

Aspects of Poor Law Administration, Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries, from Trull Overseers' Accounts

BY I. FITZROY JONES

INTRODUCTION.

The following notes are based on an examination of the Account Books of the Overseers of Trull and certain other parish documents at present deposited in the Somerset Record Office. I must express my thanks to the Rev. C. W. Trevelyan, Vicar of Trull, for leave to examine them, and to Mr. I. P. Collis, the County Archivist, for making not only the documents, but his knowledge and experience, readily accessible. Few would nowadays attempt to deal with any records of parochial administration without Mr. W. E. Tate's *Parish Chest* within easy reach, and I have used it constantly.

1. THE RECORDS.

The accounts of the Overseers of Trull are contained in six volumes and cover the period 1626 to 1833. They contain two main types of information: (a) the rate, (b) the accounts, together with occasional lists of surveyors and apprentices and some other matters. The other documents examined included sundry special rates, bastardy and settlement papers, and apprenticeship papers.

Before dealing with these, some account of the composition of the parish and local peculiarities of appointment of overseers is appropriate.

2. THE COMPOSITION OF THE PARISH.

The parish of Trull consisted of three tithings, of which Dipford and North Trendle were in the hundred of Hull (now Bishop's Hull) and Woodland in the hundred of Holway.

A problem which awaits solution is the identity and extent of an ancient area called Trendle. In the Pipe Roll of the

Bishopric of Winchester for the year 1208–9 the accounts of the great manor of Taunton Deane were presented under the headings of Holway, Corfe, Poundisford, Trendle, Hull, Staple, Nailsbourne, Fulford, Kingston, Otterford, Muleland and Chipley, together with the Hundredus and Forinsecus. It is not clear what these territorial divisions were. In the Defectus account we find under Poundisford mention of Duddlestone, Lega (now Howleigh), Cumba, Fulford and the Hundred of Poundisford; under Trendle there is mention of Dipford and thedinga (i.e. tithing) Lifig de Trindle; whilst in the Expensa account Holway is referred to as Berthona (i.e. secondary manor) de Holweia. Some light is thrown upon these divisions by a plea, dated 9 Hen fil John (1224–5), in which twelve jurors and the townships of Punderford, Trendle, Hulle, Holeweie and Otriford give evidence.

By the sixteenth century Holway, Poundisford, Hull, Staple and Nailsbourne—to deal only with the Taunton neighbourhood—had become hundreds, whereas Corfe, Fulford and Kingston had become tithings. Trendle, as such, had disappeared by this date, having apparently been broken up into North and South Trendle and Dipford tithings and distributed; North Trendle and Dipford into Hull hundred and South Trendle into Poundisford hundred, which, at this later date, comprised also the tithings of Duddlestone, Blagdon, Leigh, Fulford, and formed the neighbouring parish of Pitminster.

Another problem is the date at which Trull parish was brought into being. On 5 November 1308 the chapel of St. Mary Magdalene at Taunton was constituted a vicarage. It had previously been served by the canons of Taunton Priory who continued to be the rectors until the Dissolution. The bishop ordained, *inter alia*, that the vicar should serve by himself and his curates not only the newly constituted vicarage but the chapels of Trendle, the Castle and Fons George [Wilton] whilst, to assist the vicar, the Prior was directed to provide services at the chapels of Stoke [St. Mary] and Ruishton by one secular priest; of Staplegrove and St. James's, Taunton by another secular priest; and of Bishop's Hull by a third secular priest. From this it appears that Trull was a chapelry of Taunton St. Mary Magdalene, and it remained such until the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII.

In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, compiled to enable Henry to know the value of the monasteries, we find an allowance for a stipend of £6 13s. 4*d.* to John Sabyn, chaplain of Trull. It was this man whose name appears in the heading of the earliest parish register starting in 1538. Taunton Priory declared their acceptance of the supremacy of the King on 15 September 1534, and on 12 February 1539 the Prior and canons signed their instrument of surrender. To facilitate the disposal of their estates a Survey was made; in this we find mention of the Rectory of St. Mary Magdalene in Taunton with the chapels of Ruishton, Trull and Bishop's Hull.

The oldest parish register starts with the record of a baptism on 21 December 1538. It is a particularly interesting volume for it is on paper, not parchment, and is an example of the rare original registers set up in accordance with Thomas Cromwell's injunction in that year as Henry's vice-regent for ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the newly formed Church of England; the parchment copy made under the mandate of 1603 does not exist as far as is known. This register is headed 'Hec sunt nomina et cognomina baptisatorum despensatorum et sepulcorum huius parochie de Trull tempore domini Johannis Sabyn curati ibidem Robertus Smyth Robertus Symon et Wyllielmus Moxens custodies ecclesie ibidem hec anno [1538]'. It is observable that Trull is described as a parish and Sabyn as curate; as early as 5 July 1533 Sabyn is recorded as witnessing the will of Thomas Miller and in 1535 as 'curate there' he is named in the will of John Gybbons, both testators belonging to the parish.

When we turn to Ecton's *Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum* which deals with the *status quo* in 1760 or thereabouts we find Trull described as a chapel to St. Mary Magdalene. The next record that has been noted is the Census Return for 1811, in which Trull is described as a perpetual curacy; it is however observable that, in the introduction to that return, the Commissioners declare themselves as being by no means certain as to what were the criteria for a parish.

2.1 THE PERMANENCE OF TITHINGS.

The rate is always set out under the headings of the three tithings and a casual glance at a series of rates suggests that

the individual holdings are arranged in a constant order ; a setting out of the amounts in columnar form not only confirms a general order of arrangement (with occasional irregularities), but displays the fact that, after a rather erratic beginning, the values of holdings remain constant over long periods or become broken up into recognizable sub-units. The first impression formed is that there is permanence of structure within the tithing and, consequently, the hundred ; but a closer study of the occasional irregularities discloses that they are not always arbitrary or the result of a change in rateable value, and shows that a holding could be transferred, at least for rating purposes, from one tithing to another and, indeed, from one hundred to another.

From 1636 till 1688 a certain holding in Dipford tithing was owned by the Keene family ; at the latter date it passed to John Cranmer in whose hands it remained until 1715, being regularly rated at 12*s.* from 1700. From 1716 to 1721 the rate lists are not recorded ; in 1722 Cranmore is rated at 7*s.* only, the total for the tithing being also reduced by 5*s.* Turning to the list for Woodland tithing we find that in the same year the total has been increased by 5*s.*, and an examination of the details shows that a new holding, rated at 5*s.*, is included and held by Richard Beadon. Subsequent rate lists show the transfer to have been a lasting one.

A more explicit case has been noted. Up to 1728 (or perhaps 1729 for which year no rate is recorded) one John Wyatt had been rated in Dipford tithing at 21*s.* since 1708. In 1730 his rate is reduced to 20*s.* 6*d.* in respect of this holding ; he also acquires a holding described as ' part of Vincents ' rated at 2*d.* (and another small holding which can be traced as part of one already in the tithing). The total value of the Dipford rate is decreased by 4*d.*, and on turning to the North Trendle rate we notice first that it has been increased by 4*d.* and, on examining it in detail, that a holding for which Vincent had been previously rated at 3*s.* is now reduced to 2*s.* 10*d.* and that Mrs. Browne is rated 6*d.* for a new holding described as ' part of Mr Wyatts '.

In the latter case the exchange was within the hundred, but in that first quoted the parcel of land was transferred from the Hull hundred to that of Holway. These examples indicate

the importance, when analysing rates, of bearing in mind that an alteration in a rate may be due to a transfer of a holding, or part thereof, to another tithing.

2.2. THE OVERSEERS.

The relief of the poor was originally a pious act but, when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries and appropriated their revenues, the means for aiding the poor were very largely diminished, with the result that it became necessary to devise new means for supporting those who could not earn their own living. The problem was tackled by an act of 27 H.3, cap. 25 (1535-6) which forbade the giving of alms in money except to the general fund or 'Stock' of the parish; and adumbrated the office of Overseers by enacting that the churchwardens or two others of every parish should take steps to relieve the poor. Coming next to the act of 39 Eliz., cap. 3 (1597-8) we find it enacted that 'the churchwardens of every parish and four substantial householders of the said parish' shall be called 'Overseers of the Poor'. This was followed in 1601 by an act 43 Eliz., cap. 2 with a few alterations and verbal differences and, as regards overseers, lays down that 'the churchwardens of every parish and four, three or two substantial householders there' according to the size of the parish are to be nominated yearly in Easter week or within one month after Easter to be Overseers of the Poor.

