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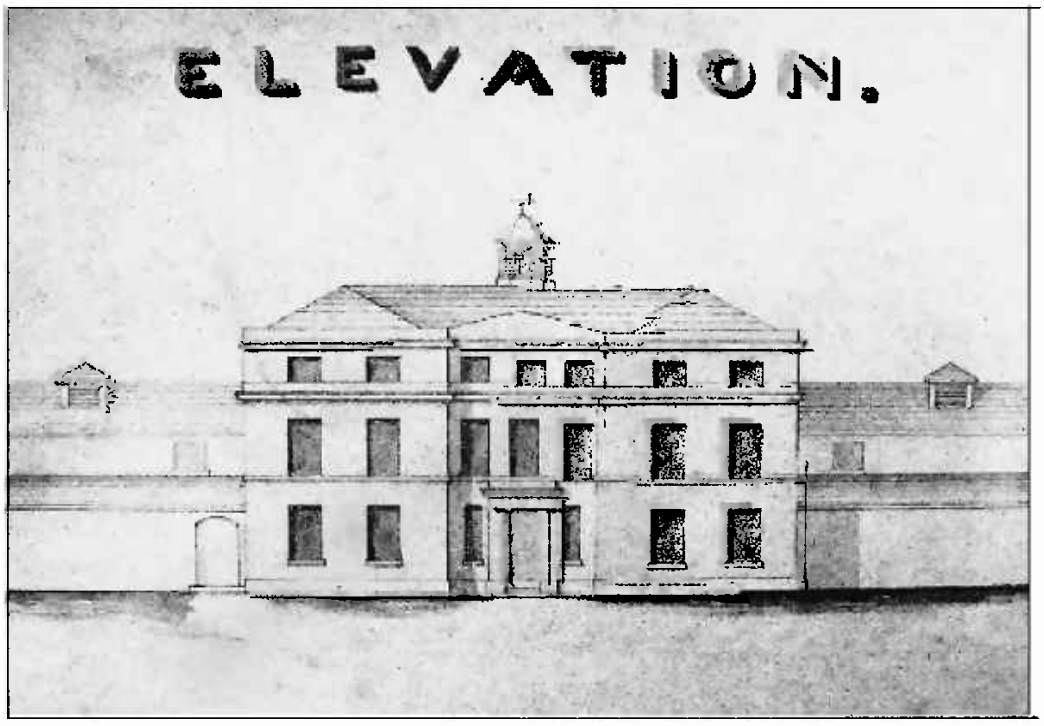

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VOLUME LXXXII

by Lance Smith

REFUGES OF LAST RESORT: Shropshire Workhouses and the People who Built and Ran them

For C E S

'No paupers, and an empty house' (laughter and applause)
Toast proposed by chairman of Madeley guardians, 1874

SHREWSBURY 2007

(ISSUED IN 2010)

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Front Cover: Elevation of the front building of Ludlow Workhouse, as designed by Matthew Stead in 1836. The paupers' entrance is the door to the left. The guardians' entrance is at the centre. (Shropshire Archives PL9/9/2/1-4.)

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Lance Smith is an architect who acquired a particular interest in workhouses when doing contract work for CADW on the updating of the Statutory List of Welsh Buildings, and has continued this interest into the years of retirement with a series of studies of Shropshire workhouses.

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D. & R. Cromarty, *The Wealth of Shrewsbury in the Early Fourteenth Century: Six Local Subsidy Rolls 1297 to 1322. Text and commentary*. 1993, ISBN 0 9501227 5 0; 125 pp. £10 (£9 to members).
Shrewsbury is fortunate to have six local subsidy rolls, a number greater than for any other town. They record the assessment of the taxpaying population's wealth from 1297 to 1322. The rolls consist of lists of names followed by inventories of taxed goods, a summation of their values and then the tax due as a fraction which the crown demanded. The authors have looked into the historical background of the taxes at local and national levels, and have used the evidence of the inventories to discuss the social structure of the town and its economy.

U. Rees (ed.), *The Cartulary of Lilleshall Abbey*, 1997, ISBN 09501227 6 9; 237 pp. £10 (£9 to members).
Shropshire has already been indebted to Una Rees for the two earlier cartulary editions, those of Shrewsbury Abbey and Haughmond Abbey. Lilleshall Abbey was an Augustinian house lying in the wooded area to the north-east of Shrewsbury. It was never a very wealthy community, and its income was diminished by the large numbers of travellers it was obliged to succour. This volume has entailed a great deal of work in searching for the originals of the charters and collating the two. In addition to the charters there are also documents relating to taxation, a rental of the Abbey's properties in Shrewsbury, and items relating to the abbey's attempts to augment its revenues by appropriating some of its churches. This gives only a small indication of the range of the contents, which represent the archives used by the Abbey officials in their dealings with their estates and legal business.

N. Baker (ed.), *Shrewsbury abbey. Studies in the archaeology and history of an urban abbey*, 2002, ISBN 0 –9501227 7 7; 237 pp. 113 figures, £10 (£9 to members).
After the introductory chapter giving the historical, archaeological, and physical back ground, follow two chapters on the surviving remains. Part 2 covering chapters 4 to 9 contains detailed accounts of the excavations undertaken between 1985 and 1988 on the Queen Anne House site, including important technical reports. Chapter 10 covers the Abbey Mill site excavations over the same period. Part 3, Synthesis, Discussion and Conclusion, contains chapters on 'The changing precinct', 'The Abbey and its suburb', and 'The Abbey and the town'. This was an important undertaking aiming to use an opportunity to use excavate part a site, which till then had remained buried by industrial development, and then to relate the findings to what was still standing, and the history of the Abbey and the suburb in which it stands.

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PREFACE

Most of the materials for this study are accessible in Shropshire Archives, and my thanks are due to Tony Carr, Mary McKenzie and their staff there for the ease and efficiency with which the archives can be accessed and their unfailing helpfulness in dealing with enquiries. It has also been a pleasure to work in outlying repositories holding material relevant to the workhouses of Shropshire, including the County Records of Staffordshire at Stafford, the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and the National Buildings Record in Swindon. Libraries throughout the County have also been helpful with access to their collections and many individuals have been more than a little encouraging. Parts of this volume have already appeared in embryonic form in the *Journal of the Telford Archaeological and Historical Society*, and I am grateful to the editor, Neil Clarke, for permission to reproduce them.

