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*Official Publication of the International Society for British Genealogy
and Family History*

The Lives of the Poor

**The Expelled Irish
Scotland's Poor Relief Systems
Poor Law Settlement Records in England and Wales
Welsh Protesters and Pioneers**



VIRTUAL British Institute October 5-9, 2026

Scottish Research: The Fundamentals and Beyond

with Paul Milner, M.Div., FUGA

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The Lives of the Poor

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Cover image: The former poorhouse building in Ayr. Irish applicants to poorhouses like this were often removed to Ireland to keep them from becoming chargeable to the local parochial board (photo by Chris Paton).

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President's Message



**W. Todd Knowles
President, ISBGFH**

Dear Members and Friends,

Genealogy has a wonderful way of introducing us to people from every walk of life. Some of our ancestors owned land, operated businesses, held positions of prominence, and left behind wills, deeds, photographs, letters, and other records that allow us to reconstruct their lives in remarkable detail. Others were not so fortunate.

In this issue, we turn our attention to the poor and the many challenges they faced, particularly throughout the United Kingdom over the centuries. Their stories are often more difficult to uncover, but they are no less important to our family histories.

For generations, poverty shaped nearly every aspect of daily life. Our ancestors may have struggled to find work, feed their families, maintain a home, or care for children, the elderly, and the sick.

Some found themselves dependent upon their parish or community for assistance. Others entered workhouses, moved from place to place seeking employment, were separated from family members, or made the difficult decision to leave their homeland entirely in hopes of finding a better life elsewhere.

For the family historian, researching these ancestors presents a unique challenge. People of limited means did not always leave behind the records we traditionally associate with genealogy. They may not have owned property or written wills. They may have left few personal papers, photographs, or possessions. Sometimes their lives appear only briefly in the historical record.

Yet, if we know where to look, their stories can still be found.

Poor Law records, workhouse registers, settlement and removal records, parish documents, census returns, court records, apprenticeship records, institutional records, newspapers, and many other sources can provide glimpses into lives that might otherwise have disappeared from history. Sometimes a single entry—an occupation, an address, an application for relief, or the name of a child—can open an entirely new chapter in a family's story.

The authors contributing to this issue help us explore these records while also introducing us to the realities our ancestors experienced. Their articles remind us that genealogy is about far more than collecting names, dates, and places. It is about understanding how our ancestors lived and the world in which they lived.

As you read this issue, I encourage you to look again at your own family tree. Consider those ancestors whose lives may be represented by only a handful of records. What circumstances surrounded them? What hardships did they endure? What opportunities did they have—or were they denied? And what decisions did they make that ultimately affected the generations that followed?

Their lives may have included poverty and hardship, but they also contained determination, family, community, sacrifice, hope, and resilience. The rewards and struggles they experienced became part of the heritage eventually passed down to us.

We hope you enjoy learning from our authors about the many different aspects of life experienced by the poor throughout the centuries. More importantly, we hope their contributions inspire you to look more deeply into your own heritage and discover the stories of ancestors who may have been overlooked simply because they left fewer footprints behind.

Every ancestor has a story worth discovering.

Thank you for joining us as we continue to explore those stories, preserve them, and pass them on to future generations.

Warmest regards,

Todd



From the Editor's Desk

**Shannon Combs-
Bennett, Ph.D.**

In April 1840, a widow named Mary Ann Coleman stood before two justices in Kent and admitted she did not know which parish her husband had belonged to. She had heard him say, once, that he was apprenticed to a shoemaker at Leeds. That fragment, something overheard in a marriage, was enough to decide where she belonged.

Her words survive because she was poor. Settlement examinations, relief applications, and poorhouse registers exist precisely because a parish wanted to know who would be paying. The result is a strange sort of gift: our poorest ancestors are sometimes the ones who speak to us most directly, in their own reported words.

This issue follows those records across England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. We see ancestors through the lens of the workhouse and cottage home, the removal order and the parochial board. Some of what you will read is hard. All of it is human.

I hope it sends you back to the people in your own tree whose lives look thin on paper. They may have more to say than you expect, and if you find them, I would like to hear about it. Write to me at editor@isbgfh.com, whether you have an article in mind or simply a subject you wish we would cover.

Shannon



We are proud to offer our informational series of sessions, Ask the Genealogist. Each session features a well-known genealogist who will answer your questions in a live online format.

Please submit your questions ahead of time, if possible, to our Education Director at educationdirectorisbgfh@gmail.com.

Of course, you may also ask questions during the presentation.

[Visit our website](#) to see upcoming dates and topics for our next session of Ask the Genealogist, our new online series.





ENGLISH RESEARCH TOPICS

PAUL MILNER, FUGA, M.DIV.

Poor Law Settlement Records in England and Wales

Settlement records in England and Wales relating to the poor are well worth looking for. This article will set the scene for how the poor were treated in the Tudor period, how settlement could be gained, and how it developed over time. This section can seem technical and complex, but if you have an ancestor from this period, it is worth understanding the laws as they stood. Some examples from one parish show the value of these underutilized records. A bibliography is provided for those who want to dig deeper into the subject.

Setting the Scene

During the Tudor period (1485–1603), an estimated one-third of the population lived in poverty. Early in the period, monasteries helped the poor and encouraged parishioners to practice Christian charity. With the dissolution (closure) of the monasteries in the 1530s, this practice ended. The Tudor laws were focused on punishing beggars and vagabonds. For example, the Vagabonds and Beggars Act 1494 (11 Hen. 7 c.2), passed by Henry VII, stated that idle persons should be placed in the stocks for three days and three nights and have no other sustenance but bread and water and then returned to the place where they last dwelled or were born. The Vagabonds Act 1530 (22 Hen. 8 c.12) mandated that only licensed beggars could beg legally. It was the justices of the peace who identified the “impotent” poor and granted them a license to beg. In practice, this meant that only the elderly and disabled could beg, and the need

for a license prevented the able-bodied from begging. These punishments were made harsher under the Vagabonds Act 1536 (27 Hen. 8 c.25) whereby someone caught outside of their parish without work could be whipped through the streets. If caught a second time, they could lose an ear; a third time, and they could be executed. Officials were reluctant to enforce such provisions.

The Vagabonds Act 1547 (1 Edw. 6 c.3), passed by King Edward VI, was especially brutal, stating that vagabonds could be enslaved for two years and branded with a “V.” Enslaved individuals were to be fed bread and water or a small drink. They could be forced to work, and made to do so by beating, chaining, or other methods the master chose. They could be bought and sold just like other slaves. If no private man wanted the slave, they were to be returned to their place of birth. The Act kept weekly collections in the local parish for old and sick people who could not work. The Vagabonds Act 1549 (3 & 4 Edw. 6 c.16) suggests limited enforcement of the 1547 Act.

The Poor Act 1551 (5 & 6 Edw. 6 c.2) created the Register of the Poor to record all “impotent, aged and needy persons” and only these people were to be assisted. Parish authorities were directed to “gently exhort” parishioners to give support for needy residents. Those who refused were to be referred to the Bishop of the Diocese. With the Poor Act 1555 (2 & 3 Ph & M c.5), the Marian Parliament reinstated licensed begging, but

required legal beggars to wear badges. The Poor Act 1562 (5 Eliz. 1 c.3) introduced punishments for failing to meet poor-relief obligations. The Vagabonds Act 1597 (39 Eliz. 1 c.4) required local officers to catch people without a home or a job and whip them. After punishment, they were to be sent to the town of birth. Repeat offenders could be burnt on the ear with a hot iron, or for the first time face overseas penal transportation, or be put to death.

The Poor Relief Act 1597 (39 Eliz. 1 c.3) set the framework for community-based welfare that was finalized in the Poor Relief Act 1601 (43 Eliz. 1 c.2), more famously known as the “Elizabethan Poor Law,” or the “Old Poor Law.” The 1597 Act required every parish to elect two unpaid overseers of the poor at Easter with the intent of managing local welfare. The overseers could collect a compulsory tax, the “poor rate,” from property owners to fund relief. For the helpless in the parish, overseers could provide food, money, or shelter for the elderly, the sick, and young children who could not work. For the able-bodied, the parish could put them to work. Punished beggars and vagrants who refused to work could be sent to the house of correction. The 1601 Act re-confirmed the parish as the core unit of administration, clarifying the duties of the overseers and churchwardens to make the system run more smoothly across the country. The Act also refined care for the poor by introducing almshouses for the impotent and elderly, providing apprenticeships for poor children, and solidifying family responsibility for dependent relatives.