These overseers, among other duties, entered into a record known as the Collection Bill the names of the persons they thought to be fit subjects for relief; it was found however in the course of time that the overseers had become unduly arbitrary in the matter, and in 1691 an act (3 W. and M., cap. 11) was passed, one section of which required that a book should be kept in every parish to record the names of those receiving 'collection', and that yearly in Easter week, or more often if convenient, the parishioners should meet in their vestry to authorize a list to be made and entered of such persons as they should think fit to receive collection. No other person was to be allowed to receive collection except by direction of a magistrate.

It will have been noted that the churchwardens were to act also as overseers; moreover every substantial householder

could be compelled to serve. The acts laid down the principles and left the administrative machinery to be developed locally—*tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis*. In Trull the parishioners decided upon having three overseers—one for each tithing—and upon the two churchwardens of one year becoming two of the overseers for the ensuing year; such organization is by no means general. Both measures commend themselves for approval; the tithing was a natural administrative unit in those days, and the transpeciation of function ensured continuity of administration. Although an overseer was appointed in respect of each tithing—whose rate he was responsible for collecting—his payments were not restricted to his tithing but covered the needs of the whole parish and, as we shall see later, the three overseers took turns of duty.

The various parochial offices carried no emolument until a very late date but involved very considerable responsibility and work. It is not surprising therefore that such appointments were not coveted, and that penalties were attached to failure to act. It seems a natural development from this dislike that a roster of persons liable for office should be set up, with the dual purpose of ensuring that each liable person took his turn and of distributing the liability as fairly as possible. Even a fairly close analysis of the records does not disclose an actual sequence, but it seems probable that the roster had a territorial basis, certain tenements by virtue of their rateable value qualifying for inclusion. This land basis is clearly in evidence in the records of the nearby village of Runnington where the qualifying tenements are specified and a sequence of holdings, rather than of persons, is observable. What constituted a substantial householder must have varied from parish to parish, and an examination of the rated values of the Trull overseers suggests that, in the earlier period at any rate, the third overseer was often a 'smaller' man than the two ex-churchwardens.

The existence of a roster is indicated by an entry in the account for 1720 when it was agreed by the parishioners that John Baker should be allowed a guinea for his executing the offices of churchwarden and overseer out of his turn. In another parish the desire to avoid duty prompted John Piggott of Brockley, when granting a lease in 1779, to include a

covenant that the lessee would discharge him from 'all parish apprentices and bear the offices of Churchwarden, Overseer of the Poor, Constable and Tithingman'.

The connection of an overseer with a tithing is not generally explicit. In 1646 it is stated that William Domett was appointed for Woodland, John Moore for Dipford and Robert Gibbens for North Trendle; and from time to time in the accounts an overseer states that his receipts include the rate of a specified tithing; but more often the connection has to be derived from a comparison of the rate received with the tithing rate as listed.¹

The books enable a practically complete list of Overseers to be completed for the years 1626 to 1833; one overseer is missing in 1645, 1659, 1701 and 1730, and after 1815 only two overseers seem to have been appointed (and one of those for 1821 is missing). Some gaps have to be filled from the Churchwardens' accounts, apprentice articles and other sources.

Prior to the creation of overseers persons known as Collectors had been appointed to collect the voluntary alms of the parishioners. In 1705 the first entry in the second account is 'pd the old Sideman', the only reference to this old name that has been noted.

Up to 1799 the office of Overseer was not only onerous but honorary. In 1800 we find the entry 'to serving the office of overseer as by agreement at vestry £1 1s.', and a like entry continues to appear annually. By 1810 the amount had been raised to £1 10s., at which figure it remained during the period considered. It was usually paid out of the overseers' funds, but we find that the churchwardens paid this charge in 1807, 1815 and after 1823.

3. THE RATES.

A rate, being a tax or sum assessed on property, presupposes an assessment of the property, and of such assessment there is no record in the accounts until 1827. This deficiency is to a certain extent made good by other extant documents. These are two rates of which the first, made in 1633 for the Composition and for the building of two bridges, gives the assessment

¹ In some extant rates for maintenance of the forces (between 1651 and 1660) the collectors are allocated to specified tithings.

of the parish as £109 6s. 8*d.* and details of a rate amounting to £2 5s. 5*d.*, which can be verified as being at the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* in the pound ; the second, for carriage of saltpetre and dated 28 September 1635, states explicitly that the rate is $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* in the pound and the rate, £2 5s. 3*d.*, agrees closely with that of 1633.

By 1827 the rateable value of the parish had risen to £3,137 17s. 6*d.* ; from 1820 onwards each rate list specifies the rate in the pound and so provides direct clues to the actual assessment. To determine the intermediate changes between 1633 and 1820 would require not only a careful examination of the tithing totals (which have often to be calculated from figures that are by no means clear) but a year-by-year comparison in individual rates to distinguish between reassessment and those due to accidents such as premises not being occupied and, as mentioned above, transfers between tithings. Obvious reassessments were made in 1662, 1712 and 1820. Of the last of these definite proof occurs in the Vestry Book, where on 15 June 1820 a minute records that a new rate is about to be produced and prescribes that aggrieved persons may have their claims referred to Mr. Robert Farrant of Wellington, but that they will have to pay the cost of reference if they are not relieved. The new rate produced, at 3*d.* in the pound, £37 15s. 3*d.* in place of the £22 15s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ *d.* which the former rate produced in April.

Turning now to the rates themselves, we find that the accounts do not specify how they were collected ; they merely set down the total amount received ; a suggestion as to procedure is made later. A rate was drawn up at the beginning of the financial year and was based on an estimate of the expenses of the coming year, and from time to time it happened, of course, that expenses were underestimated so that a second levy became necessary. In the earliest part of our period it seems that, if the original levy proved too small, a second rate was made to meet the deficiency. Thus in 1637 a second rate (two-thirds of the first) was levied in October ; in 1638 a second rate (half of the first) was levied in November ; in 1640 a second rate (also half of the first) was levied in December. In each case the first levy was approximately the same (about £11) and seems to have been a sort of standard rate. In 1639 a single rate, apparently $1\frac{1}{2}$ times this standard

rate, was levied at the beginning of the year and proved adequate.

This standard rate continued to be levied until 1662 and proved sufficient except in 1647, when the receipts show that an extra half rate was levied ; no second rate however (as in 1637, 1638 and 1640) is recorded. In 1662 two rates are recorded and the accounts show that both were collected ; the second differs sufficiently from the first to indicate a new assessment, as mentioned above. In 1664 it seems to have become apparent to the overseers that future expenditure would require at least a doubled rate, and a new standard rate was set up at about £22 ; this was noted in the accounts by an entry under the heading ' heere the Ratts wass risen '. This proved to be sufficient as a single rate only until 1671, after which it became necessary to levy it several times, including sometimes a half rate ; by the early years of the nineteenth century as many as 20 and more rates were required. In 1806 the standard rate was quadrupled, and in 1820 the practice was introduced of specifying the rate per pound. Up to this latter date only one rate is recorded for each year, but after it there is a reversion to the setting out of a number of different rates, as many as four being set out for several years.

Although the records start in 1626 no actual rate is recorded till 1636, for which year it amounted to £9 13s. 10*d.* There is extant, however, an earlier rate on a loose sheet ; this was made 4 May 1630 and amounts to £8 16s. 2*d.* ; the accounts for that year show that the amount realized by rate was £13 4s. 3*d.*, which shows that actually an extra half rate was called for. Comparison with the 1633 rate suggests that the basic rate was one of 2*d.* in the pound. From 1636 the rate is recorded nearly every year except between 1745 and 1795 when the lists occur very irregularly ; between these years however the rate remained practically unchanged.

In 1698 the heading of the rate states that it is ' to be collected as many times it needs ' and similar wording is incorporated in the heading for many years thereafter. This principle of gathering a standard or basic rate several times during the year may have been adopted as early as 1672, from which year (as we have already mentioned) more than one levy was made annually.