L.S.

CHAPTER 1

GUARDIANS AND BUILDERS

The Poor and the Reform of Workhouses

The Poor Law

For over three centuries the poor law was a dominant feature of English social life. In Shropshire as in other counties a parish-based system for relief of the poor grew up which is known as the old poor law. This was radically reformed by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which compelled parishes to join together in 'unions' for the provision of relief to the destitute. The subsequent system is known as the new poor law. Before unions were formed under the Act many local attempts had been made at creating them. Such early unions, generally known as 'incorporations', were numerous from the mid-18th century. The incorporation formed by the parishes of Shrewsbury at the end of the 18th century was nationally important and generated several imitators in Shropshire and neighbouring counties. Reform of the poor law from its parish base to its union base in Shropshire may be said to have taken place during a long period from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century. Before the Shrewsbury incorporation was set up the poor law in Shropshire was entirely managed by parish vestries; by the mid-19th century it was entirely managed by unions and three surviving incorporations.

A widely used tool of the poor law both in its unreformed and in its reformed state in Shropshire as elsewhere was the workhouse. The new poor law was introduced into the county in 1836 and there was much rebuilding of workhouses over the following decades. In 18th-century Shropshire parish workhouses were common, and after the reform union or incorporation workhouses were universal.

The Poor Law Amendment Act followed a parliamentary inquiry which had sat from 1832. Edwin Chadwick was a leading member and the main author of its Report. The Act placed the national supervision and direction of the poor law in the hands of the Poor Law Commission, a body of three politically independent commissioners whose office was in Somerset House. The commissioners had a small number of assistant commissioners to whom local territories were allotted. It was the intention that henceforth the management of the poor was to be administered locally in unions of parishes under boards of guardians elected by ratepayers. After initial concentration on the southern English counties, where the need for reform was considered to be most pressing, the commissioners recruited additional assistants to spread the reform further to the north and west. It was as part of this second phase of their work that William Day was recruited. Day was the assistant commissioner who was almost single-handedly in charge of the introduction of the new system in Shropshire. His work was then extended into Wales, firstly north Wales, then eventually the whole of the Principality. He was authoritarian and difficult, but the manner in which he was eventually dismissed in the wake of the Andover workhouse scandal (in which he was not involved) earned the Commissioners no credit. The same crisis brought about the end of the Poor Law Commission in 1847. The authority which took its place was the Poor Law Board, with a similar function, but acting as a department within the Home Office. This in turn became the Local Government Board in 1871.

The study of workhouse architecture nationally has been greatly advanced recently (1999) by K. Morrison's work for English Heritage.[1] Morrison discusses these buildings from their earliest origins to the final repeal of the poor law in 1930, and even beyond. From her work it is possible to obtain a view of the gradual and difficult evolution of the workhouse from its early character as a device to manage problem classes to its early 20th-century character as a hospital. It also amply illustrates the level of administrative pride which must have influenced many boards of guardians in approving the design of expensive buildings. The restrained utilitarian design of the workhouse architecture advocated by the commissioners under the new poor law of 1834 was not followed for long. Further work is needed on the economic aspects of what was a considerable output of official building and a formative factor in bringing about architectural professionalism in the early

19th century. Further work is also needed on localised studies of the workhouse. In this respect Shropshire is a neglected county.

The local government aspect has not waited so long for a nationwide and authoritative history: it was exhaustively treated before the close of the poor law in the work of Sydney and Beatrice Webb as part of their magisterial study of English local government.[2]

Literature dealing specifically with the new poor law in Shropshire is not plentiful. There have been few studies of workhouse buildings in the county. There is a good biography of William Day, the assistant poor law commissioner most involved, by R. A. Lewis.[3] Day's work in the late 1830s was to shape the new poor law in Shropshire and lead directly to the building of a number of union workhouses. Patrician, serious minded, humourless and principled to the point of painfulness, Day was the most conscientious of assistant commissioners and worked tirelessly to achieve the best for the poor in receipt of relief in its various forms as well as for the ratepayers paying for them. Shortly after Lewis's study W. J. Walsh wrote an important history of the poor law in Shropshire and the circumstances in which Day attempted to reform it, concentrating on the crucial period from 1820 to 1855 and on the uncooperative districts of the north-west of the county served by the 18th-century incorporations.[4] These studies are foundations for any subsequent account of the history of the poor law in Shropshire. Both were studies of a neutral tone appropriate when the traditional pejorative view of the unreformed old poor law was under challenge.

Shropshire Workhouses under the Old Poor Law

Many of the 18th-century parish vestries in Shropshire used workhouses as one of their ways of managing their poor. An example is Wellington where, from 1748, an illiterate contractor, Hazlehurst, sheltered, worked and fed the paupers at his own premises. This was a substantial business, Hazlehurst also taking the paupers of several other parishes. He bargained with the overseers of Newport for £45 p. a. to 'provide good, wholesome and sufficient meat, drink, washing, lodging, wearing apparel…and pay for burials of the poor in the workhouse and provide an apothecary and surgeon.'[5] A more common situation is exemplified by pre-incorporation Ellesmere or Whitchurch, where the vestry owned the workhouse, and managers were engaged on yearly contracts. In the case of Ellesmere the contractor did not live in the workhouse. It was under the immediate supervision of a woman paid £4 a year who can hardly have been distinguishable from a pauper herself.