Settlement Acts

The Poor Relief Act 1662 (14 Cha. 2 c.12) was officially known as an Act for the Better Relief of the Poor of This Kingdom, but is also known as the Settlement Act, or the Settlement and Removal Act. The purpose was to establish the parish to which a person belonged, i.e., their place of settlement. It clarified which parish was responsible if the person needed parish relief. This was the first time a document known as a “settlement certificate,” proving domicile, became statutory. The certificate became more formal

later. It also regulated the forced removal of the poor. We will discuss and show examples of this and other settlement documents later.

The act stated that every individual “belonged” to a specific parish responsible for their welfare. Genealogists must understand the criteria for who belonged where, and under what circumstances that might change. The act gave local officials the power to remove any new migrant deemed likely (added emphasis is important) to become a charge on the parish rates, and to send them back to their last legal home. This meant that any potential to become a charge on the poor could lead to removal; the officials did not have to wait until assistance was needed or requested. This was very unevenly applied between parishes.

The Poor Removal Act 1795 (35 Geo. 3 c.101) put an end to the preemptive removal clause of the 1662 Act. Now the poor could only be removed if they actually asked for poor relief or help. It also protected the sick or infirm from being sent away. In this same year, 1795, the magistrates in Berkshire introduced the Speenhamland system to tie poor relief and wage supplements directly to the cost of bread. History suggests this legislation had many negative effects, such as employers reducing wages knowing the parish would supplement the shortfall; still, it spread to other areas.

The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 (4 & 5 Will. 4 c.76) drastically changed the welfare system by abolishing relief for able-bodied people, even for a short-term need. No money or food aid was to be given outside of institutions. The government’s Poor Law Commission centralized power. Those in need were forced to live inside a workhouse where conditions were intentionally made harsher than those of the lowest-paid free worker. Parishes were now granted the authority to come together collectively to form a poor law union and build a workhouse, managed by local boards. The aim was to lower high taxpayer costs and stop people relying on financial help.

The Divided Parishes and Poor Law Amendment Act 1876 (45 & 46 Vict. c. 58) adjusted residency rules for settlement, and granted the Local

Government Board the power to dissolve or reorganize inefficient or divided local unions. The formal and complete abolition of the settlement and removal system did not occur until the National Assistance Act 1948 (11 & 12 Geo. 6 c.29), replacing it with a social safety net for everyone with a variety of provisions.

Ways to Gain Settlement

The criteria for gaining settlement varied by sex, status, and circumstances, as shown by the different groups.

Men could gain settlement by:

- owning or inheriting land or property in the parish, regardless of its value, provided he lived on it for at least 40 days.
- renting a tenement or property worth at least £10 per year.
- paying taxes and dues on property valued at least £10.
- serving in an official annual public parish office, such as constable or churchwarden.
- completing a continuous, uninterrupted hire as an unmarried servant or worker for one full year and a day.
- completing a legally contracted formal apprenticeship within the parish.
- living in a parish for 40 days. This was a controversial clause. Under the 1662 Act, the requirement was completing the 40 days without local officials filing a complaint. Churchwardens or overseers could appeal to the justices of the peace to legally remove the newcomer back to their previous parish of settlement if it appeared likely they might need financial help. This led people to move quietly into the parish and hide from officials. An amendment under the Administration of Intestates' Estate Act 1685 (1 Ja. 2 c.17, section 3) stated that the 40-day residency would not begin until the newcomer gave a parish officer written notice of their arrival and family details. The Poor Relief Act 1691 (3 Will. & Mar. c.11) tightened this rule further, requiring the public notice to be read in church

on a Sunday and registered in the parish book. In effect, this made it very difficult to gain settlement by default quietly. The Settlement Act 1697 (8 & 9 Will. III c.30) built upon the 1662 framework, making it now a strict requirement for any stranger or poorer person entering a new parish to carry an official settlement certificate signed by local officials and justices of the peace. This certificate guaranteed that the home parish would take the migrant back and pay costs if he or the family ever became destitute or needed assistance. See Figure 1 for a printed example. This act led to most documents being either printed or handwritten, which we now associate with the poor law, and we will see additional examples later.

Unmarried women could independently earn a settlement using the same adult criteria listed above for the men.

Married women automatically took their husband's place of legal settlement as their own, even if it was a place where she may never have been.

Widowed women with children who remarried gained a new place of settlement upon marriage. Her children from the first marriage kept their father's place of settlement.

Legitimate children gained settlement immediately after birth from their father. Care is needed as the father's place of abode, and therefore the place where the child was born, was often different from his place of legal settlement.

Illegitimate children could claim legal settlement in their place of birth, provided that their mother had not been issued with a settlement certificate that allowed her to live somewhere other than her place of settlement when the child was born. Generally, strong attempts were made, by fair means or foul, to remove unmarried pregnant women to their place of settlement before the child was born. An illegitimate child not born in its mother's place of settlement had a different place of settlement from its mother. This could lead to separation, and often did.

Settlement and Removal Records

We have provided the historical and legal background. Now let's take a look at the primary records. These parish records are in the parish chest and record a parish operating in its civil, not religious, capacity. The records may be completely handwritten, though many parishes used forms printed by law firms, specifically to meet poor law administration requirements.

The 1697 Act created three main groups of records:

- a. Settlement certificates — this is correspondence from one parish to another, often printed, providing the name and occupation of the person(s) to whom it was issued. They include the names of numerous parish officials and justices of the peace.
- b. Examinations as to settlement — these were conducted by a churchwarden or magistrate, before the issuance of a removal order. The examination could take place at the request of either the parish seeking to remove an individual or the parish unwilling to receive him, or both parishes. There may therefore be more than one record of an examination relating to an individual. These records may include birthplace, parents' and family members' names, and employment details such as employer names, length of service, and other valuable information. These can be a real gold mine of family information.
- c. Removal orders — often a printed form naming the person and their family to be removed. They were issued in duplicate after the overseer applied to two justices of the peace, one copy for each parish involved. The parish of departure and destination are named. Appeals against a removal order will be found in the quarter sessions records.

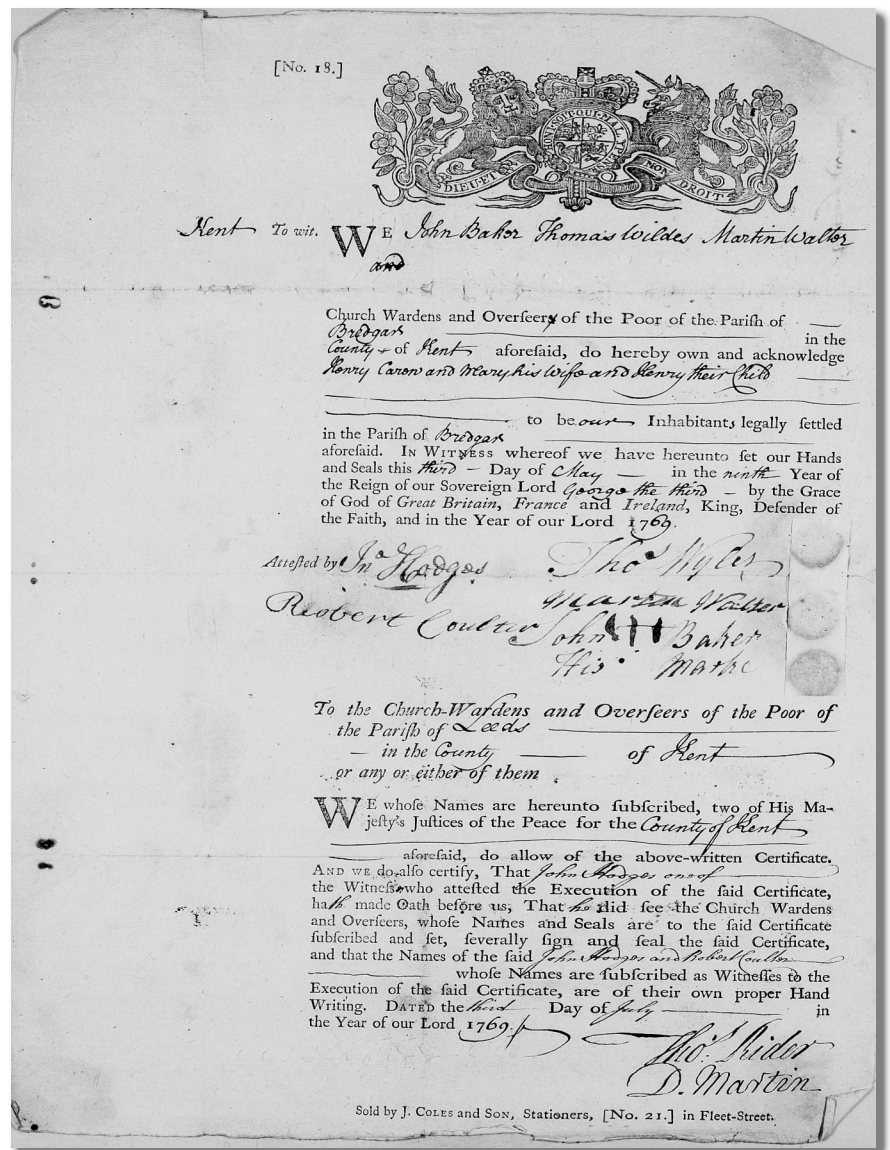


Figure 1. 1769 settlement certificate from the parish of Bredgar to the parish of Leeds for Henry Caron and his family.