Though the rate was collected as often as necessary, practic-

ally no clue is given as to the times of collection of the different rates ; the amount received from each tithing is always given as a single total even though it may be described as ' received by three rates '. A hint is, however, given in 1681 when one overseer made payments on the following dates :—

August 14 and 28 ; September 11 ; December 18 (1) ; January 1 (2) and 15 (3) ; March 26 (4) ; April 9 (5) ; annotating the entries on the marked dates as—

- (1) first payment of [i.e. first paying out from] 2nd rate,
- (2) second payment of 2nd rate,
- (3) last payment of 2nd rate,
- (4) first payment of half rate,
- (5) last payment of half rate,

In that year $2\frac{1}{2}$ rates were collected.

Although how the rate was actually collected from the rate-payers does not appear, it is quite clear that each overseer received the rate of one tithing and disbursed to the whole village ; this he did in a somewhat erratic manner. Thus the accounts for 1685 show that the three overseers made payments on—

- (first) May 3 ; July 26 ; November 1, 15, 29 ; February 21,
(second) May 17, 31 ; June 14 ; August 9, 23 ; September 6 ;
December 13, 27 ; January 10 ; March 7, 21,
(third) June 28 ; July 12 ; October 4, 18 ; January 24 ;
February 7 ; April 4.

This irregular sequence of payments suggest that, perhaps after the balance in hand had been expended, a rate was collected and expended by the overseers in turn and that, as the balance again neared extinction, a new rate was collected and treated similarly, and so on ' as need requires '. Owing to the casual disbursements being often undated it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to analyse the accounts sufficiently to detect any system.

The rate normally purported to be levied by the Church-wardens and Overseers and was signed by some or all of them ; it was ' allowed ' or ' seen ' by two justices. There are, however, many divergencies from this practice ; in 1674 and 1675 both old and new overseers signed as well as the new church-wardens ; in 1699 the rate was not allowed by the justices but was subscribed—

‘This rate was published in the church the 28th of January and noe objection made.

Ja. Hays, Min^r.’

(Incidentally, the year of this rate was given as 16 $\frac{9}{7}$ $\frac{9}{0}$, a scribe’s error for 1 $\frac{6}{7}$ $\frac{9}{0}$.)

Now and again the signatures of other inhabitants are added to those of the churchwardens and overseers ; in 1701 and 1702 the rates are witnessed by 11 and 16 parishioners only, none being described as churchwarden or overseer, and the rate allowed in the usual way by the justices. Although fairly frequently the two justices allow the rate without any subscription by overseer or churchwarden, it is very rarely that they do not sign at all ; in addition to the year 1699, noted above, they failed to sign the rate for 1679.

4. THE ACCOUNTS.

The overseers’ accounts, like those of the churchwardens, are perhaps best described (in their earlier form at any rate) as statements made to satisfy the parishioners as to what monies had been received and what disbursements made. The records of original entry were probably the personal property of the individuals, and none are known to be extant for the period under consideration. That there were journals from which the accounts, as recorded, were written up is evidenced by the accounts themselves ; these journals may have been books or merely pieces of paper, as in the case of the account of Robert Gadd one of the overseers for the year ending Easter 1716. His account does not appear in the records ; instead we have the following memorandum :—

Wee whose names are hereunto subscribed have the 2d day of Aprill 1716 examined the account of Robt. Gadd one of the Overseers of the poor of our Parish of Trull for the last year 1715. Which is entered on a single sheet of paper and we finde that he has received by three poor rates and a halfe in the tythinge of North Trendle twenty three pounds seaventeene shillings and nine pence and that he hath paied to the poore for their releife at several times in all the sume of twenty four pounds four shillings and five pence soe that he has pd more than received the sume of six shillings and eight pence and we conceive that the sd account is just and true as are also the accounts of the other Overseers Mr. Sherford and Mr. Cranmore as they stand entered in this booke.

The memorandum is signed by six parishioners and allowed and confirmed by two Justices.

In 1735, the scribe, having listed John Dimond's total payments to the poor on specified dates, adds the memorandum—

The perticklers of the Several Sums as above are all to be seen in a little book as it was paid. Not haveing this book sooner could not enter it att large in this.

From time to time references occur such as 'paid to the poor two pay days as by the particulars to the parishioners' followed by the total amount. In 1705 no details of the disbursements of one overseer are given; against his total amount appears 'Disburst to the poor as by particulars to the parishioners Easter Monday did appear'. Indirect confirmation of the existence of records of original entry appears from collation of the accounts of the Churchwardens and those of the Overseers; twice between 1692 and 1712 a single combined balance in the Churchwardens' account appears as two separate (and equivalent) amounts in the Overseers' accounts of the following year, showing that the churchwardens, on becoming overseers, brought forward their individual balances.

There seems little doubt that, in the early days at any rate, the annual presentation of accounts partook of the nature of a colloquium; and the frequent adjustments at the end of accounts suggest that John Baker, suddenly remembered, or was reminded, that he had paid Henry Smith some money and had forgotten to put it down. The parishioners were satisfied as to the bona fides of the payment, and so discrepancies between end of the year balances and those carried forward may perhaps be due to a verbal explanation unaccompanied by the setting down of adjusting entries.

That the examination of the accounts by the parishioners was by no means perfunctory is evidenced by the case of Tristram Slape, one of the overseers for 1724, who after presenting his account had to sign the following entry:—

Pd Jane Way therten shillings and to pence which is not agreed to by the parishioners, which sum I returne into the hands of Mr. John Gill now standing churchwarden, but overseer for the year next insheving which is 1725.

And the refund is duly recorded in the accounts for 1725.

The references quoted make it manifest that some kind of record was exhibited to the parishioners, and that they were satisfied that the account as set out in the book represented the transactions in an adequate manner. The certificates that are from time to time incorporated in the attestations of the accounts emphasize adequacy rather than accuracy of detail ; thus we get in 1703 ' These accounts wheare seene by the parish and no objection made ' ; in 1697 ' Wee doe think these accounts to be just '.

The accounts are usually described as those of the overseers, though there are years when the churchwardens are associated with them. In the earlier accounts the date on which the overseers came into office is specified, and is found to be Easter Monday in each case ; occasionally the precise dates of the period are specified as in 1648 when the overseers ' Laid out weekly for 51 weeks beginning 9th Apr and ending the 25th March 1649 ', these dates being the Sunday after Easter and Easter Sunday respectively ; in this year we are also told that ' the overseers came into office 3 April 1648 ', i.e. Easter Monday. Some care in reading the heading is necessary as the accounts are described, sometimes as those of a given year, and sometimes as those given up to the parish on a given date (which is of course in the financial year following that of the accounts concerned).

The amount of detail given increases as time goes on. The earliest accounts are mere summaries ; then we get detailed fortnightly payments, and finally day-by-day transactions. Sometimes the accounts are summarized and a joint balance presented ; in some years they are not even cast. Normally payments to the regular poor—those of the Collection—are kept quite separate from those to the sick and needy and for administrative purposes, and it is quite evident that towards the end of the period a special record was maintained of payments to those in receipt of regular parish relief. These were ' the ' poor ; the other assisted persons were those to whom the title ' second poor ' was applied. These latter were those who, though their means were small, did their best to do without charity, and struggled to avoid the stigma—as it undoubtedly then was—of pauperdom.

In Trull the fact that the Churchwardens of one year became

two of the overseers of the following year resulted in a very close connection between the two sets of accounts. It is probable that, in the earlier days at any rate, common sense predominated over departmental jealousies, and obscurantist book-keeping was not deliberately employed. The money in the hands of the Churchwardens and the Overseers was for the benefit of the parish, and it was probably thought not to matter very much whether churchwarden or overseer paid it out. Not only do we find the churchwardens receiving repayment of casual gifts made to poor persons, and the overseers account being charged with cost of 'bread and wine for the communion', of timber 'about the bells' and a number of like irrelevant charges, but overdrawn balances of one account are covered by payments made by the other. In 1699 the second churchwarden was owed £1 5s. 4d. by the parish and notes that he has reimbursed himself in the following year from the overseers' funds, in which the entry duly appears. Between 1727 and 1734 the churchwardens' account was frequently overdrawn and balanced by money obtained from the overseers' funds.