In 1834 an assistant inquiry commissioner, A. J. Lewis, explained the practice of engaging a contractor to 'farm' the poor:

> 'The parish enters into an agreement with the governor or manager of the workhouse to allow him a certain sum per week for each pauper relieved in the workhouse, and in general the agreement specifies the quantity and quality of the food with which each pauper is to be daily supplied.…In the latter [system] it is in the interests of the contractor to get as many paupers into the workhouse as he possibly can.'[6]

Parish workhouses might be redundant buildings converted to the purpose. In Wem and Clun old maltings were used. Old farmhouses or cottages might be used, as at Ellesmere and Little Wenlock. There were also some purpose-built workhouses, as at Claverley and Newport. The best was that at Cleobury Mortimer, a substantial house of five bays and three storeys plus an attic, probably put up as a charitable act by the lord of the manor, William Lacon Childe (d.1757). Purpose-built early workhouses are notable for their considerable storey height, perhaps because of the need to accommodate hand-looms. The purpose-built workhouse at Madeley is known to have contained weaving machinery from its start in 1797.[7]

In Shrewsbury in 1784 an attempt was made at radical reform. The leading ratepayers of the town saw the solution to the age-old problem of the indigent poor as being one of combining the diligent management of a workhouse with what they quaintly termed 'excitement to industry'. They resolved to provide compulsory training to enable the poor to follow trades in which they could gain a living, and this, they were sure, would achieve the enthusiastic co-operation of the poor. The promoters' initiative was by no means as original as the Shrewsbury ratepayers were given to think, and was doomed like earlier similar schemes elsewhere in the country to failure. To Shropshire people the initiative was new and the leaders of the Shrewsbury ratepayers and their imitators in several other parts of the county may be said to have taken their first step in a process of reform, predating the national reform of the poor law by fifty years.[8]

The belief in this simple remedy for poverty was very beguiling. When giving evidence to the Inquiry of 1834, and overstating his case, A. J. Lewis rushed to condemn its naïveté:

> 'The original founders of these establishments were, indeed, so sanguine as to their utility, that they imagined that able-bodied paupers would not only at all times be provided with employment, but that their labour, after paying the expenses of the establishment, would yield a surplus fund. These golden dreams, as might have been expected, have never been realised. The labour of the paupers, so far from yielding any profit, is in fact, a loss to the establishment.'

The writer then falls into exactly the same error by commenting that if only the Shrewsbury experiment had been properly and diligently supervised, it might have worked.[9] Yet it had been very diligently supervised. Too ready a condemnation of the Shrewsbury system might have cast doubt on the wisdom of providing workhouses at all, and that was a conclusion which the inquirers framing the new poor law were not keen to reach.

Juveniles and young adults were at the forefront of the problem. As described in Chapter 2, in 1784 the leading ratepayers of the town decided to re-open the former foundling hospital at Kingsland as a workhouse, taking poor persons, predominantly young, from the Shrewsbury parishes to live within its walls and be both compulsorily and willingly employed in gainful work. The workhouse was given the name of a 'house of industry' to mark its enlightened management.[10] The Act creating the Shrewsbury incorporation united the five urban parishes of the town with Meole Brace, the adjacent parish in which the old orphanage stood on the south side of the Severn. Archdeacon Hugh Owen, the Shrewsbury historian, writing in 1808, gave the rapid rise of the poor rate in these parishes as the immediate motive for the experiment, but it was clearly embarked upon in a much more positive spirit.[11]

Compulsion, allied to a co-operative response from the poor persons assisted, was the principle of relief in many workhouse schemes throughout the 17th and 18th centuries and even into the 19th century. In the policy of the Shrewsbury house of industry, as set out in the incorporation Act and in the publicity surrounding the experiment published by Isaac Wood, the treasurer, it is evident that it was expected that the able-bodied poor compelled to take refuge in this workhouse would react with gratitude.

> 'In December 1784 the house was opened for the reception of the poor, who, having been accustomed to a maintenance from regular or occasional weekly pay, at first evinced great reluctance in accepting the mode of relief prepared for them; but on experiencing the plenty and comfort of the new institution, the mildness of its regulations, and the benevolent attention of the directors, their prejudices gradually subsided, and they in a great degree became reconciled to it. To the indefatigable exertion and unwearied perseverance of the first directors, and of the gentlemen who immediately succeeded them, the inhabitants of Shrewsbury are chiefly indebted for those excellent regulations and judicious laws which have rendered their house of industry a model to almost all succeeding institutions of the kind throughout the kingdom.'[12]

The huge Shrewsbury house of industry, containing a 'family' of around 275 inmates, was a model to several other groups of parishes in north-west and central Shropshire, who accepted without question that they too needed vast buildings. In 1791 the Shrewsbury model was copied by Oswestry and Ellesmere, and in 1792 by Atcham and Whitchurch. There was also a conspicuous imitator outside the county at Forden (Montgomery and Pool). There was enthusiasm for these schemes and the great cost of purchasing or constructing the new buildings required was not thought to be an obstacle.

The Shrewsbury house had originally been designed for about 600 orphans. It will be further described in Chapter 2. No attention appears to have been given to any arrangement of yards or gardens.[13] This is in contrast to the design of reformed workhouses under the new poor law a generation later, when the provision and correct segregation of yards was a dominant consideration in planning.

The task of the 18th-century incorporations putting up houses of industry on the Shrewsbury model was simpler than that of the new poor law unions building workhouses in the 1830s or later. The directors of incorporations (the equivalent of guardians under the new poor law) did not take over the management of the poor from the local parish officials until their buildings were complete, so they could concentrate without distraction on building.

On the eve of the new poor law in the early 1830s Shropshire contained five incorporations in the middle and north west of the county. Elsewhere in the county about 223 parishes remained which were still managing their poor individually. A few had attempted reformed management, as permitted under Sturges Bourne's Acts of 1818 and 1819, by taking the direction of the parish vestry out of the hands of the ratepayers at large and forming select vestries in which decisions were taken by elected representatives. This is likely to have been the context in which some workhouse improvement was attempted, such as the addition of a new workhouse on church land at Claverley in 1818.[14]

Shropshire Workhouses and the New Poor Law

While the Amendment Bill was under consideration by the Inquiry Commission in 1834 the problems of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire were examined by A. J. Lewis.[15] He commented favourably on systems of relief in use in these counties, but noted that the pernicious 'roundsman' system, sending labourers to work for local employers while paying them out of the poor rate, was used at only two places in Shropshire, Edgmond and Lydbury. Shropshire was noted for its widespread use of workhouses, in contrast to Herefordshire, where existing workhouses were falling into disuse. Several incorporations in Shropshire already had 'houses of industry'. Although Shropshire had both important rural and industrial areas it resembled neither the depressed southern agricultural counties nor the troublesome northern counties whose reorganisation met great local resistance and had to be left until last. Evils of the old forms of relief complained about in Shropshire included an 'augmented number of parish apprentices' and 'many awkward and unknown parish workmen forced on the farmers'.[16]