Settlement certificate — Figure 1. In this document, we have a printed form filled in by the officials in the parish of Bredgar to the parish of Leeds, both in Kent. This 1769 settlement certificate is for Henry Caron, his wife Mary, and their child Henry. Note the five signatures of officials from Bredgar acknowledging Henry Caron as from the parish in the middle of the certificate. One parish official cannot issue certificates.

Examination as to settlement — Figure 2. What is interesting about this handwritten examination is that when I found it, it opened so many doors to tracing Richard. It pointed me

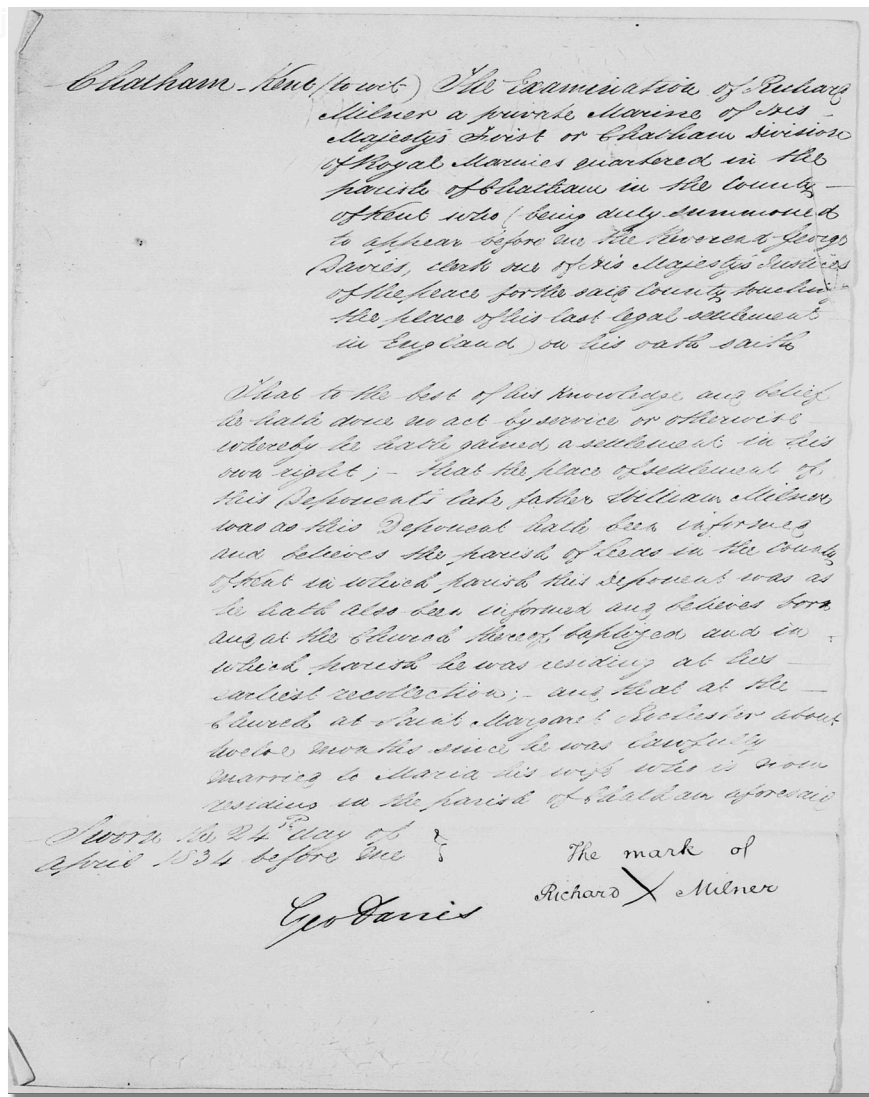


Figure 2. 1834 settlement examination of Royal Marine Richard Milner by the officials in Chatham regarding place of settlement as a result of his marriage.

toward his service in the Royal Marines, and before that in the 36th Regiment of Foot. He spent over 29 years serving in the armed services and received the rarely awarded Royal Navy Long Service Medal. Needless to say, it took me many years and numerous trips to The National Archives at Kew to trace his military career. The 29 years of quarterly muster rolls are not digitised and are unlikely ever to be.

Richard had been in the Royal Marines for nine years when this examination took place. In the past, the authorities would not have cared if he did not return from sea. So why did they now care? What changed was that Richard married Maria [Burrell] in 1833 at St. Margaret's,

Rochester. I found this important because these records were not yet indexed. This marriage was also important to local officials because if Richard did not return from sea, Maria's place of legal settlement, upon her marriage, was Richard's. The officials wanted to know where he was settled. Thus, the examination identifies his place of birth and his father's name in Leeds, Kent. Examinations can contain lots of useful information.

The Examination of Richard Milner, a private Marine of His Majesty's First or Chatham Division of Royal Marines quartered in the parish of Chatham in the County of Kent, who being duly summoned to appear before me the Reverend George Davies, clerk to one of His Majesty's Justice of the Peace for the said County touching the place of his last legal settlement in England, on his oath saith

That to the best of his knowledge, and belief he hath done no act by service or otherwise whereby he hath gained a settlement in his own right; that the place of settlement of this Deponent's late father William Milner was as this Deponent hath been informed and believes the parish of Leeds in the County of Kent in which parish this deponent was as he hath also been informed and believes born and at the church thereof baptized and in which, he was residing at his earliest recollection; and that at the Church of Saint Margaret Rochester about twelve months since he was lawfully married to Maria his wife who is now residing in the parish of Chatham aforesaid

Sworn the 24th Day of April 1834 before me George Davies. The Mark of Richard X Milner

Removal order — Figures 3 and 4. These documents show correspondence from the parish of Harrietsham to the parish of Leeds, both in Kent. The overseers of Harrietsham are claiming that Mary Ann Coleman has become

Parish of *Harrietsham*
in the County of *Kent*
As to the removal of *Mary Ann Coleman Widow*

To the Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of *Leeds*
in the County of *Leeds*

Take Notice, That the above-named *Mary Ann Coleman* lately residing at *and* in this Parish* has become chargeable to the said Parish and that an Order of Justices has been obtained for her removal to your Parish of *Leeds* as her last place of legal settlement (a copy of which order, and also a copy of the examination on which the same was made are herewith sent). **And Take Notice**, That unless you appeal against the said order, and, within twenty-one days from the sending hereof, duly serve notice of such Appeal, the said pauper will be removed to your said Parish of *Leeds* in pursuance of the said order.

Dated this *30* day of *April* One Thousand Eight Hundred and *forty* *Edward Norington*
Thomas Wilson Overseers (a) of the Poor of the said Parish of *Harrietsham*

Heul To the Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of *Harrietsham* in the County of *Kent* to wit: of *Leeds* and to the Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of *Leeds* in the County of *Leeds* and to each and every of them.

Whereas Complaint hath been made unto Us, whose Names are hereunto set, and Seals affixed, being Two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace acting in and for the said County of *Kent* (one whereof being of the Quorum) by the Overseers of the Poor of the said Parish of *Harrietsham* That *Mary Ann Coleman Widow* has come to inhabit in the said Parish of *Harrietsham* not having gained a legal Settlement there, nor having produced any Certificate acknowledging *her* to be settled elsewhere, and now actually become chargeable to the same Parish. WE, the said Justices, upon Examination of the Premises, upon Oath and other circumstances, do adjudge the same to be true, and do also adjudge the place of the legal Settlement of the said *Mary Ann Coleman* to be in the said Parish of *Leeds* in the said County of *Leeds*.

These are, therefore, in Her Majesty's Name, to require you the said Overseers of the Poor of the said Parish of *Harrietsham* or some or one of you, or some proper person or persons to be employed by you, to remove and convey the said *Mary Ann Coleman* from and out of your said Parish of *Harrietsham* to the said Parish of *Leeds* and *her* deliver, together with this our Order or a duplicate or true copy thereof, unto the Overseers of the Poor there, or one of them, who are hereby required to receive and provide for *her* according to Law.