The accounts were generally certified by the signatures of a number of parishioners and allowed by two justices. From 1672 to 1674 the churchwardens and overseers certified them, but this was unusual, the more ordinary method of signature by parishioners with or without some form of attestation persisting over a long period. The number of attesting parishioners varies between 4 and 11; the attestation is on the lines of 'We do think these accounts to be just' or 'We approve (or allow) of this account'. In 1653 there is a certificate that the account had been 'tendered and rec^d xjth day of April 1653 Before Wm. Cogan, Wm. Buncom, Ri. Skinner, Xpher Dollen, Edw. Keene and other parishioners'. For some years about 1682 the attestation took the form of 'The (several) accounts have been seen and allowed by (the major part of) the parishioners'. In 1688 only the minister—Harry Bayly—attested them, saying 'This account was publicquely read and no objection made'. For 1692 the attestation is amplified to 'The three accounts laste mencioned were published in the parish church the 16th of April 1693 [Easter Sunday] and no objectition', [sic] and is signed by 8 parishioners. The

accounts for 1748 have a special certificate; it reads:—

15th April 1749. This Acco^t was verified before me one of his Majesty's Justice of the Peace for the County of Somerset on the oaths of William Thomas and John Richards Overseers of the poor of the parish of Trull and on the affirmacon of John Dimond another overseer of the sd parish (he being one of the people called Quakers).

A similar entry in 1823 disclosed that John (or James, the heading and certificate differ) Hewett was also a quaker. Though the law demanded the allowance of the accounts by two justices, it seems probable that their inspection was normally perfunctory; the certificates quoted make it clear that it was the parishioners who had to be satisfied, though the justices had statutory rights of control.

Up to Easter 1815 the accounting period was from Easter to Easter, and this fact must be born in mind when any comparison of annual payments is made, for the 'year' might contain anything from 47 to 57 weeks. In 1815 Easter fell on 26 March and from that year onwards the financial year was from Ladyday to Ladyday.

5. THE ASSETS.

The assets available for distribution fall into four categories—

- (a) the balance(s) of the previous overseers' account(s).
- (b) the balance(s) of the account(s) of the churchwardens of the previous year.
- (c) the rate.
- (d) sundries such as arrears of rate, bequests, fines, etc.

The connection between the balance at the end of a year's account and that brought in at the beginning of the following year is at times elusive. It is not necessary to ascribe these errors to chicanery, though it must be admitted that some take a good deal of explaining away. Two factors must be borne in mind: (a) that at times the overseer and churchwarden balances were amalgamated, wholly or in part, (b) that the accounts are not original and there may be copyist's errors.

A fairly close analysis of both churchwarden and overseer accounts has clarified some obscurities, but as the former accounts (except for a volume preceding our period in date) are not extant for the years prior to 1692, the overseer accounts before that year do not yield so easily to analysis.

The assets of the parish were known as the Stock, but the term is not applied consistently. In 1718, for example, it was applied to the combined balances of churchwardens and overseers, but the amount so termed in 1720 consisted of the churchwardens' balance only. There was no hard and fast rule as to the amalgamation, or otherwise, of the churchwarden and overseer balances when bringing them forward, but by far the more common practice was to keep them separate, and even to record as separate items the balances of the individual churchwardens and overseers.

The paying over of the balances was often implicit in the accounts, but in 1673 we get a particularized statement inserted after the setting out of the rate which reads

Remains in the hands of the old overseers which they have paid to the new this very day being the 20th of April 1674 [Easter Monday] viz.—

Wm. Buncombe	£1	13	8
Xpher Dolling	3	7	2
Geo. Durston	2	14	7
the whole is	7	15	5

This preciseness, however, is offset by the balance actually shown at the end of the accounts being £8 5s., 'which we have paid to the new overseers'. Actually, it appears from the accounts for the next year that £7 15s. 5d. was paid over.

From time to time we find balances corrected and, at this distance in time, we cannot tell whether the adjustments were made after or before the accounts had been allowed. Generally speaking agreement exists between the balances shown at the end of a year and those brought forward to the accounts of the following year, but there are many discrepancies.

Examination of the churchwardens' accounts from 1692 to 1832 shows that there was usually a surplus at the end of the year, and that when overdrawn the churchwardens sometimes carried forward their adverse balance to their own account and sometimes recouped themselves from the funds of the overseers, this being a natural result of the transformation of churchwarden into overseer already referred to.

The labour of casting the accounts and rates has not been attempted, though it has been occasionally necessary in order

to complete some abstracts which have been lodged with the Somerset Record Office. This labour is increased by the original clerk's reprehensible habit of correcting an error by writing the second figure over the first so that, when the ink tints have been equalized in the passage of time, it is almost impossible to determine the intention of the clerk; further trouble is caused by irregular setting out of figures, which makes casting an uncertain operation. Such examination as has been made, however, disclosed a fair number of errors of addition and subtraction. The following discrepancies and complications are perhaps especially striking.

In 1679 the overseers ended up £8 7*s.* to the good, but their successors entered this balance as 8*s.* 7*d.*; in 1708 one overseer ended up with a balance of £13 2*s.* 4*d.* due to the parish, but he returned this by making payments of £8 8*s.* in 1709 of £1 14*s.* 4*d.* in 1710, and of £3 in 1713. The separate accounts, however, do little to make this clear. A balance of 8*s.* 10*d.* due to the parish at the end of 1782 was not paid over till 1786; a balance of £10 13*s.* 11*d.* due at the end of 1805 is not ostensibly paid over, but seems to be included in an otherwise inexplicable balance brought forward in 1815. In 1732 an apparently missing balance from the previous year is found in the churchwardens' account, whose overdraft it partially offsets, but a number of balances seem not to have been paid over at all. Complications such as that unravelled above indicate that other discrepancies may be less culpable than they appear at first sight.

The assets grouped above under sundries were of infrequent occurrence; arrears were fairly frequent in the earliest accounts; in 1634 the overseers received £3 from Edward Collier [Collard] by a warrant from John Gorges Esq. (no reason being given); in 1659, 4*s.* was received 'for seats which was due the last year' though no other entry for pew rent has been noted in either overseer or churchwarden accounts; it is possible that the missing churchwarden accounts for this period held the like entries. Other items noted were fines for being excused from taking an apprentice; sales of a person's goods; in 1744 a grant of £3 in respect of a pressed person; in 1778 and 1780 the County Treasurer paid in to the overseer fund; the 'Porlock people' paid £4 2*s.* 6*d.* in 1782.

- (b) Payments to other poor persons—the Second Poor—in necessity ; these include provision of clothing and monetary aid—
- (i) at childbirth,
 - (ii) in relief and for medical attention during sickness,
 - (iii) after death,
 - (iv) to vagrants.
- (c) Administrative payments such as—
- (i) apprenticeships,
 - (ii) settlement charges,
 - (iii) bastardy charges,
 - (iv) purchase of materials to keep the poor at work,
 - (v) maintenance of a parish doctor, midwife, etc.,
 - (vi) salaries and office expenses,
 - (vii) subscriptions to county and other external institutions.

Although, as mentioned above, for the greater part of the period each overseer received the rate of one tithing only, he made payments to the whole of the parish. The amount of detail given varies tremendously, not only from year to year but, in the earlier accounts more noticeably, in the accounts of the individual overseers of one year. Apart from the payments to those on the Poor List, actual dates of payment do not appear till quite late ; the first recorded dates of payment to the poor appear in 1671, they are next recorded in 1677 and thereafter it is the normal practice.

6.1. THE POOR LIST.

In each parish there were a certain number of persons who, owing to age or infirmity, were totally unable to support themselves. Such people were necessarily in continuous need of support from charity or parish funds. At the beginning of poor law administration these persons were somewhat arbitrarily assisted by the overseers, but there gradually arose a recognized group of persons known as *THE POOR*, and a regular roster was set up known as the poor list.