The remedy of the new poor law with its new emphasis on the workhouse as a tool of social management was widely approved nationally and the new bill was passed in Parliament without much dissent. The able-bodied were supposed henceforth to obtain relief only by entering the workhouse with their families and submitting to a regime harsher than that which they were thought capable of finding in independence. According to the Act their condition was to be 'in no case so eligible as the condition of persons of the lowest class subsisting on the fruits of their own industry'. It may be remarked in passing that this was an absurd notion, as the poor who became inmates of a workhouse under the new system had the benefit of medical attention, and, in theory at least, a medically approved diet. Many also inhabited new, weathertight buildings. For 'less eligibility' one had to rely on the loss of liberty and the fact that it was a prison-like regime in which to be shamefully incarcerated amongst fellow inmates many of whom might be highly disagreeable. It became one of the most successful features of the workhouse system that despite some advantages to them it was universally hated by the poor. The importance of these refuges of last resort was not just to be measured by the number of inmates. They served their purpose in relation to the whole population of the poor, not merely the very small number who were unfortunate enough to be housed under their roofs.[17]

On average, considered nationally, unions created for the new poor law consisted of about 20 parishes. Shropshire is not far below this figure, 274 parishes being combined into 16 unions or incorporations. In Shropshire there were about 17 parishes per union on average, whether the calculation is for the whole county or only the non-incorporation parts. (See Figure 1.)

In the Report advocating the setting up of the Poor Law Commission, Edwin Chadwick and his colleagues had advocated the use of multiple workhouses within unions, so that different categories of pauper could be managed with appropriately different regimes. The inquiry commissioners argued for at least four workhouses, one for the elderly, one for children, and one each for the able-bodied paupers of each sex. It appears not even to have crossed their minds that anyone might disagree, and their enlightened policy would have led to the early appearance of orphanages and geriatric hospitals. Unfortunately this proved to be impractical. A new policy of gathering all classes of pauper in one location was adopted by the poor law commissioners at an early date, influenced by the views of Sir Francis Head.[18] By the time that the work of the Commission had reached Shropshire, the new policy was firmly in place, and William Day, a political ally of Chadwick, had to conform, although it was something with which he was not entirely in sympathy. Sir Francis, challenged on the subject of the Commission's *volte face* on this crucial issue, compared with the clear advice of the Inquiry Commission, revealingly conceded that boards of guardians might take pride in their single workhouses:

> 'The very sight of a well-built, efficient establishment would give confidence to the Board of Guardians; the sight and weekly assemblage of all the servants of their union would make them proud of their office; the appointment of a chaplain would give dignity to the arrangement, while the pauper would feel it was utterly impossible to contend against it.'[19]

Sir Francis himself advocated buildings of monastic simplicity, model plans of which he published in the commissioners' first annual report as an alternative to the commissioners' architect's model designs.[20]

It was considered by the Poor Law Commissioners that unions should be large because it was desirable for workhouses, whether for one class of pauper of for all, to be few and far between, not located too close to the majority of the poor who might resort to them. A writer on Shropshire indigence in 1817 had supposed that one workhouse for the whole of the county might be sufficient for able-bodied persons 'who claim support without deserving it'[21], but by the time of national poor law reform after 1834 a more realistic provision was decided upon, and two years later Shropshire was divided into the equivalent of sixteen unions. 'The limits of unions which we have found most convenient', the commissioners wrote, 'are those of a circle, taking a market town as