Given under our Hands and Seals the *thirtieth* day of *April* in the Year of Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and *forty*

J. Jackson *Th. Wilson*

(a) Or "Guardians."
* Township, &c.

Figure 3. Page 1 of the 1840 removal order from Harrietsham to Leeds regarding Mary Ann Coleman.

chargeable to the parish and that an Order of Justices has been obtained for her removal to the parish of Leeds, her last place of legal settlement. The first page, Figure 3, is a printed form where the officials fill in the blanks: from whom, to whom, and concerning whom. The second page, Figure 4, contains her examination and that of an additional witness. Again, this examination provides many research clues to follow up on, but this family situation would be almost impossible to resolve without personal testimony.

We note that her husband, George Miller Coleman, though probably born in Harrietsham, would have gained settlement in Leeds by serving a binding apprenticeship there. Thus, Mary Ann's place of settlement would be that of her husband's in Leeds, not Harrietsham. Putting poor children out for an apprenticeship in a different parish was a common practice to get people off the settlement rolls.

The Examination of Mary Ann Coleman now residing in the Parish of Harrietsham in the said county, widow and Richard Masters of Leeds in the said county, shoemaker touching the place of last legal settlement of the said Mary Ann Coleman taken upon oath before Us, Two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace and for the said County, acting in and for the East Division of the Lathe of Aylesford in the said county, this 13th day of April 1840

And first the said Mary Ann Coleman for herself saith that her maiden name is Mary Ann Ashaives and that she was married on the twenty first Day of July 1834 in the parish Church of Bicknor to George Miller Coleman who died a week before last Christmas – That she does not know to which Parish her Husband belonged but that she has heard him say he was Apprenticed to Mr. Masters a shoemaker at Leeds. That she knew her husband went by the name of Gladwish as well as Coleman and has heard that his mother's name was Miller. That she now lives in the Parish of Harrietsham and is chargeable to that Parish.

And Secondly the said Richard Masters for himself saith that sometime in the year 1799 he had an apprentice of the name of George Gladwish put out to him by the parish of Harrietsham and that an Indenture

was signed by him this Examinant and was allowed by two Justices of the Peace for the said County — That the

said George Gladwish served the examinant under the said Indenture until he was One and Twenty and slept and served all the time in his house in the Parish of Leeds — That he has heard his Mother's Name was Gladwish and his father's name was Coleman and that he was a base born child.

All the documents described above were located in the parish chest records for the parish of Leeds in the Diocese of Canterbury in Kent.

FamilySearch has filmed these and many similar documents, as well as records for many other dioceses. Some dioceses have put their own parish and parish chest materials online, e.g., the Diocese of Rochester. The originals are usually with the parish registers in the diocesan record office, usually but not always the county record office.

In conclusion, I hope these three examples show you the value of these documents. Since the records are official correspondence, copies may

be found in the sending and receiving parishes. So, if records do not survive in your parish, look in the surrounding parishes. Some family history societies index settlement records for a diocese, making these valuable clues easier to find.

These documents are well worth looking for. So, happy hunting.

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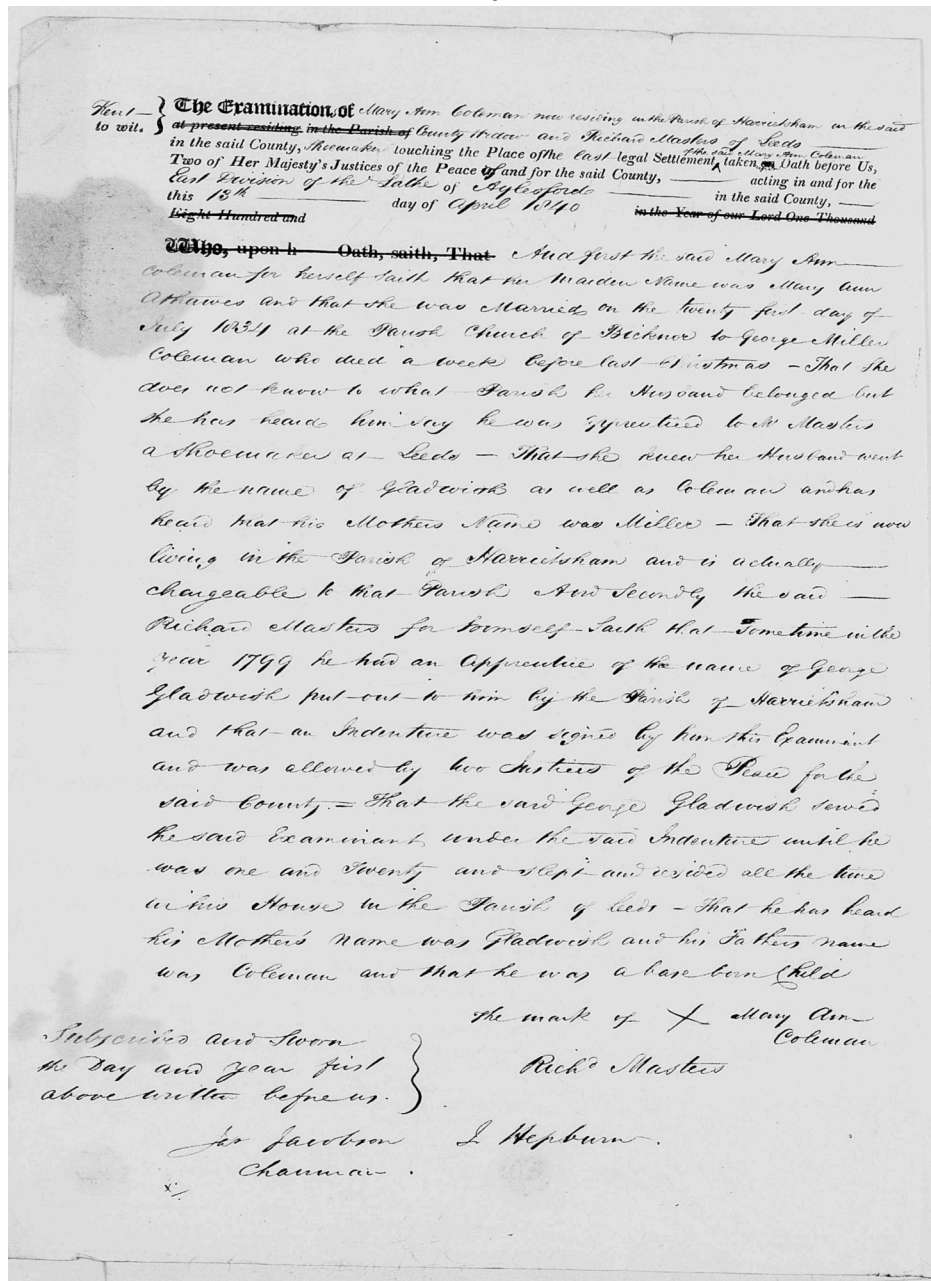


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Paul Milner, FUGA, M.Div., lives in Chicago, Illinois, but is originally from the coast of Cumberland (now Cumbria) in northwest England. Paul has specialized in British Isles genealogical research for over 35 years. He teaches week-long English and Scottish research tracks at the ISBGFH British Institute, Institute of Genealogical and Historical Research (IGHR), and Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy (SLIG).

Paul is a recipient of UGA Fellow Award (2018) and the David S. Vogels Jr. Award from FGS (2019). He is the author of six publications providing how-to guidance for English and Scottish researchers.

Paul is currently the book review editor for the BIGWILL newsletter and retired review editor of the FGS FORUM. He is currently on the board of the International Society for British Genealogy and Family History (ISBGFH), the past president of the British Interest Group of Wisconsin and Illinois (BIGWILL), and a past board member of the APG, FGS, and GSG. Paul focuses on British Isles resources and methodology on his blog at www.milnergenealogy.com.



SCOTTISH RESEARCH TOPICS

CHRIS PATON

Scotland's Poor Relief Systems

Many of our Scottish ancestors likely found themselves impoverished at some stage and in need of financial assistance. Poverty in Scotland was originally considered a crime, with various statutes passed in the fifteenth century against those who begged for a living. Groups of vagrant beggars were to be arrested and punished as “breakers of the king’s peace” if encountered,

whilst individuals aged between 14 and 70 were not allowed to beg in towns or the country, unless they were judged unable to earn a living by any other means – in which case they were to wear a badge or token identifying them as beggars. Those deemed to be fit for work had to earn their own living, for fear of imprisonment and subsequent punishment, which could



The original King James VI Hospital in the burgh of Perth was erected in 1569 for the alleviation of the poor, with the modern building dating to c. 1749. It now acts as a charitable housing and welfare trust (author's image).