The relief of the poor was a first charge on the funds of the parish and as such the record of the payments throughout the period is not only kept rigorously separate from all other pay-

In this connection it is to be noted that the overseers did not always include bequests, fines, etc., in their general accounts, but gave separate particulars of them and their disbursement; these incidental accounts are not always dated. Some are bequests; £2 10s. 'which Giles Buncombe gave to the poor' about 1700; £2 10s. from Mrs. Thomasine Franklin about 1707; the 'gift of Ann Buncombe of 10s. given by William Buncombe, late of Pitminster, decd.' in 1713. There is a record that in 1715 'Edward Dymond's gift to the poor was Ten pounds which was given and paid amongst the poor of Trull . . . by his executor with the then officers'. Of fines an interesting example is 'An account of Mr Jo. Baker's money that he paid for swearing'; this resulted in the distribution of 6s., so that he evidently swore 6 times for, under the Act 21 Jas I cap. 20, the penalty was a shilling a swear for an ordinary person. What he said is not recorded, but the Quarter Sessions records of this period show that the swearing need not be of a very vigorous order to qualify for a fine, for in those records we find a man haled before the justices for swearing and it is divulged that his words were 'Damn you' and 'Damn me'. That this entry in our records is an isolated one is probably due to the fines being levied by the Constable who had to render a certificate to the Justices of the names of the recipients of the fine, and the records would normally remain with the Constable. Soon after the beginning of the nineteenth century the assets are from time to time augmented by penalties attached to bastardy; some particulars of these are given later under that heading.

The names of the recipients are not always recorded; where they are, the beneficiaries seem to have been generally chosen from the Second Poor rather than from those in regular receipt of parish charity.

6. THE DISBURSEMENTS.

These can be conveniently considered under the following heads—

(a) Payments to the regular poor—the Poor List.

These include in later years those 'settled' in Trull but living elsewhere.

ments, but is given pre-eminence of position in the actual setting out of the accounts. The degree of detail varies; at first we find the total annual payment to each individual recorded for a specified number of weeks at a given weekly rate. These weekly payments were made until 1668 when payment at fortnightly payments were introduced and maintained for the remainder of the period.

In 1682 one of the overseers is shown as making payments thrice only, paying for six weeks each time, but the account as set out may be a summary of the actual transactions. In 1748 the accounts describe the payments of one overseer as monthly, and a second overseer gives his dates of fortnightly payments, but groups them in pairs as if monthly payments had been made.

From 1677 onwards the actual dates of payment are usually specified, and an examination of these shows that up to 1809 payment was normally made on a Sunday. From 1810 to 1812 the dates of payment are not recorded, the entry being reduced to some statement such as 'paid the poor at 25 payments'; from 1813 onwards payment was normally made on Fridays. As the accounts as presented are almost certainly not records of original entry it may well be that some of the divergencies from Sunday or Friday in the two periods may be illusive, being the results of a copier's errors.

One of the humiliations laid upon the regular poor was an enactment—8 and 9 W and M cap. 30, 1696-7—that every pauper and his wife and children should wear on the shoulder of the right sleeve of the uppermost garment a large Roman P together with the first letter of the name of the parish in red or blue cloth. The first notice of the badges is an expenditure of 2*s.* 6*d.* in 1709; in 1728 six badges cost 6*d.*

A poor person thinking himself aggrieved in respect of the amount he received could appeal to the justices and even to Quarter Sessions; on 30 May 1719 a magistrate's order was issued, ordering 9*d.* a week to be paid to Joan Fry, a widow, who is described as 'very poor, impotent and utterly disabled to provide for herself and child'; in 1790 Mrs. Hare was paid 5*s.* 'by order of Henry Whitmash Esq.'; in 1794 the overseers paid 15*s.* to 'several poor by Mr. H. Whitmash's order'; the following year 8*s.* was paid to 'Sarah Hayes for 8 weeks

arrears for herself by the order of Justice Gardener'; and in 1819 Parsons received 4s. by order of the Justices.

6.2. THE SECOND POOR.

In addition to the really destitute inhabitants of the parish who formed the Poor List, there were also a certain number of indigent persons who were normally able to support themselves, but unable to amass any savings, with the result that, when they fell sick or were otherwise incapacitated for work, they had to receive assistance from the parish. In those days the matter-of-fact acceptance of payment from a public fund was scorned by the sturdy and independent Englishman and only resorted to under stress of circumstances; to be the recipient of parish relief was by such considered a stigma. Their reluctance to accept such support was tacitly respected by those testators who frequently made bequests to the second poor, so ensuring that the beneficiaries should be, not those already living constantly on charity, but those who, though nearly as poor, struggled proudly on.

6.3. CHILDBIRTH.

Regular assistance in childbirth was established comparatively late. Except for a lone entry in 1627—paid the midwife for John Winter's wife 1s.—no case of assistance has been noted till 1758, when Searl's wife was paid 4s. 'in her laying in'. The next entry was in 1771, and thereafter there are fairly frequent entries. Payment was made either to the expectant mother or to the midwife for effecting delivery. Sometimes—as in 1826 when Mary Winter was paid 2s. 6d. in childbed and the midwife for her a like sum—both kinds of relief occur. It does not appear that the appointment of a midwife was a parish one, but Betty Ridwood seems to have had no competition between 1795 and 1812. After this there is no name given to the women paid 'for delivering', though 'Ann Oaten's salary for last year 5s.' may indicate a retaining fee, a similar entry having been noted in 1827.

6.4. MEDICAL ATTENTION.

Throughout the period poor persons were able to get medical attention at the charge of the parish. This attention was by

no means always that of a doctor or surgeon, the first entry of payment to a doctor being in 1674. In 1656 widow Sawyer was paid 13s. 6d. for healing Robert Herring's foot; in 1764 Mrs. Buckthought received three guineas for cure of Sarah Mountifield, and received further payments between 1771 and 1781. In 1792 Samuel Buncombe's wife was paid half a guinea for curing John Winter's child of a rupture.

The names of several doctors or surgeons are recorded. Mr. Hartway, 1674; Dr. Money, 1678; Mr. Lye (or Leigh), 1684 to 1697; Dr. Dunning, 1707; Dr. Totterdell, 1742 to 1744; in 1747 Surg^{nt} Brient was paid five guineas 'concerning John Slap[e's] legg'; Mr. Langley, 1749; Dr. Buncombe, 1756 to 1788; ? Mr. Iremonger, 1760-1; Dr. Brown, 1774; Mr. Coles the surgeon's bill for attending the people at Cade House [? a home] £1 11s. 6d. in 1783; Dr. Bryant, 1788; Mr. Hartnell, 1804; Mr. J. Welch, 1810 to 1829; Dr. Warrin, 1812; Mr. Liddon, 1811 to 1821. The employment of a parish doctor with an annual fee seems to have been started in 1785 with an emolument of 4 guineas; this amount was increased in 1797 to 5 guineas.

As will be readily understood, there are many references to smallpox. The first noted was in 1684 when widow Viccars was allowed 10s. 'when her children was sick of the smallpox'. It is probable that references to 'the distemper' are to this disease, for in December of 1752 payments were made for Cottle's child 'in the smallpox' on the 9th and 'in the distemper' on the 23rd.

There are several references to specified cures. In 1674 Mr. Hartway was paid £5 for the cure of Anne Springe's eyes; in 1692 is recorded the payment of 3s. to 'the surjon for cuering Mary Whites leg and Gilbert Chalcombs arm'; in 1695 and 1707 10s. is paid for setting an arm; in 1744 we get 'for cureing Norman's children of the Eitch 2s. 6d.'; and in 1742 Dr. Totterdell was paid 2 guineas for the cure of a thigh. In this connection it is of interest to note that in 1841 an Act laid down that if a pauper survived an operation for less than 36 hours the surgeon should get only half his fee.