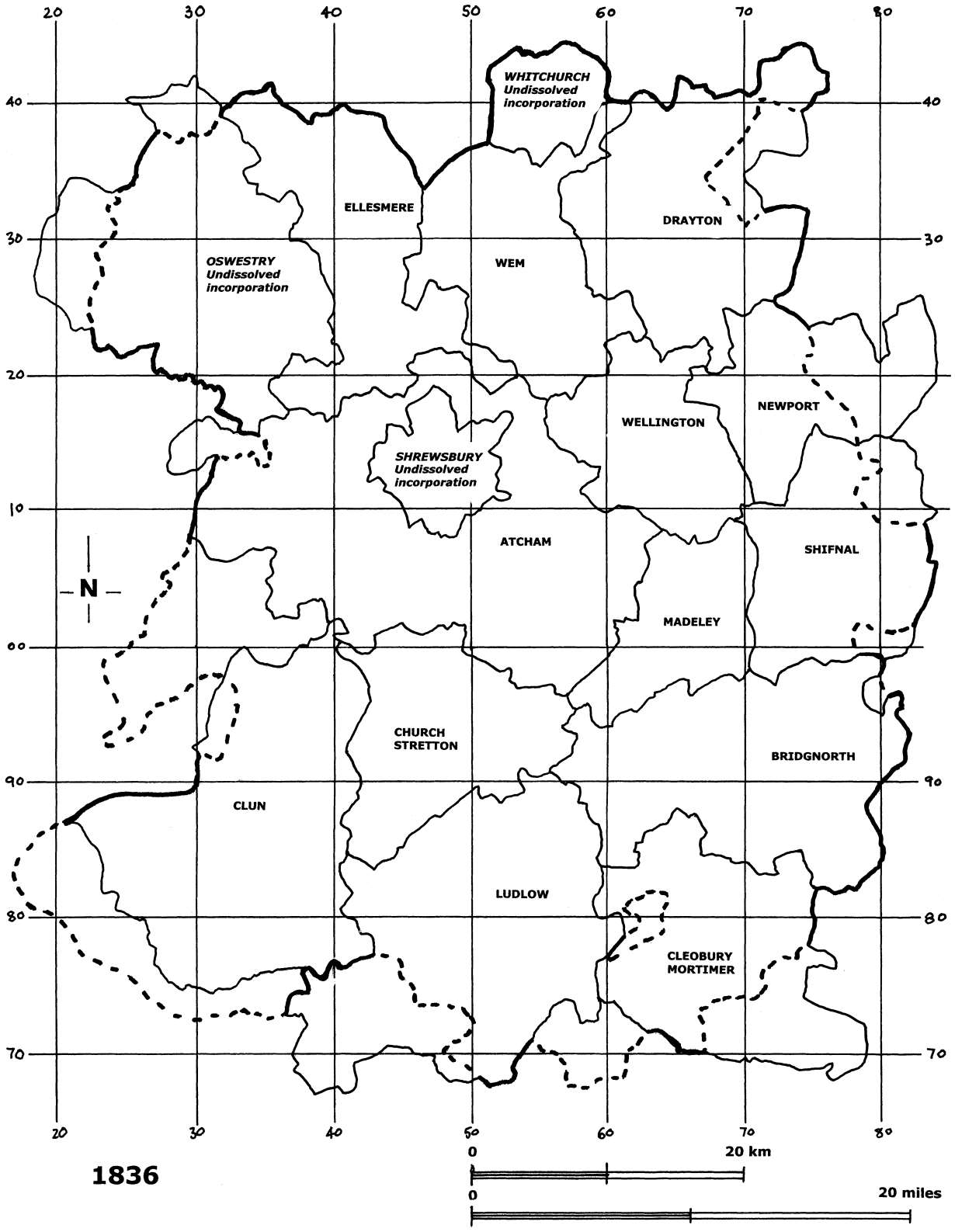

Figure 1 Shropshire 'Registration County' and its poor law unions or incorporations in 1836. For the purposes of the new poor law Shropshire was at first administered by 16 local authorities. These were (a) eleven unions created in 1836, plus two reformed incorporations, reconstituted and enlarged as unions in 1836, and (b) three surviving unreformed incorporations allowed to continue after 1836 as equivalent to unions.

a centre, and comprehending the surrounding parishes whose inhabitants are accustomed to resort to the same market'. In effect they adopted the rule already laid down in the late 18th-century Gilbert's Act, which had established territories of about 20 miles diameter as desirable for a union.[22] This was linked to the principle that no person should have to travel more that 10 miles if summoned to appear before a commissioner or assistant commissioner. In Shropshire the unions and incorporations were generally of this 20–mile size or a little smaller. The same was true of the adjacent English counties. In the adjacent Welsh counties they were rather larger.

William Day was appointed as an assistant commissioner in January 1836 and introduced the new poor law into Shropshire between May and November. There were five existing incorporations on the Shrewsbury model in the county and the declaration of eleven new unions completed the reorganisation. Two of the incorporations (Ellesmere and Atcham) were readily converted into unions, the latter with a considerable enlargement:

Table 1 Shropshire unions and incorporations in 1838[23]

Union or Incorporation	*Act or Declaration*	*Workhouses on 7 April 1838*
Shrewsbury	1784	Shrewsbury
Oswestry	1791	Morda
Whitchurch	1792	Whitchurch
Bridgnorth	31 May 1836	St Leonard; St Mary; Quatt
Shifnal	3 June 1836	Shifnal
Wellington	4 June 1836	Wellington; Ercall Magna
Madeley	6 June 1836	Madeley; Broseley
Cleobury Mortimer	15 July 1836	Cleobury Mortimer
Ludlow	15 July 1836	Ludlow; Leintwardine
Clun	18 July 1836	Clun; Bishop's Castle
Church Stretton	20 July 1836	Church Stretton[24]
Drayton	3 October 1836	Drayton
Newport	5 October 1836	Newport; Gnosall[25]
Ellesmere	14 November 1836	(Incorporated 1791) Ellesmere
Wem	16 November 1836	Prees[26]
Atcham	18 November 1836	(Incorporated 1792) Crosshouses

It had been the confident expectation of the Poor Law Commission in its initial years that little or no new building would be required.[27] This assumption was not borne out in Shropshire, where six unions built new workhouses in the first 20 years of their existence. Most of the others carried out substantial improvements to an existing workhouse. The more rural unions tended to be quicker at acquiring up to date premises: Ludlow and Church Stretton led the way in 1838, Wem in 1839, Clun in 1843. Bridgnorth had a new workhouse by 1850, Drayton by 1852 and Newport by 1855; these were unions on the fringe of the industrial area of the county. Madeley and Wellington, both unions of highly industrial character, were notably slow, not acquiring their new workhouses until the 1870s.

The Poor Law Commissioners in London played very little part in local workhouse development. The commissioners recognised that they could not have local knowledge. In accordance with the Act, they appointed assistant commissioners to supervise boards of guardians and exercise almost all their powers locally[28], confining themselves to ruling on matters of principle and law, issuing 'Rules, Orders, and Regulations', and reserving to themselves only the final ratification of local decisions. Their ratification was signalled by the affixing of their seal to documents.[29] They employed an official architect, Sampson Kempthorne, whose model designs for workhouses were made universally accessible by publication in their first annual report[30], but it was up to each board of guardians to decide to build or not and to use or not to use the model designs as they saw fit. Similarly it was up to each board of guardians to make its own enquiries if it required to obtain land, plans and the services of an architect or builder. Every decision had to be submitted to the commissioners for the affixing of their seal before it might be acted upon, and if the proposals met with the approval of the assistant commissioner this was little more than a formality.[31]

Numbers of Workhouse Inmates in Shropshire

No clear policy appears to have guided the parish officials of the old poor law regarding their use of workhouses. The inmates of these small local workhouses or poorhouses were often persons feeble in intellect or body, including orphan children, but usually including some persons whose destitution was not a matter of mental or physical incapacity. Following the reforms of 1834 decisions about the numbers of inmates to be accommodated appears to have been left to the local judgement of the newly elected boards of guardians.

It was noted in 1839 that the national average number of inmates in the one or more workhouses of a union was proving to be about 200. Shropshire unions in 1841 were all housing below this number; the largest was Oswestry with 149 and the smallest Shifnal with only 42 pauper inmates.

Table 2 Paupers in the workhouses of Shropshire unions or incorporations, 1841

Oswestry 149	Wellington 87	Church Stretton 57
Ludlow 138	Shrewsbury 86	Madeley 56
Ellesmere 131	Wem 83	C'bury Mortimer 48
Atcham 115	Whitchurch 76	Shifnal 42
Bridgnorth 106	Clun 73	
Drayton 88	Newport 65	

The size of individual workhouse communities in the County varied considerably. The largest were generally in the giant workhouses of the former incorporations: 115 pauper inmates at Atcham and 131 at Ellesmere. The largest of all in Shropshire was the vast Oswestry incorporation workhouse at Morda, with all the 149 inmates of the incorporation. At Shrewsbury there were only 86, not including the lunatic asylum located in a wing of the house, and at Whitchurch only 76. Former parish poorhouses adopted as union workhouses housed the smallest numbers, down to only 29 in Newport or St. Mary's, Bridgnorth. The inmate population in 21 Shropshire workhouses in 1841 (see Figure 2 below) was around 1405, about 0.5% of the county population.