Madderty Kirk, Perthshire. Before 1845, the kirk session of each parish church was legally responsible for maintaining the poor (author's image).

include burning of the cheek and banishment. A statute in 1503 decreed that beggars could now beg only within their parish of birth; it also instructed the head man of each parish to take up a voluntary collection from the local populace for the relief of the poor.

In 1579 the first poor relief act was passed, entitled "For Punishment of Strang and Idle beggars, and Reliefe of the Pure and Impotent." Through this, itinerant beggars aged between 14 and 70 were to be arrested, imprisoned, and have their ear burned with a hot iron, unless somebody offered them work for a year and a day. If the beggar escaped this service, they could again be imprisoned and have their ear burned once more, though after this they could not be punished again for a further 60 days; if still believed to be idle after this, they could be executed as thieves. However, more

compassionate reforms were also put in place, with hospitals to be erected for the "aged and impotent poor," whilst burghs were required to make registers of those in genuine need within their jurisdictions. Those from outwith the burghs were required to return to their parish of birth to be similarly enumerated and investigated. The inhabitants of parishes were to be taxed to pay for their upkeep, with the money to be collected by specially commissioned overseers of the poor. The parish and burgh authorities tasked with the new system could put those receiving poor relief to work if they were not completely lame, too old, or disabled — refusal could lead to a person being scourged and placed in the stocks. If the poor person had children, they could be taken from their custody and put to service as well, with sons liable to such service up to age 24 and daughters to age 28.

In 1597, responsibility for administering the poor law shifted to the kirk session of each parish, and a further law in 1600 allowed the presbytery (the church court above the kirk session) to supervise each session's poor relief duties. Within the larger royal burghs, burgh authorities and trade incorporations worked with the kirk sessions, sometimes setting up institutions such as hospitals and poorhouses to support the Kirk's efforts.

Although several statutes modified the Kirk's responsibilities, the poor relief system largely remained the same until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Poor Law (Scotland) Amendment Act was passed in 1845, transferring responsibility for administering poor relief to the state. From 1845, a system of parochial boards was established in every parish in Scotland, which now reported to a central Board of Supervision in Edinburgh. Poorhouses could be set up independently by a parish, or by several adjacent parishes pooling their resources to form a "combination workhouse," to treat those who were sick or destitute. The decision on whether to admit someone into a poorhouse, or to give them "outdoor relief," was now made by an inspector of the poor. Still, unlike the equivalent system in England, poorhouses were not to be used to relieve any person able to work. Applicants denied relief had a right to appeal through the sheriff courts. The system continued to evolve, with parochial boards replaced in 1894 by parish councils and a Local Government Board, and further reforms in



Glasgow City Archives, located in the city's Mitchell Library, has one of the best-preserved collections of post-1845 poor relief records in Scotland (author's image).

1929 and 1948 passing the system to local authority control as the welfare state continued to evolve.

Administrators considered many factors when granting poor relief, both indoor and outdoor, including the perceived legitimacy of the claim, the feasibility of recouping the expenditure, the right of settlement, and the applicant's moral character — in a 1921 example from Glasgow,

an Irish woman named Mary Thomson applied for relief shortly after her daughter married and left home to live with her new husband. The application noted that Mary had not worked for an employer for five years and had been supported by her daughter since then. Details of her four children were then provided, listing their names, dates and places of birth, and noting that they were the children of a former marriage, her first husband having died in Belfast 30 years previously. With regard to her second husband, William Whiteside, it was stated that he had travelled to Canada some 14 years earlier and that he had apparently died whilst there, well over a decade before her application. Mary was briefly admitted to the poorhouse, and then provided with outdoor relief.

However, not everything was as it seemed. A year later, her case notes recorded that her husband was very much alive; he had visited the parochial board's office to state that he had left his wife in 1907 "owing to her drunkenness and immoral conduct," making his way subsequently to Belfast rather than Canada. The authorities informed Whiteside that, as her husband, he was responsible for helping her financially. He steadfastly refused to do so, and was duly sentenced to three months' hard labour by the sheriff court. After his release, he disappeared completely and was listed as having deserted his wife again. Further investigations into Mary's circumstances revealed that Mary had been prosecuted twice in 1916 and 1919 for breach of the peace, again in 1919 for assault by stabbing (for which she was imprisoned for seven days), and in 1917 for "keeping a disorderly house," i.e., a brothel, for which she was imprisoned for 30 days. The report further added that Mary's daughter Sarah was "known in every police office in the city as a prostitute." As such, Mary



Peter Higginbotham's Workhouses.org.uk website can help to locate former Scottish poorhouse buildings and surviving poor relief records.

was no longer deemed fit to receive outdoor relief.

Mary continued to fall foul of the law, again being prosecuted for running a brothel in 1922, as well as several counts of theft and breach of the peace. Another of her daughters, also called Mary, was later prosecuted in 1924 for running a brothel. Mary senior was admitted to the poorhouse on a few occasions, and a 1927 note recorded the poor law officer's observation that he was "quite satisfied that she is not living the life she previously did." Although not recorded in the poor law application, the family was to endure further tragedy a year later in 1928, when Mary's daughter Mary died by suicide in the city.

Prior to 1845, the kirk session registers and accounts can be helpfully detailed, providing information on why somebody is being granted poor relief, or frustratingly basic, with some parishes merely providing lists of vague names such as "Widow Smith" and a simple record of payment. In many cases, you may find parish accounts noting a total amount collected and disbursed, with no names mentioned. Most historic kirk session records are now free to view online at ScotlandsPeople (www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk), although a small payment is required to download pages from a volume. In some cases original registers have

been returned to local archives, and may also be consulted there. The records of parish “heritors,” the principal landowners of a parish who had a statutory duty to support the Kirk, may also list some poor relief payments — these may be held at the National Records of Scotland (NRS), in estate papers within local archives, or in private hands. The NRS provides a useful research guide on poor law records at www.nrscotland.gov.uk/learning-and-events/research-guides/poor-relief-records/. Although the new state-based poor law system came into effect in 1845, some parishes continued payments for a few years during a transitional period, so it is still worth searching beyond this year in the kirk session registers.

Records from the former royal burghs, mainly held in local county archives or at the NRS, can also be as useful as session minutes in researching poor relief. For example, a register of the “Burgh and Parish Committee for Purchasing Coal for the Poor minute book, including names of subscribers and those assisted” survives from 1814–1816 for Irvine, which can be consulted at Ayrshire Archives (www.ayrshirearchives.org.uk).

Several online guides can help you find information about post-1845 poorhouses and the various registers still extant in archives across the country. The first is Peter Higginbotham’s website at www.workhouses.org.uk (English, Welsh, and Irish poorhouses were designated “workhouses” because those who found themselves there could be put to work). In this, he provides a detailed overview of the poor law acts, the locations of former poorhouses, and lists where known records may be held from the institutions, if they have survived.

The Your Scottish Archives platform can also help to trace local archive holdings via <https://yourscottisharchives.com>, whilst Edinburgh-based genealogist Kirsty Wilkinson has compiled an incredibly useful document entitled “Records of the Scottish Poor,” available on the Internet Archive at <https://bit.ly/4bp3syN>, which identifies lists of poor rolls, registers of poor, volumes of poor relief applications, and various other

records containing lists of paupers for parishes in Scotland, as held by the NRS and other sources.

Digitised poor relief application records for Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh, North Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire, and Kirkcaldy in Fife can be searched on Ancestry, whilst collections for Dundee and Linlithgowshire can be found on Findmypast. Findmypast also hosts a transcription-based database entitled “Scotland, Poor Law and Poor Lists,” which includes some records from Inverness (1846–1894), Wick (1870–1887), Stirling and Perthshire (1816–1899), and Dreghorn (1872–1901), and additional holdings from Ross and Cromarty, Moray, Elgin, Renfrewshire, Wigtownshire, and the Borders. Additional applications for various parishes in Ayrshire can be found on FamilySearch, whilst records for Paisley (1839–1948) can be searched via an index at <https://libcat.renfrewshire.gov.uk/iguana/uploads/file/Website%20version%202019.pdf>.

Based in the Ayrshire town of Stewarton, Northern Irish-born Chris Paton runs the Scotland’s Greatest Story research service (<https://scotlandsgreateststory.wordpress.com/>) and the daily Scottish GENES genealogy news blog (<https://scottishgenes.blogspot.com>).