Sundry medicaments have been noted. In 1707 Mr. Hay-some was paid 4s. 10d. for physic for Smith's child; in 1748 'salve for Huses legg when the waggon ran over' cost 3d.; in

1752 Ann Glass was supplied with a bottle of Eli [*? elixir*] for 1s. 3*d.* ; a bottle of Dafys Elixir cost 1s. 3*d.* in 1746 and is probably the same medicine ; cordials and ointment occur in 1758 ; in 1804 a body belt for Dymond cost 7*s.* ; in 1816 an elastic truss for William Govier cost 16*s.* and in 1830 wine for Robert Daw's family cost 3*s.* 8*d.* Apothecary's bills occur between 1749 and 1755, the annual amounts varying from 6*s.* 5*d.* to £2 5*s.* 6*d.*

Inoculation is first noted in 1771 when Mr. Woodford was paid two guineas for inoculating Babbs and James children ; it is said to note in the same account a payment of 12*s.* for three coffins for Gomer's child, Babb's child and James's child. This depressing after-entry may perhaps account for the next entry not occurring till 1808, a generation later, when inoculating Griffin's children cost 8*s.* ; in 1810 Mr. Welch got 15*s.* for inoculating Eno's family and the following year 16*s.* for a like attention to Fouracre's family. In 1824 'enoculateing' 8 poor children cost £1.

6-5. PROVISION OF CLOTHING AND OTHER NECESSARIES.

Throughout the period there are constant references to the provision of garments of all sorts. Prices vary so much that it seems that the garments must often have been second-hand ; this suggestion is supported by an entry in 1678 which reads 'paid Gonmer Morcomb for an old coate for Ann Atmore 3*s.*'. Garments mentioned include smock, petticoat, waistcoat (for women), gloves, shirts, stockings, breeks, mantle, shoes, coat, apron and quite late, in the nineteenth century, trousers and half-boots. Early in the eighteenth century a frequent entry is 2 changes. There are not many mentions of material ; in 1828 a fustian coat for a boy cost 8*s.* 6*d.* ; the material most frequently referred to is brin which is described in Webster's Dictionary as a kind of stout cloth of linen, sometimes partly cotton ; it appears to have been in general use for under-clothing. It has been noted first in 1753 when 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ yards cost 14*s.* 4*d.* ; fifty years later the price was about 1*s.* 4*d.* a yard. Other materials were grogram 6 yards of which in 1803 cost 8*s.*, and deurish [*? dowlas*] which in 1824 cost 1*s.* a yard. Other comforts include such things as sheets, blankets, and a bed-tick. In 1628 is recorded the buying of wood for the poor,

and in 1629 the payment of 1s. 4*d.* for a seame [load] of faggots, but later there are not many references to wood. In 1691 a special gift was made to the poor 'in the hard weather', and from time to time rates are recorded as remitted on account of poverty. Occasionally it seems a poor person had to sell his goods to provide himself with the bare necessities of life, for in 1695 one of the overseers gave Susanna Searle 5*s.* 6*d.* to redeem her goods from one of his co-overseers, and in the same year redeeming Sarah Gill's bed cost 3*s.* 6*d.*; as late as 1828 an overseer lent Samuel Dunn's wife 5*s.* to reprieve her bed. Rather more practical gifts were 5*s.* to Ann Pomery to buy a harnes[s]; 'gave Crocker towards a fiddle 15*s.*'; 'paid Luckies Club 2*s.* 6*d.*' (this was in 1827).

6.6. BURIAL EXPENSES.

There are numerous references to aid being given at burials. This took the forms of paying for laying out (or stretching out as it was generally called) the body, providing a shroud and coffin, paying for the digging of the grave and ringing the knell; later on, after the Acts of 1666 and 1678 for Burial in Woollen, the payment not only for wool but for the affidavit—which appears in the accounts as 'afterdaued' and 'artherdaivit' and other strange forms—was made by the overseers. In this connection the following extract from the parish registers is pertinent. 18 September 1679 Valentine Carter 'was buried in linen and so I had no Affidavit and certificate brought me which, according to the Act, I notified to the Overseers of the poor on Friday the 26th day of September 1679'.

Mr. Tate refers to the practice of the seizure of a pauper's goods at his death and their sale by the parish officers in order to reimburse the parish for as much as possible of its expenditure on the pauper. Occasional records of such sales occur, and the variation in the amount paid for the various requirements and operations also suggest that the overseer's payments were complementary to those made by the family of the deceased or were deficits made good after the goods and chattels of the deceased had been realized; in 1654 we actually get entries of 4*s.* and 2*s.* 3*d.* being paid 'towards burial'.

The first record of payment for an affidavit has been noted in 1685 and thereafter is fairly frequent until about 1700, after

which it has not been observed. In 1709 we get the entry 'for wool about several persons putting into their coffins 3s. 10d.', and other entries include wool up to 1790. Between 1769 and 1806 a number of entries in connection with burials include the provision of bran. The only reference to a burial in linen occurs in 1696 when the accounts record the distribution of £2 10s. received from the widow Cogan's executors, half the fine levied for non-compliance with the Act.

The old custom of a burial feast is illustrated by the entry in 1693 'gave the bearers in beer 2s. 6d.'; in 1700 the payment for like refreshment was 3s. 6d.; and in 1740 12s. was paid for 'a coffin, grave and licker'.

In 1694 an Act—6 and 7 W and M cap. 6—was passed granting the Crown a duty of 2s. per birth, 2s. 6d. per marriage and 4s. per burial of all except paupers, with increased amounts for those in the higher ranks of society. In his *Parish Chest*, p. 48, Mr. Tate describes the parson as tax-collector; he does not, however, appear to have acted in this capacity at Trull, for in 1700 we find the entry 'paid Mr. Rich. Gill for the death of the poor' and in 1705 'paid the collector on burials for Thomas Hews, Valentine Smith and Benjamin Smith's child 12s.'. The more usual entry was merely, as in the first noted entry in 1697, 'for deaths of 2 men'. These payments were widely evaded and in 1705 an Act—4 and 5 Anne cap. 3—was passed indemnifying the clergy who had failed to keep records of these events; in this year, in addition to the payment already noted there occurs 'the tax on burials £1 2s.' which is perhaps arrears for 1703 and 1704 when no payments were made. As paupers were exempt, these payments would have been made to assist members of the Second Poor.

6.7. APPRENTICES.

One method by which a parish could offset its liability to maintain its poor was by apprenticing poor children to a trade and shifting the liability for support upon the master. This was authorized by sec. 3 of the Act 43 Eliz. cap. 2 (1601) and throughout our records we find references to the practice, the earliest being the payment in 1627 of 16s. to Valentine Gardener for apparelling his two apprentices. This payment for clothing was a regular accompaniment of apprenticeship and appears

to have become a standardized £1 from an early date, though there were exceptions. In the earliest records we have the payment 'to Scadding with Grace Herring' of £2 in 1629 and 'to Robert Smyth with his apprentice' of £1 in 1635, in which year also 2s. 11d. was paid for a smock for Mr. Wood's apprentice.

After this date we have not noticed an apprenticeship till about 1670. In 1672 the overseers paid 'Richard Andrews that he was to receive with a poor child that he took apprentice' £1. In 1673 the payment is not mentioned but instead we find 'laid out to a suit of clothes and for the making of them for the widow Smith's maid when she went apprentice 18s. 11d.', whilst for Bugler's and Christopher Smith's boys they laid out for like purpose 19s. 9d. After this date variations from the standard £1 were few; in 1689 Mrs. Cogan and Thomas Cox each received 30s. and in 1709 Christopher Norman 35s. This last seems not to have been a ratepayer, and as apprenticeship obtained settlement (see above) it may well have been necessary to pay more to get a boy off the liability list of the parish by apprenticing him in another parish.

The accounts do not specify the trade of the apprentice, and indeed rarely his name; in 1684 the usual £1 is paid 'to John Sawyer to clothe his apprentice being Nicholas Viccars'. There are, however, extant a number of actual apprenticeship indentures amongst the parish documents. These extend from 1618 to 1809 and comprise about 170 apprenticeships, and throw some interesting lights on the bare records of the accounts giving, of course, the general missing name of the apprentice and the trade to which he (or she) was to be put. Only 2 of all these apprentices were bound to trades other than 'the art and science of husbandry' or the 'art and mystery of housewifery' as the labour of the man or maid of all work was magnificently styled.