In these 1841 Census figures the pauper inmates of Shropshire workhouses fell into three main categories: children under 15 years of age, adults (mostly female), and the elderly, whom we may arbitrarily define as over 60, mostly male.[32] The boys and girls under 15 were of almost equal numbers. The number below the age of 5 was unexpectedly low compared with those above 5. Perhaps there was a considerable influx of orphans beyond

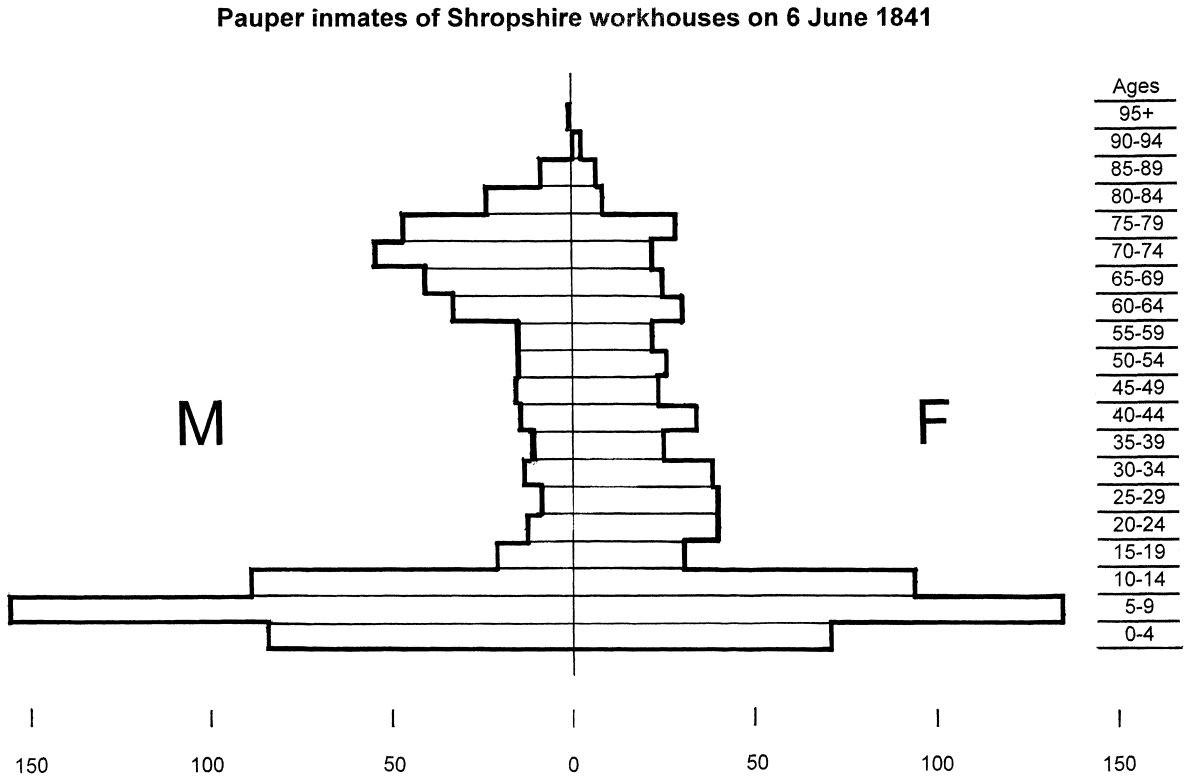

Figure 2 Shropshire paupers in the workhouses of the county as recorded in the 1841 Census, recorded as workhouse inmates but excluding staff as far as possible, broken down into five-year age bands and distinguishing males and females.[33] (See Table 3 overleaf.)

Table 3. Approximate figures for Figure 2.

Age group	0–4	5–9	10–4	15–9	20–4	25–9	30–4	35–9	40–4	45–9	50–4	55–9	60–4	65–9	70–4	75–9	80–4	85–9	90–4	95+
Atcham (former house of industry at Crosshouses)																				
66 Males	6	15	14	1	1	1	2	2		4		1	1	2	7	6	2	1		
49 Females	3	15	11	1		3	3	1	3		1	1		2	1	2		2		
Bridgnorth (industrial school at Quatt)																				
23 Males	1	19	1											1	1					
23 Females	1	9	10	1			1			1										
Bridgnorth (St. Leonard's)																				
12 Males		1		1			1	1	1		3	1	1		1	1				
19 Females	3	1		4	2	5	2			1		1								
Bridgnorth (St. Mary Magdalene's)																				
17 Males								2		2		1		3	2	4	2			1
12 Females	1					1		1	1	2				1		3	1	1		
Church Stretton (Shrewsbury Road)																				
24 Males	6	6	5		1					2			1	1		2				
33 Females	6	7	5		4	1	1	2	1	1						1	3	1		
Cleobury Mortimer																				
23 Males	2	7	2		1	1			1					3	4	1	1			
25 Females	4	4	3	1	4		3	1	1		1			2	1					
Clun (former poorhouse)																				
11 Males	2		3	1			2			1	1	1								
24 Females	6	1		2	4	3	1	1			2	1		3						
Clun (Bishop's Castle)																				
20 Males	1	12	7																	
18 Females	3	7	5		1		2													
Drayton (Shropshire Street)																				
52 Males	9	15	6	1			3				2	3	1	2	5	2	2	1		
36 Females	2	8	3	3	2	2	3	1	3	1	1	2		1		3	1			
Ellesmere (former house of industry)																				
76 Males	8	14	18	6				2	2		3		8	4	5	1	4	1		
55 Females	6	13	14	1	3				2	2	4		6	2	2					
Ludlow (Gravel Hill)																				
66 Males	11	20	11	1	3		2	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	3	2	3			
72 Females	15	13	10	3	3	2	7	1	2	2	1	2	2	4	1	3	1			