Amongst his many publications are Tracing Your Scottish Family History on the Internet, Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry Through Church and State Records, and Sharing Your Family History Online from Pen and Sword, as well as Down and Out in Scotland: Researching Ancestral Crisis from Unlock the Past. Chris also tutors short courses through Pharos Teaching and Tutoring Ltd, including Scottish Research Online and Scotland 1750–1850: Beyond the Old Parish Registers.



IRISH RESEARCH TOPICS

CHRIS PATON

The Expelled Irish

Ireland was formally annexed by the United Kingdom in January 1801, after which Irish people became British subjects in a legal sense. This continued until December 1922, when the Irish Free State was created, although the situation for those based in Northern Ireland remained unchanged. During this period, Irish people had the right to travel to Britain to seek

work. While many succeeded, others were not so fortunate and joined other impoverished communities in England, Wales, and Scotland.

In the early nineteenth century, the state churches assisted the poor in Britain. Still, from 1834 the first major change took place with the implementation of the Poor Law Amendment Act



The Famine Memorial, Dublin. As a consequence of the Great Famine from 1845–51, thousands of impoverished and destitute Irish folk moved to Britain, briefly overwhelming the poor relief system there, and triggering mass removals back to Ireland (author's image).

removal of poor persons to ireland

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ENGLAND AND WALES.

RETURN of all POOR PERSONS Removed from *England and Wales to Ireland*, from the 1st day of January 1867 to the 31st day of December 1869.

County and Union, &c.	Name of Poor Person.	Adult.		Children under 16.	From what Port sent.	To what Place sent.				
		Male.	Female.							
ENGLAND.										
CAMBERLEY:										
Stokeport -	Henry Stanton -	1	-	-	Holyhead -	Castletar.				
	Sarah McGuire -	-	1	-	ditto -	Ballyshannon.				
	Mary Byrne -	-	1	-	ditto -	Dublin.				
	Christopher Smith -	1	-	-	ditto -	ditto.				
	John Berry -	-	-	1	ditto -	Westport.				
	Sarah Cordless -	-	1	-	ditto -	Mount Bellew.				
CONSWALL:										
Bedruth -	Daniel Vaughan -	1	-	-	Plymouth -	Cork.				
	Margaret Corney -	-	1	-	ditto -	ditto.				
	Ellen Corney -	-	1	-	ditto -	ditto.				
	Elizabeth Corney -	-	-	1	ditto -	ditto.				
	John Corney -	-	-	1	ditto -	ditto.				
	Charles Corney -	-	-	1	ditto -	ditto.				
	Daniel Corney -	-	-	1	ditto -	ditto.				
	Jane Corney -	-	-	1	ditto -	ditto.				
CUMBERLAND:										
Carlisle -	Maris McNeilly -	-	1	-	Whitehaven -	Killkee, county Down.				
Cockermouth -	Patrick M'Avoy -	1	1	3	Barrow -	Kilkeel Union.				
	Patrick Broughy -	1	-	-	Silloth -	South Dublin Union.				
Wigton -	Mary Mallen -	-	-	1	Whitehaven -	Londonderry.				
	John Mallen -	-	-	1	ditto -	ditto.				
DERBY:										
Ashborne -	Margaret Ford -	-	1	-	Holyhead -	Glennamaddy, Galway.				
	Patrick Ford -	-	-	1	ditto -	ditto.				
	Andrew Ford -	-	-	1	ditto -	ditto.				
DEVON:										
East Stonehouse -	Thomas Maloney -	1	-	-	Plymouth -	Athlone.				
Stoke Damerel -	Mary Hayes -	-	1	-	ditto -	Cork.				
	Patrick Kelly -	1	-	2	ditto -	Waterford.				
DORSET:										
Wimborne -	Robert Wood -	1	-	-	Bristol -	Tinnore, county Waterford.				

The UK Parliamentary Papers website provides information on many Irish folk sent back from Britain to Ireland.

in England and Wales. This fundamentally changed the way that poor relief was distributed in England and Wales, with a new state-based network of punitive workhouses offering indoor relief, environments designed to be so hostile that they would act as a deterrent to those seeking assistance. In Scotland, a similar but less harsh system was implemented from 1845, creating a parallel network of “poorhouses.” However, authorities north of the border favoured outdoor relief, which financially assisted the destitute in their homes.

To be able to claim poor relief from the relevant local authority, applicants had to have what was known as the right of “settlement.” There were various ways that this could be obtained, but for most it was based from birth on the settlement of their parents, i.e., the parish that was responsible for their poor relief, should it be required. By their very origins, Irish people moving to Britain did not have a right of settlement in parishes in England, Wales, or Scotland; if claiming poor relief, many were sponsored to return to Ireland to seek assistance there, whilst others were removed by local

authorities using vagrancy legislation, often by barely legal means. With the Great Famine from 1845–1851 in particular, thousands of desperate Irish folk made their way to Britain to seek assistance, overwhelming the relatively new poor relief systems there as it had done in Ireland (with reform there having been implemented in 1838). As a result, expulsions increased massively.

The now-defunct Moving Here website cites a good example of the types of records you might find in British county record offices and local archives, preserved by the Internet Archive at <https://bit.ly/4fPDbfN>. Among the records illustrated is a digitised copy of one of 65 volumes from 1801–

1835 recording the names of poor people deported from Liverpool to Ireland, in this case from 1834, sourced from Lancashire Archives. The site also gives examples of other useful records, including the original examination papers relating to an individual’s case, as well as material relating to the removal as held in the relevant quarter sessions papers for the area in question.

The ProQuest UK Parliamentary Papers website, accessed through subscribing libraries and universities at <https://parlipapers.proquest.com/> parlipapers, contains further lengthy lists naming people so removed. To find them, use the catalogue to search for terms such as “poor removals to Ireland” and a date range. If you cannot gain access to the Parliamentary Papers website, some of the records are also freely available on Raymond’s County Down website at www.raymondscountydownwebsite.com. These include returns from Scotland to Ireland in 1867, 1869, and 1875–1878; from England and Wales to Ireland in 1867 and 1869; and from January 1875.

The earlier nineteenth-century records on the platform tend to concern various bills and legislation about the poor laws themselves. Records listing removals in this period are usually more statistical, with most not naming those removed and instead providing the numbers ejected from each parish, along with any associated costs. Later in the century, more genealogically useful material begins to appear on the site.

The first detailed lists naming paupers on the site were published in 1863, detailing all the destitute poor removed from England and Scotland and sent back to Ireland from 1 December 1860 – 1 December 1862. Several similar reports then follow, with the latest equivalent list dating from 1878. The records are surprisingly detailed and list many individuals and their causes for removal, but are unfortunately not keyword searchable. This means you will have to browse through them to find the parish you’re interested in. In most cases, the counties and parishes are presented in alphabetical order, although the individuals within each parish list are not arranged that way.

For example, in England in 1875, authorities in Sunderland noted a Margaret Gillespie in a list of removals describing her deportation to Belfast.

Although her age was not recorded, the record states that she had two children, four-year-old Mary Ellen and six-month-old Charles, and that she had resided in England for 17 years, though with a “considerable time spent in Scotland.” Her removal was attributed to her “inability to earn a livelihood.”

An example from Scotland shows some of the exceptional details that can sometimes emerge. In 1877, a Sarah Hunter or Law was sent from the parish of Ayr back to Belfast. She was noted as being aged 40, and as having been resident in Scotland for 20 years, with an additional comment stating “chargeabilities becoming frequent to Ayr and St. Quivox; a hawker changing residence frequently; no settlement in Scotland.”

Not every case in the records documents those forcibly removed, and some cases also include voluntary resettlements. In the parish of Cruden, Aberdeenshire, an entry from 1876 states that a Thomas MacVeigh, aged 27, was said to have been resident in Scotland for five years, but that he was returned to Ireland after a “voluntary request after recovery in Aberdeen Lunatic Asylum from insanity,” and that rather than going to a poor law union he was instead conveyed “to his brother’s house, White Abbey, Antrim.”