Of the others we learn that Henry Bull, who was bound in 1618 was aged 8 and Robert Winter bound in 1638 was 9; these poor wretches were indeed liable for apprenticeship when they reached the mature age of 7. The overseers' accounts show that in 1710 John Gill received £4 with Cook and that in 1712 they paid Richard Cook's master a further £2; fortun-

ately the relative indenture is extant to explain this unusual payment, and we find that Cook was apprenticed on 31 July to John Gill, who was a cordwainer (i.e. a shoemaker) of Crowcombe, to learn that trade. The more considerable fee is thus accounted for.

In 1718 we find 'Memdm that Thomas Gill a poor child of this parish was bound apprentice by the parish to John Kinge for Mr. Yea's estate at Comeltrow for which twenty shillings was paid him by the parish and three pounds by Mr. Yea'. Here again the indenture is extant and from it we learn that the boy was to be taught the trade of blacksmith. The same boy seems to have been apprenticed in 1716 to Robert Smith *alias* Wornell, being bound for 15 years to learn the trade of sergeweaver but nothing appears to explain the change of occupation.

In this last apprenticeship we see that Gill was apprenticed 'for Mr. Yea's estate'. A similar wording has been noted in the accounts in 1741 only when boys were apprenticed to Benjamin Risdon for Eastment's Hill estate, Thomas Brown for his estate called Joyeses, and Thomas Bult with Harman's boy bound to Justice Gunston's estate. Householders of a certain status could be compelled to accept apprentices and Mr. Tate says that in some parishes apprentices were allocated to them in rotation, and some such roster seems to be indicated by these entries. A list of apprentices for 1813 and 1814 in the Trull Vestry Book also associates the apprentices with specified estates.¹

Such a roster of obligation to take an apprentice shows that these poor boys were not always acceptable. In 1675 we find the overseers going to Quarter Sessions because Botolph Thomas and Edward Babb refused to take their apprentices. Settling the matter seems to have been protracted and expensive—at Sessions alone £2 12s. 2d. was spent—but the overseers evidently won at least part of their case for in 1677 Mr. Thomas

¹ It seems that although the child was apprenticed to the tenant, it was the landlord who was responsible; for, from proceedings in Q. Sess. at Wells in 1691, it appears that Richard Denson, of Trull, stood convicted for refusing to take one Valentine Gill as apprentice bound to him by the parish in respect of the estate of one John Bult, but it was John Bult who undertook to care for Gill during the apprenticeship and the usual payment of £1 is recorded in the accounts as made to him.

accepted his apprentice, receiving the usual pound 'by order of Sessions'. It was in 1675 too that Mr. Whetham paid £3 10s. to be excused of his apprentice; in 1699 is recorded the receipt from James Beasley of £3 to excuse Mr. Yea from his, a special memorandum of receipt being signed by two of the overseers.

In addition to apprenticing pauper children, it seems that from time to time the overseers assisted poorer parents to apprentice their own children. In 1706 they paid 10s. 'towards the binding of Mary Durston's son'; in 1714 John Pine got 15s. 'towards the clothing of his boy when he went apprentice' and in 1717 he got 5s. 'to bind his boy apprentice'; in 1716 they gave Richard Wood 10s. 'to bind his son apprentice'; in 1725, 8s. towards binding John Pope's child. Later entries have not been observed.

As already remarked, little information is vouchsafed by the accounts of the names of the apprentices; the books, however, contain two records of apprenticeships, both in the fifth volume. The earlier is a list of 21 apprenticeships (November 1762 to March 1774) on a loose sheet, and the latter, at the end of the book, of 42 (April 1775 to 1795). The second of these degenerates as it grows; in most of the later entries the Christian name of the apprentice is missing. It is interesting to note that most of these entries anticipate the act 42 Geo. III cap. 46 (1801-2) directing such registers to be kept. A Vestry Minute Book supplements these lists with a list of 28 apprentices bound between 1813 and 1825.

6.8. SETTLEMENT.

Settlement was the term used to describe the belonging of a person to a parish with the right to maintenance should need arise. It belonged as of right to the child of a person already possessed of settlement and could be obtained in several other ways such as the rental of a tenement worth at least £10 per annum, serving a parochial office, having been apprenticed in the parish, having paid poor rate, etc.

As a person having a settlement was a potential liability, it will be readily appreciated that the parish authorities used every endeavour to prevent a settlement being obtained, and the Quarter Sessions records are crowded with cases in which a

parish seeks to transfer to another parish the onus of settlement of an undesired intruder, or combats attempts to saddle it with a poor person from outside.

In 1662 the Besley family loomed large in the accounts. During the year widow Besley received 1s. a week for 39 weeks, and Thomas Besley (apparently her son) received in casual payments 26s. 4*d.* between 16 July and 13 October; on 18 October the overseers laid out 4s. 1*d.* to him and 'to men and horses to help him to Bradford'. From 22 October to 15 January further payments to him amounted to 22s. 2*d.* On 26 November the overseers 'laid out for charges at bridgewater sessions about the besleys 16s.'. Finally, on 15 January they 'laid out for the hire of horses and men to carry besleys wife and children from trull to bradford 5s.'; 'to redeme somthings of his at his goinge a way 1s. 6*d.*'; and 'paid unto the perrytor (i.e. the apparitor, the officer who executed the orders of magistrates and judges) for waring [warning] us to apere at Court wch was his fee as hee said 4*d.* ech of us 1s.'. Thereafter Thomas Besley disappears from the records; widow Besley was paid a shilling a week in 1663 and 1665 (the accounts for 1664 are missing), but in 1666 she received 1s. 3*d.* a week for 19 weeks only, and is not again mentioned; it may be that she died at the latter end of August in that year.

On 9 May 1676 the parish officers of Plymtree issued a certificate that Francis Harvey had his legal settlement there, and in the accounts for the same year we find that Mr. John Crosse was paid and allowed 10s. for getting the order. It is not however, till 1678 that we find the expenses of removal which were varied and extensive; at Wellington, 1s.; Sir William's warrant, 1s.; at Collumpton, 1s. 11*d.*; at Plymtree, being 8 persons and 4 horses all night, 8s. 3*d.*; Sir William Waldron's butler, 6*d.*; at Wellington backwards, 2s. 8*d.*; for a horse to carry the children, 2s.; Giles Priest to go with them, 2s.; to get one to prove the order, 10*d.*; for my [the overseer's] journey and horses 2 days and at Exon Sessions being 3 days cost there 12s. A total charge of £1 12s. 2*d.*¹

In 1687 a poor man, Walter Gill, belonging to Trull, died at Combe [St. Nicholas?]; 8s. 10*d.* was paid for his lodging

¹ The story is carried on by a memorandum at the end of the account that 'Mr. John Crosse will not pay his Rate to the poor'.

whilst there and 3s. was laid out on fetching him thence and the loan of a horse.

In 1701 one John Carter was a source of considerable expense and trouble. On 3 July an order was obtained certifying that he and his wife Sarah were legally settled in the parish of All Saints, Dorchester, but a complication occurs in that on 4 July Dorchester obtained a certificate that Sarah Parrett, who had been taken into his house as his wife and appeared to be pregnant, was legally settled in Trull where she was born. From this latter order it appears that Carter had already a wife, Mary Hilgrove, whom he had married some 16 years previously and four surviving children by her. It seems, however, that Carter was marriageable, for from our accounts we learn that the Trull overseers paid £1 2s. 6d. for a licence and gave Mr. Hays [the minister] 'for meriing [marrying] of Carter 5s.'; other expenses were guarding him on four occasions, 7s. 6d.; taking him, 10s.; an order and warrant, 3s. 6d.; councillers fee, 10s.; gave him in time of sickness, 2s.; taking him and carrying him to Dorchester, £1 3s.; in his sickness again, 5s. In all John Carter cost the parish £4 8s. 6d., and even then it seems they were not really rid of him, for in the following year there is the entry 'taking and girding of Carter and carrying him to Bridewell 9s.', though this may be only an outstanding account not paid the previous year.

In 1743 it seems that an unwanted child was abandoned in the parish, for we find the overseers paying 2s. 6d. 'for crying the child, that was left to Georges, at Taunton, Wellington, Cullompton, Culmstock church and market'.

Almost yearly entries such as 'for a warrant to remove strangers' occur, a particular person being sometimes named, as in 1681 when it was obtained 'for warning John Lumbry and Mary Hellier out of the parish'. About the end of the seventeenth century the order cost 2s. 6d. and the warrant 1s.; at later dates the cost is merged in other expenses, though in 1813 two orders of removal are recorded as costing 2s. each.