Madeley (Belmont Road)																				
23 Males	2	5	2	2	2	1		1		1				2	1	2	2			
33 Females	3	4	6		1	3	3	2	2	1	1		2	1	1	2		1		
Newport (Workhouse Lane [Vineyard Road])																				
13 Males	4			3	1				2	1			1	1						
16 Females	1		1	6	2	2			2	1		1								
Newport (Gnosall, Staffordshire)																				
16 Males		3	3	1				1						3	2	2	1			
24 Females	2	7	4	1					2	1	1		1		2	1		1	1	
Oswestry (House of Industry, Morda)																				
66 Males	10	15	3	1	2		1	1	3		2	3	7	3	4	10	1			
83 Females	3	17	9		4	5	5	3	5	2	3	6	8	1	4	7			1	
Shifnal (Park Street)																				
21 Males	3	4					1		1				4	1	3	3	1			
21 Females	1	6	2		3	2	1	1	1	1			1	2						
Shrewsbury (House of Industry, Kingsland)																				
37 Males	3	2	2	1		3	1	1	2	1	2	1	4	3	5	3	2	1		
49 Females	1	3	1	4	2	4		6	2	3	5	3	4	1	5	2	1	1	1	
Wellington (Children's Workhouse at Ercall Magna)																				
20 Males	6	8	5															1		
20 Females	4	8	5	1		1			1											
Wellington (Walker Street)																				
18 Males	1		1							1	1	3	2	3	5	1				
29 Females			1	2	1	2		4	2	2	1	2	4	3	2	2	1			
Wem (Love Lane, Whitchurch Road)																				
48 Males	6	17	4		2		1		1	1				2	4	6	2	2		
35 Females	2	5	1		3	4	4	2	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	2				
Whitchurch (House of Industry)																				
35 Males	3	8	2	3		3			1		1	1	1	6	3	1	1	1		
41 Females	5	8	4	2	2	1	3		3	2	3	1	2	1	2	1	1			

County Totals

Age group	0–4	5–9	10–4	15–9	20–4	25–9	30–4	35–9	40–4	45–9	50–4	55–9	60–4	65–9	70–4	75–9	80–4	85–9	90–4	95+
687 Males	84	171	89	22	13	9	14	12	15	17	16	16	33	41	55	47	24	8		1
718 Females	72	136	95	32	41	41	39	26	34	24	27	23	31	26	23	29	9	7	3	
1405 Persons	156	307	184	54	54	50	53	38	49	41	43	39	64	67	78	76	33	15	3	1

infancy, or a sudden drop in bastardy. The predominance of females in the 15–60 age group, likely to contain all the 'able-bodied', suggests many were present as unmarried or abandoned mothers. The predominance of males amongst the over 60s is less easy to explain. As in the aggregate figures, the same patterns are detectable in the breakdown of figures from most workhouses or groups of workhouses in individual unions. The only notable exception was the house of the Shrewsbury United Parishes at Kingsland, which did not contain many children.

In 21 Shropshire workhouses, including both the main houses of unions and the surviving peripheral houses (usually houses retained for the separate accommodation of juveniles), there appears to have been a total of approximately 1405 pauper inmates (excluding staff as far as possible from the figures) on Census Day 1841. Females made up 51% of the total and children below the age of 15 made up 46%.

These figures for a single day need to be compared with figures for a workhouse over a period of time. In Cleobury Mortimer workhouse a graph of the numbers from 1837 to 1848 (Figure 3) shows numbers gradually rising from about 40 in 1837 to about 80 in 1843, and exceeding 90 in 1844, 1845 and 1848. It also shows the variability in a typical year, with the heaviest workhouse occupancy experienced in the first half of the year[34]:

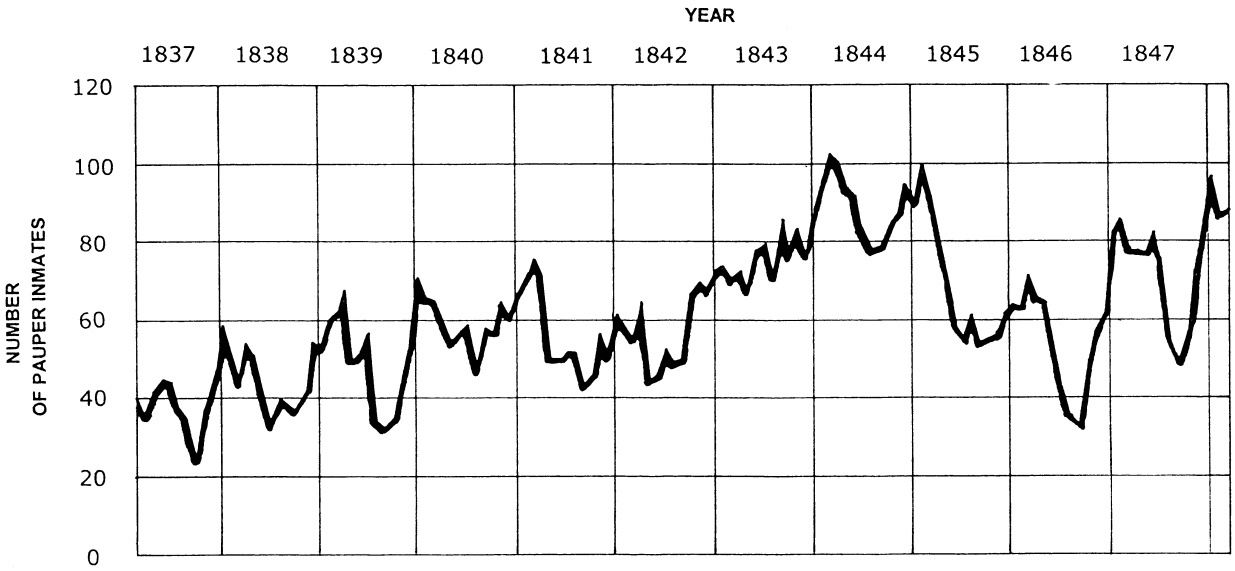

Figure 3 Numbers of inmates in a Shropshire workhouse: Cleobury Mortimer from 1837 to 1848.