- Aghadeng - Ancestors - Barbridge - Co. Down Births 1865-75 - Dromone - Dromona - Flax Growers 1796 - Griffiths 1863-64 - Guest Book - Inquests 1841 Ireland - Kilcoos & Maghera - Kilkeel - Co Down Land Deeds 1876 - Links List - Loughbrickland - Maps - Midl Files - Mourne - Newry - Parishes & Townlands - Photos - Rathfriland - Seapatrik	Return of poor from Scotland to Ireland, 1875/6/77 and 1878							
	http://www.raymondscountydownwebsite.com							
	Returned to workhouse or place of birth							
	Although people had been in Scotland for a number of years, when they got sick or unable to work, picked up for vagrancy or were in the poor house, the new laws, stated they were to be sent back to their place of birth or the nearest poor house in Ireland.							
	County	Parish	Year	Name	Number of Family	Ages	Length of residence in Scotland	Cause of removal
	Aberdeen	St Nicholas	1875	John Trayne	"	"	About a week or 10 days	Chargeable, Insanity
	"	Cruden	1878	Thomas MacVeigh	"	27	Said to be 5 Years	Voluntary request after recovery in Aberdeen Lunatic Asylum from Insanity
	"	Peterhead	"	Luke Kerr	"	15	19 weeks	Removed voluntary on recovering from the effects of an accident, relatives in Ireland advanced money for expenses
	Ayr	Saddell and Skipness	"	Michael Haggerty	"	23	2 and a half years	Ill health
	"	Andreasan	"	John Sim	"	45	3 years	Was chargeable as a pauper 5 Months
	"	"	"	Honoria Eardly	"	70	1 Year	Was chargeable as a pauper 4 Months
	"	Auchinleck	"	William Baird	"	51	33 Years	Rheumatism, no settlement
	"	Ayr	1875	John Johnston	"	35	Few weeks	Insane, no settlement in Scotland
	"	"	1877	Sarah Hunter or Law	"	49	20 Years	Chargeabilities, becoming frequently to Ayr and St. Quivox, a hawker changing residence frequently
	"	"	1878	Ellen McMillen Hinds	"	55	3 Weeks	Insane, no settlement

Raymond's County Down website hosts lists of Irish folk deported from Scotland to Ireland in 1867, 1869, and 1875–78, as well as returns from England and Wales from 1867–69 and 1875.



The former poorhouse building in Ayr. Irish applicants to poorhouses like this were often removed to Ireland to keep them from becoming chargeable to the local parochial board, as with Sarah Hunter or Law in 1877 (author's image).

In addition to the lists of individuals deported, case notes occasionally appear in letters and parliamentary reports, often noting disputes between Irish and British authorities over who was responsible for an individual's poor relief. One example is an entry from July 1867 that outlined the circumstances of 27-year-old Mary Horrigan, wife of a marine from the north of Ireland called Michael Horrigan, who had left Skibbereen, County Cork, aged just a year old. Seven months after her husband went to China to serve, Mary applied for poor relief from Greenwich Union, but was ordered to leave Woolwich for Skibbereen, even though her four children had been born in England. Upon reaching Skibbereen, the union there sent her back to London. Correspondence over Mary's circumstances was included in a poor removal return to the House of Commons dated 24 May 1870.

The practice of removing Irish people back to Ireland declined substantially by the end of the nineteenth century, thanks to a series of legal reforms. Most notably, these included the Union Chargeability Act 1865 in England and Wales,

which spread the costs of relief across the entire poor law union, and not just a specific parish, and the Divided Parishes and Poor Law Amendment Act 1876, which greatly restricted the circumstances that could lead to an individual's removal. In Scotland, similar local government reforms in 1894 and 1929 effectively ended the right of settlement as a determining factor in who should receive poor relief.

Based in the Ayrshire town of Stewarton, Northern Irish-born Chris Paton runs the Scotland's Greatest Story research service (<https://scotlandsgreateststory.wordpress.com/>) and the daily Scottish GENES genealogy news blog (<https://scottishgenes.blogspot.com>). Amongst his many publications are Researching Ancestral Crisis in Ireland, Tracing Your Irish Family History on the Internet (2nd edition), Tracing Your Irish Ancestors Through Land Records, and Tracing Your Belfast Ancestors from Pen and Sword, as well as Sharing Your Family History Online. Chris also tutors short courses through Pharos Teaching and Tutoring Ltd, including two Irish-themed courses, Progressing Your Irish Research Online and Researching Irish Land Records.





Welsh Protesters and Pioneers: A Journey from the Workhouse to Cottage Homes

“The poverty amongst the people of [Cardiganshire] is quite extreme ... all Welsh men have little or no money and not only is it not to be had, but that it cannot be expected.”

So wrote Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham-Clinton after he moved to his new estate at Hafod in northern Cardiganshire in the 1830s.¹ In his diary, he also noted how poor and severe weather produced bad harvests that devastated families, as they did not then have “the wherewithal to bake their bread — the prospect before them is a terrible one, their winter must be one of extreme hardship.”

The harvests of 1793 and 1816–1817 were particularly bad and resulted in food shortages. As a result, a relatively significant wave of emigration took place from certain parts of Wales as families sought to avoid that hardship. Nevertheless, before the Victorian era, throughout Wales, workhouses — the institutions where the poor were sometimes destined when nature dealt them a heavy hand — were a relatively unfamiliar aspect of life. In the eighteenth century, out of 2,000 recorded parish poorhouses in England and Wales, only 20 were located in Wales itself: Pembrokeshire had the most (although they were all very small institutions), while five of the country’s counties — Cardiganshire, Caernarvonshire, Flintshire, Radnorshire, and Breconshire — had none.



“Welch Beggar Woman” by artist Louis Simond, published in 1815 in his *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain* during the years 1810 and 1811 by a Native of France. National Library of Wales / People’s Collection Wales, <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/825441>.

But this does not mean the shadow of poverty did not hang over most or all communities, or that disease, disabilities, and infirmity (the reason why many, especially the elderly, were admitted to poorhouses) were not facts of life. The lot of the poor, and poverty in general, appears to have become more evident in Wales as the nineteenth century wore on. The fast pace of population growth in many parts of the country, especially from the 1840s onwards, economic fluctuations and periodic unemployment, coupled with the rising cost of living and the loss of land where rural labourers had once been able to graze their own animals or to plant some crops, presented Welsh families with further financial stresses.

Rural and industrial discontent grew alongside these stresses, and philanthropists, social reformers, and the government alike responded with schemes, measures, and reports to address

the problem. The development of the Victorian workhouse was one such response.

Workhouses in Wales

Even though our Welsh ancestors were acutely aware that poverty was always only a poor harvest away, as an independent-minded, largely rural populace they had for centuries been able to somehow get along by utilising their community's resourcefulness, which generally saw them through hard times, as an early American tourist, William MacGavock, wrote in 1852 of Welsh people's self-reliance: "The people of Wales are naturally industrious and frugal, and although few of them can be called rich, they are generally independent, relying exclusively upon their own labor for support." And so, when the authorities introduced plans to build a new network of workhouses across the country during the 1830s and 1840s, the rural population in particular was very guarded about the policy, for the institutions became both



Y Dolydd: Llanfyllin Workhouse, Montgomeryshire. It was designed to house 250 inmates (a huge increase from its smaller predecessor, which housed only 10). It also incorporated a small cemetery nearby, although most of the graves are unmarked. After 1930, it became an old people's home that closed in 1982. Llanfyllin Dolydd Building Preservation Trust / People's Collection Wales Creative Archive Licence: <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/43068>.

symbols of what was seen as government encroachment into people's lives and as targets of protest against other government policies more generally, in particular road tolls, which had added a further financial burden upon hard-pressed working people.

At that time, in many parts of Wales, people were not shy of demonstrating their resistance to such policies, and workhouses were well and truly in their sights. In Narberth, Pembrokeshire, a large group of people threatened to burn down the town's new workhouse. At the same time, over in Carmarthen, the Rebecca Rioters (an infamous band of disguised protesters whose actions emanated from the period's widespread discontent) targeted Carmarthen workhouse — on 19 June 1843, six alleged ringleaders, farmers from outlying rural parishes, gathered a significant following as they marched to the town and stormed the workhouse there.

In mid-Wales, Llanfyllin was one of the few areas in the country with a poorhouse before the nineteenth century (albeit a very small one that housed only 10 inmates), and it was where one of the first new Victorian workhouses in Wales was built in the 1830s. Known as Y Dolydd (meaning "The Meadows"), it was not immune to protests, for when it was opened in 1838, a large

number of people marched from nearby Llanfair Caereinion to destroy it — they were thwarted by the deployment of the county's Yeomanry.

This climate of protest was partly why some local Welsh poor law unions initially resisted building their own workhouses. By 1845, out of the country's 47 unions, 17 of them still did not have such establishments. It was not until the 1870s that the very last of the unions to hold out — Crickhowell, Lampeter, Builth, and Tregaron — eventually capitulated and began building their own workhouses. However, they did so only after pressure and threats from the Poor Law Commissioners.