One outcome of the vigilance of overseers in preventing settlement was the necessity of providing inhabitants who wished to go into another parish with a settlement indemnity certificate, which declared the liability of the issuing parish

to maintain the persons specified. A number of such certificates are preserved amongst the Trull records, and as we shall see later special certificates were issued to discharged soldiers to enable them to obtain relief on their journey home.

6.9. BASTARDY.

Intimately collected with settlement and consequently a matter of considerable concern to the overseers was the possible advent of a bastard. This concern arose not so much from moral considerations as from the risk the parish ran of incurring financial liability.

Normally a legitimate child took its father's settlement, but a bastard became settled in the parish of its birth. Consequently it became a matter of urgency for the overseers to secure the marriage of a pregnant woman who had omitted that ceremony. If the putative father were of their own village the responsibility for the child would then rest with him, whereas if he were of another parish, then that parish became responsible, and to it in due course the family would be deported.

Naturally the overseers kept an ever open eye for this contingency and took all possible steps to prevent their parish acquiring not so much the stigma as the financial burden of a child born out of wedlock. In this they were helped by an Act—6 Geo. II cap. 31 (1732–3)—which ordained that a woman pregnant with a bastard child is to declare herself so and name the father, and further that a person, charged on oath with being the father of a bastard child, shall be apprehended and committed to gaol until he gives security to indemnify the parish from expense. Among the parish archives are 11 such bonds dated between 1717 and 1810; of those bound no fewer than 8 came from other parishes. Paternity is admitted or adjudged by Quarter Sessions in most cases, but in the last three paternity is not admitted or even referred to. The amounts vary from £20 in the case of a yeoman in 1792 to £200 in the case of an esquire in 1789, and include the binding of a labourer in £60 in 1725. In the case of the esquire the indemnity is described as given 'for divers good causes and considerations'.

Mention of the upkeep of a bastard child occurs as early as

1627 when we find John Maior being paid *6d.* a week for keeping one, receiving this amount till 1630 when, after paying for its maintenance for 7 weeks, the overseers paid *2s. 6d.* for a shroud for it; in all this child cost the parish no less than *£4 4s. 6d.* For several years after 1636 a base child was maintained at a weekly cost of *1s. 8d.*, reduced in 1646 to *1s. 6d.* and restored to *1s. 8d.* in 1652.

In 1697 the overseers spent quite a large sum about a base child which really belonged to Exeter. For keeping it for 11 weeks, *£1 7s. 6d.*; paying someone to go to Exeter with the child, *3s.*; clothes for it, *2s. 6d.*; and order, *2s. 6d.*; for hire of horse 3 days at Exon, *3s.*; charge about Exeter, *£3 11s. 6d.* That poor unwanted child cost the parish nearly *£6* to get rid of it.

For 50 years there is not much mention of these chancelings, but thence onwards we find frequent references to marriages which were apparently intended to remove the parochial burden threatened by the coming child. In 1753 Joan Wood's condition gave cause for anxiety; for her examination and a warrant the overseers paid *2s.*; for her 'licens and marrige' *£1 10s.*; to the 'Clark and Saxon' they gave *3s. 6d.*; and expenses and guard [to make sure the unwilling spouse did not decamp] cost *15s.* more; Joan became 'an honest woman' at a cost to the parish of *£2 10s. 6d.* For the 'marig of Agness Wells and other expenses' the overseers paid *£3* in 1785.

So far we have referred to disbursements in connection with bastardy; there are, however, entries among the receipts, but these do not occur until the end of our period. In 1807 T. Humphries paid *£5* in respect of bastardy; in 1808 Thomas Joanes paid *£25* and William Coles *£7 16s.*; in connection with this last amount some light is thrown by a like entry in 1811 which is described as a payment for three years at *1d.* per week. The next, and last entry noted was a payment of *£5* by Henry Browning in 1821.

7. THE ARMED FORCES OF THE CROWN.

Soldiers and sailors come into the picture in two ways. On the one hand the parish had to provide from time to time a specified number of men for the militia, or pay a fine; and early in the nineteenth century it was thought expedient to

set up a permanent force under regular officers in addition to the militia, acts for the purpose being passed in 1802, 1803 and 1804. The recruits were to be raised by the parish officers and by the regiments; the parishes received part of the levy money paid for a recruit raised, and were fined if their quota was not made good. In every parish men were chosen by lot and had to serve for three years or provide £10 for a substitute; small owners could be discharged of their liability by a rate levied on the parish, which sometimes overcame its own liability by paying bounties to volunteers.

On the other hand under the Act 43 Geo III cap. 61 (1803) a soldier or sailor, who had served his time, could obtain a certificate from the Mayor or Chief Magistrate of the nearest city or corporate place to his place of discharge, the exhibition of which would relieve him, on his return journey to his home or place of legal settlement, of the penalties attached to begging under the 1792 Act 32 Geo. III cap. 45.

Two isolated entries occur fairly early; the first entry noted is the payment in 1677 of £3 19s. 6d. to the Militia, and in 1709 we get 'for carriage of the soldiers by consent of the parish 10s.', apparently some rather unusual charge, the consent of the parish being thus particularly noted.

The following entries refer to the liability of, and the support given by, the parish in connection with soldiers and sailors. In 1795, for a man for the Navy, £3 15s.; 1797, 'paid part of the Navey' [*sic*], £8 0s. 6d.; also in 1797, for seamen, £7 7s.; in 1798, Militia, £8 18s.; and in the same year, 'to the overseers of Langford Budville for substitute for John Rendle, £4', which is followed next year by 'Farmer Bridges, one of the overseers of Langford Budville, £8'; 1803, paid for substitutes £31 and £27; 1812, paid the overseers of Wiveliscombe for Mr. Mattock's substitute at 7s. 6d. a week, £9 15s. and £9 12s. 6d. Extant maintenance orders show that the substitute was William Lock senr. and that allowances were payable in respect of his wife Susanna and four children; it seems that Wiveliscombe made the actual payments and were reimbursed by Trull, for the two amounts are specified in an order dated 19 October 1812 as being arrears from 25 March to 29 September 1812; payments to Wiveliscombe continued until 1815. Also in 1812 John Hainham was paid 9s. for serving in the local Militia,

and there is the further entry 'paid 8 men for going in the local Militia, £16 16s.'. Giving money to 'sailors with a pass' is noted several times between 1798 and 1809, the amount being usually 1s. or 2s.; in 1819 the overseers 'lent the soldier £2', perhaps a loan to enable a returning soldier to 'rehabilitate' himself.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion reference may be made to a few entries of interest which could not be included under any of the previous headings.

In 1628 Thomas Knight paid a fine of £3 6s. 8*d.* for his house and in 1658 the accounts show 8*d.* as paid for mending the stile in Laydy Luscombe, which was a field frequently named in the Churchwarden's accounts as a source of income to the parish. In 1677 the overseers paid 8*d.* for 'a search in chequer when we intended to build'; dinners at visitations and sessions are regular entries; fees for counsel's opinion—probably in settlement cases—occur from time to time. In 1694 the curious spelling Jealborde for Gilbert occurs. In 1692 the new overseers were paid the sum of £1 7s. 'raised by a rate upon the parish over and above their proportion for their M^{ties} Tax', perhaps a reference to the Highway Tax Levied by 3 W. and M. cap. 12; in 1697, £5 10s. was paid 'being the robbery for Alen Lock'. In 1743 'gave the people to Drinke when John Georges was bapt', 1s. 6*d.* In 1811, the year of the second census, the overseers paid themselves £1 0s. 9½*d.* for taking the population of the parish, which is noted as being 499 to corroborate their claim, they being allowed to make a charge of one halfpenny a head (the census return, incidentally, shows that the numbers of males and females were almost exactly the same, the former predominating by 3). In 1812 'the coroner's expence attending the soldier that was shot near Wild Oak' came to £1 13s.

It is hoped that the foregoing notes show that Overseers' Accounts are not merely a dull mass of figures, but contain plenty of interest for those who examine them carefully. 'But it is pretty to see what money will do.'