouse does not seem to have begun for some time and so the monies raised from the lands in Wottenhall were applied generally by the Overseers of the Poor. Between 1736 and 1739, Randle Rutter was the tenant of Townfields Farm and he paid £45 in the first year as a proportionate rent. Of this he was allowed £20 4s 0d for payment of taxes and repairs so that on 21 April the Overseers, then John Billington and William Heaward, had £36 to pay to the several poor families of the parish. Over the next two years the poor received £36 and £40 after the deduction of the tenant's expenses. The normal rent was £80 and this was paid by Rutter, then by Thomas Oakes in 1740 and 1741, then Thomas Hall, between 1742 and 1747, and then Mary Knight between 1747 and 1757.

The accounts show money being spent on the almshouses in 1742 when there was a need to purchase three 'bedcords' at a cost of 2s 6d, glazing work cost 3s, and 'three bucket leathers for the pump' costing 2s.^{vi} The following year there was need to repair the pump and also to repair 'tyles' using lime, hair and nails - probably roofing tiles or slates.

A good deal of work on the almshouse was undertaken in 1745 when the accounts show that money was being spent on floor boards, timber for window sills, 500 flooring tiles, iron work, glazing and 8500 bricks.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE ALMSHOUSE ACCOUNTS

Year	Number of	Allocation to the Poor	Tenant's allowance	Expenses
1740	12	£34 10s 0d	£79 1s 7d	£2 13s 2d
1741	12	£43 12s 8d	£13 8s 8d	Nil
1742	12	£43 10s 0 ³ / ₄ d	£25 14s 10 ¹ / ₂ d	7s 6d
1743	12	£44 14s 10 ³ / ₄ d	£28 1s 4d	£72 16s 2 ³ / ₄ d
1744	12	£45 6s 9d	£16 2s 9d	Nil
1745	12	£45 17s 2 ³ / ₄ d	£20 0s 6d	£26 10 6 ¹ / ₂ d
1746	12	£46 8s 10d	£14 0s 4 ¹ / ₂ d	Nil
1747	12	£43 8s 9d	£23 17s 6 1 ¹ / ₂ d	Nil
1748	12	£42 19s 8d	£15 12s 9d	Nil
1749	12	£38 11s 0d	£18 12s 2d	£62 0s 0d
1750	11	£38 14s 5d	£15 14s 4 ¹ / ₂ d	
1751	10	£35 2s 4 ¹ / ₂ d	£21 6s 4 ¹ / ₂ d	3s 4d
1752	8	£26 19s 0d	£16 9s 4d	Nil
1753	8	£36 9s 5d	£14 12s 2 ¹ / ₄ d	£72
1754	8	£42 6s 1 ¹ / ₂ d	£15 19s 10d	£119 3s
1755	7	£26 2s 11 ¹ / ₂ d	£19 5s 9d	
1756	5	£23 1s 1 ¹ / ₂ d	£20 15s 4d	
1757	4	£21 15s 1d	£23 16s 2d	
1762	12	£45 16s 2d	£20 14s 1d	
1763	12	£52 0s 2d	£17 4s 21 ¹ / ₂ d	
1764	12	£55 19s 2d		
1765	12	£65 2s 1d	£18	
1766		£64 0s 1 ¹ / ₂ d	£19 6s 6 ³ / ₄	
1767		£55 14s 11d		
1768		£59 7s 0d		
1769		£58 0s 81 ¹ / ₂ d		
1770		£58 6s 8d		
1771				

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With the detailed census returns which commenced in 1841 we have a list of inmates every ten years, as the following example tables indicate:

1851					
<i>Name</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Where born</i>
Joseph Jackson	Wid.r	74		In receipt of Charity (Joiner)	Little Budworth
Charles Bradshaw	Do	77		Do (Tailor)	
John Buckley	Do	74		Do (School Master)	Do
Ann Billington	Do		59	Do (Do. Mistress)	
Mary Brown	Do		77	Do (Millers Widow)	
Frances Buckley	Do		75	Do (Ware Houseman's	
Mary Duncalf	Do		74	Do (Ag. Lab. Wid.)	
Ann Prince	Do		74	Do (Do. Do.)	

1871					
<i>Name</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Where born</i>
Harriet Dawson	W		83	Formerly Groom's wife	Tarporley
Ann Billington	Un m		78	Formerly School Mistress	Little Budworth
Mary Prince	W			Formerly Labr. Wife	Tarporley
Elizabeth Foden	W		76	Formerly Bricklayer's wife	Over
Sarah Billington	W		73	Formerley Flatman's Wife	Tarporley
Samuel Prince	Wid.r	78		Labr.	
Philip Egerton	Wid r	78		Do	Whitegate
Ann Prince			74	Do	Eaton

1891					
<i>Name</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Where born</i>
James Fowles	Batchelor	62		No Occupation	Little Budworth
Thomas Ashley	Wid	64		No Occupation	Great Budworth
John Hopley	Wid	75		No Occupation	Little Budworth
John Bailey	Wid	68		No Occupation	Tiverton
Joseph Booth	Wid	66		No Occupation	Lancashire, Eccles
Thomas Stockton	Wid	76		No Occupation	Tarporley
Hannah Hitchen	Wid		87	No Occupation	Davenham
Ellen White	Wid		74	No Occupation	Whitegate
Ann Page	Wid		67	No Occupation	Whitegate

ⁱ Dictionary of National Biography

ⁱⁱ An abstract of Lady Dodd's will is given in CRO: DEO190/3

ⁱⁱⁱ CRO: DEO 190/2

^{iv} CRO: P36/22/1. A Cheshire acre is equivalent to 2.1 statute acres.

^v CRO: DEO 60 & 190/2

^{vi} CRO: DEO 60