Cottage Homes

Perhaps it was also the tendency of some to be dubious of the belief that large, government-mandated institutions were an adequate means to tackle the issue of poverty in Wales that the country later became a pioneer in the initiation of another concept — that of the cottage homes. While some of the more reluctant Welsh poor law unions were only starting to build workhouses by the 1870s, in the more populated areas of south Wales some pioneering social reformers sought an alternative response, particularly for children from poor and destitute backgrounds.



NEW COTTAGE HOMES, TREDEGAR.

Swansea Union.

INDUSTRIAL COTTAGE HOMES.

SUPERINTENDENT & MATRONS WANTED.

THE GUARDIANS of the above Union require the services of a SUPERINTENDENT and MATRON (a married couple without encumbrance) to take charge of a Cottage Home containing 20 children, and the General Management of and Supervision over three other similar Cottages.

Joint Salary, £50, with Furnished Apartments, Fuel, and Rations.

The Superintendent will be required to keep the necessary accounts in respect of the four homes, and must be competent to instruct the Boys in General Garden Work or other Industrial Training. The Matron must be able to Cook, and instruct the Girls in Household Work, Plain Sewing, and Knitting.

The Guardians also require a MATRON for each of the other Three Homes.

Salary, £15 each, with Furnished Apartments, Fuel, and Rations.

Widows without encumbrance preferred. Must be able to Cook and instruct the Girls in Household Work, Plain Sewing, and Knitting.

The highest testimonials as to character will be required.

The duties to commence on or about the 24th June next.

Applications, stating age and occupation, accompanied by testimonials, to be sent in to the undersigned on or before the 6th June next.

The Candidates selected will have notice sent them to attend the Weekly Meeting of the Guardians on THURSDAY, the 21st JUNE, the day fixed for making the appointments.

Any further information required as to the duties, &c., may be obtained from the undersigned.

By order,

G. BAKER HAYNES,

Clerk.

The Cambrian, 18 May 1877. An advertisement for Swansea cottage homes' very first superintendent and matrons.

Cottage homes were seen as a way to care for children, many of whom were orphans, outside the workhouse environment and to replicate, as far as possible, the sense of living in a family home. Most of these homes were established in the industrial areas of Wales, where demand was greatest. There, they were deliberately located in the less populated, sometimes rural, parts of the poor law unions' catchment areas to provide the children, as much as possible, with a village-like upbringing. Most cottage homes consisted of a cluster of individual houses where up to around 20 children lived. They were often built around a large grassy area. They

sometimes included an infirmary, a chapel, and a school or workshop where the boys learned skills such as carpentry and gardening, and the girls received training in sewing, knitting, and housework. An overall supervisor and matron ran the homes, and each house was headed by a matron, often known as a "mother," all of whom were employees of the local poor law unions.

Wales was the location of some of the UK's very first cottage homes — Swansea (opened in 1877), Neath (in 1878), and Bridgend (in 1879). Contemporaneous statistics may explain why Swansea was the first area of Wales to implement a cottage homes policy: the rate of poverty among the city's population was recorded at 7.6%, compared with 5.1% in Cardiff and 3% in Merthyr Tydfil. Its complex of cottage homes was located in the Cockett district of the city, and it originally consisted of four houses, each housing up to 20 children. However, it soon became clear that it was not big enough. A fifth, larger house was soon added to the complex, and it could house up to 40 children. This development sparked debate, as many saw it as undermining the benefits of the "family system" the smaller units provided.

A few miles away to the east, Bridgend's cottage homes (known as Preswylfa) were located on the Merthyr Mawr Road. There were six houses in total, although they were slightly smaller than Swansea's. Shortly after it opened to residents, Preswylfa housed 68 children, and each house could hold up to 12.

A later scheme was set up further east in Tredegar (in the old county of Monmouthshire). As reported in the *Weekly Mail* of 21 October 1905 (see page 87 below), it was built to house 75 children, with a maximum of 15 children in each home.

From Cottage Homes to Scattered Homes

Cardiff's cottage homes were located in the city's Ely district and, like other such establishments, provided children with a home and some education, as well as training in relevant employment and everyday skills. However, by

the early 1900s, the local poor law union had begun implementing a “scattered homes” scheme, seen as a more workable solution for a large, fast-growing city such as Cardiff. The children would first live at the Ely cottage homes site for a short time before being assigned (or “scattered”) to specially designated foster homes around the city — they were located in Cowbridge Road East, Grangetown, and Roath, as well as in communities on the city’s outskirts, in Penarth, Dinas Powys, and Barry.

The Availability of Records

Where they have survived, workhouse and cottage homes’ records are generally found together in the local poor law unions’ collections, which have been deposited at the relevant county archives. However, surviving records can be patchy.

For general guidance as to what is available relating to individual workhouses and cottage homes, you will need to consult the individual county archives’ catalogues. Nevertheless, Peter Higginbotham’s Workhouse website includes useful overviews of each Welsh poor law union’s workhouse, which can serve as brief guides.² Unsurprisingly perhaps, some of the unions that were the most resistant to setting up a workhouse system in their area, such as in Cardiganshire, have the most limited range of surviving records — no admission and discharge

records have survived for Tregaron’s workhouse. However, most of Lampeter’s registers have survived after the 1880s (albeit with gaps). Elsewhere, earlier workhouse admission and discharge registers have a slightly better survival rate — for example, those of Pwllheli’s poor law union, Caernarvonshire, are available from 1853 onwards (with some gaps during the earliest period).

There is some good news for researchers who cannot visit county archives personally and whose ancestors lived in Glamorganshire or Monmouthshire, as a useful range of those counties’ workhouse records has been digitised and is available online. Ancestry has the following three collections, but note that these collections do not include all the registers and records produced during the stated date range:

- Glamorgan Workhouse Registers, 1850–1920 (Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, and Pontypridd poor law unions)
- Gwent (namely Monmouthshire) Workhouse Registers, 1833–1957 (Abergavenny, Bedwellty, Chepstow, Newport, Monmouth, and Pontypool poor law unions)
- Swansea and Surrounding Area Poor Law Unions Records, 1836–1916 (Gower, Neath, Pontardawe, and Swansea poor law unions)

COTTAGE HOMES. ACCOMMODATION FOR SEVENTY-FIVE CHILDREN.

The Cottage Homes at Tredegar were formally opened on Wednesday. The proceedings were conducted by the Rev. J. Jenkins, and the chairman of the guardians (the Rev. George Griffiths), who performed the ceremony, was presented by the architect and contractor with a gold key. The vicar of Tredegar (the Rev. T. Theophilus, R.D.) offered a prayer at the close of the inspection.

The guardians’ officials were entertained to luncheon at the Castle Hotel by the architect and contractor.

The homes are built on a site in Tredegar

Park, facing the recreation grounds and adjoining Park-row. Accommodation is provided for 75 children at present—fifteen in each home, each fifteen having a foster-mother. The master and matron are provided with accommodation in the centre block. The homes are large and well-arranged; equal, if not better, than anything of the kind in the Principality. Each home is self-contained, and will be worked on purely domestic lines, the larger children helping the mother in the general housework. Everything has been done to make the homes as near like an ordinary house as possible and reduce to a minimum the idea of pauperism. Credit is due to the board’s architect, Mr. W. Beddoe Rees, Dumfries-place, Cardiff, and the contractor, Mr. J. Newcombe, builder, Tredegar, for the way the work has been carried out. The cost of the present homes is between £8,000 and £9,000.

As for cottage homes' records, in particular Glamorganshire's establishments, although not online, the admission and discharge and creed registers for Preswylfa, Bridgend, have survived from 1879 onwards; for Merthyr Tydfil's industrial school and cottage homes they are available from 1877 (children's case papers and history books are available from 1906 onwards); for Pontypridd's cottage homes (also known as Garth Olwg) from 1892 onwards; and a range of records have survived for Swansea's homes in Cockett and for Neath (Bryncoch) from the late 1870s onwards.

Endnotes

1. The original diaries of Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham-Clinton, 4th Duke of Newcastle under Lyme (1785–1851), form part of the University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections. Ceredigion Record Office has photocopies and transcriptions of the sections relevant to the county which were written while the Duke lived in the Hafod estate (located in Cwmystwyth, Cardiganshire).

2. Background information relating to Welsh workhouses can be found on Peter Higginbotham's Workhouse website: <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/Wales/>

For information relating to individual Welsh poor law unions and their workhouses, choose "Workhouse Locations" from the main menu and follow the relevant links from the "Welsh Poor Law Unions" tab through to the relevant counties.

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Be on the lookout for our new monthly newsletter, the Heritage Dispatch. It's a short publication full of genealogical tips, stories, and information about upcoming ISBGFH events. To read past issues, visit the [Heritage Dispatch](#) page on our website.