An unforeseen addition to the problem of accommodation and the need to provide buildings was vagrancy. Because it was a principle that workhouses should be within walking distance from all points in a union, vagrants discovered that workhouses under the new poor law were being provided a comfortable tramping distance apart. In 1841 the Poor Law Commissioners wrote to unions about the problem of tramps discovering how easily they could alternate a day on the road and a night in a workhouse, unfairly adding to local expense.[35] The visiting committee of the Drayton guardians complained of this new problem and suggested a remedy as early as 1837:

> 'As many casual vagrants are now admitted by order of the overseers for a night's lodging, your committee feel that this inconvenient practice will soon find its own cure by a room being applied for that class of paupers furnished only with straw and that no meals be allowed to such paupers until they have each picked ½ lb. of oakum and that they be discharged immediately after breakfast, such paupers to be searched on admission and discharge'.[36]

Tramps became a great problem nationally in the 1860s and later, and many Shropshire workhouses had tramps' cells, probably mostly constructed toward the end of the 19th century.[36]

Some attempt at comparison in order to assess value for money in the design of workhouses is possible, notwithstanding the uncertain data. Three of the workhouses built for incorporations in the 1790s and two of those built after 1836 can be compared. (See Table 4.)

The Oswestry house at Morda was the biggest workhouse in Shropshire, but other old poor law workhouses at Shrewsbury and Ellesmere approached it in size. Oswestry cost about 3*s*. 5*d*. per square foot; the smaller house at Atcham the same. Ellesmere was slightly 'better value' at 3*s*. 3*d*. Ludlow and Clun are the only two cases amongst the workhouses of the new poor law entirely built in the period 1836 to 1848 for which we have reasonably approximate figures for area and cost. Ludlow was built for 3*s*. 10*d*. per square foot and Clun for 4*s*. 7*d*.

Table 4 Approximate workhouse building costs compared

Workhouse	*Completed*	*Approx. net cost*	*Approx. area in ft²*
Oswestry	1794	£6600	35750
Atcham	1794	£2700	14700
Ellesmere	1795	£5075	32500
Ludlow	1839	£6100	31500
Clun (Bp's Castle)	1844	£2650	11500

The dates are the dates of opening. The net building cost is the payment to the builder, excluding as far as possible all non-constructional costs such as purchase of the site, fees, furnishing etc. The area is the approximate total usable area of the floors, including basements but excluding attics and outbuildings.

By the 1830s and 1840s building costs were about a third higher than in *c*.1795, with craftsman's wages at approximately 3*s*. a day in 1795 and 4*s*. in 1840.[38] In view of this, if builders in the 1830s and 1840s were performing as economically as their predecessors of the 1790s one might expect their prices per square foot to have risen proportionately, and from this slight evidence they seem to have done so, or even slightly improved on economy, especially given that the workhouses of the 1830s and 1840s were better adapted and more complicated buildings, to which large exercise yards were attached.

Chairmen of Unions

The chairmen who led boards of guardians under the new poor law in Shropshire were very important in deciding what, if anything, should be built. They were democratically elected by their fellow guardians, but they were also persons who displayed qualities of leadership, and the assistant commissioner, William Day, took great care over their appointment. A chairman was expected to provide direction, at a time when, even as late as the 1830s, architects were still persons of very limited status, hardly distinguishable from tradesmen. Many chairmen were *ex-officio* guardians of the magistrate class, identified by Day and encouraged by him to offer their services. Reviewing the role of magistrates nationally in 1861, John Stuart Mill wrote:

> 'In the most recently established of our local representative institutions, the Boards of Guardians, the justices of peace of the districts sit ex officio along with the elected members, in number limited by law to a third of the whole.…I have no doubt of the beneficial effect of this provision. It secures the presence, in these bodies, of a more educated class than it would perhaps be practical to attract thither on any other terms;…having a different interest from the rest [they] are a check upon the class interests of the farmers or petty shopkeepers who form the bulk of the elected guardians'.[39]

On the boards of guardians of the new unions there was usually someone of the gentry class who could assume the chairmanship. Many members of the rural gentry had felt that the involvement of their class as magistrates tended to protect the poor from petty parish officials, and, although the new law theoretically reduced the involvement of the magistrate class, there was some feeling that the old paternalistic supervision could continue.

William Day was himself a legally trained Sussex magistrate and an unsuccessful applicant to be one of the three Poor Law Commissioners. Nobody could have been more immersed in the ethos of the new poor law. When administering it in Shropshire (and later in Wales) he lived in Shrewsbury.[40] From his writings it is evident that he expected leadership from the gentry level of county society. Both Sussex and Shropshire, and particularly the latter, were noted in the 19th century for the high proportion of gentry landownership.[41]

When planning the new Shropshire unions in 1836 Day was also particularly keen to involve the local nobility. He persuaded the Duke of Sutherland to become figurehead chairman of Shifnal union. His residence, Lilleshall Hall, was in the parish of Sheriffhales, within the union.[42] Day also tried to get the Earl of Bradford to be a vice-chairman of Shifnal union, but was unsuccessful in this.[43] In Shifnal three other magistrate members of the board took the lead; Thomas Whitmore of Apley Park became the acting chairman, proposed and seconded by his magistrate colleagues, Major Moultrie and the Rev. C. R. Cameron. Moultrie was also elected vice-chairman. This illustrates a striking continuity of direction in the local working of the poor law, as Moultrie and Cameron were the magistrates who had earlier authorised the parish of Shifnal to govern itself under a select vestry, as allowed in the Act of 1819. An opposite case was that of Clun, which lacked strong leadership, and where, according to Day, the new board of guardians contained only 'farmers and

Figure 4 Sir Baldwin Leighton (7th Bart.), first chairman of Atcham poor law union. Leighton was described as 'the great man about Poor Laws in this neighbourhood', and favoured the eventual expansion of Atcham union to absorb Shrewsbury. (From the frontispiece of his collected *Letters and Speeches*, ed. Frances C. Childe, 1875.)

shopkeepers of a very inferior grade'. The Clun guardians at first followed a timid policy of cost-cutting and inertia.

The most notable of the magistrates in Shropshire was Sir Baldwin Leighton of Loton Park, Alberbury, the first chairman of the Atcham union.[44] Atcham had been an 18th-century incorporation which consented to dissolution. Leighton was a leading figure in establishing a rigid policy of deterrence toward the undeserving poor of the union. Day was highly impressed with him, although he had misgivings about his severity. Leighton's board was quick to end any outdoor relief or payment of rent to poor people, and to refuse non-resident relief to any poor person living outside the territorial limits of the union. This disqualified many people who had migrated the short distance from their homes within the union to the mines and ironworks of East Shropshire. He made a career out of reform, and was a leading figure also in setting up an improved lunatic asylum for the counties of Shropshire and Montgomeryshire at Bicton Heath, which was the kernel of the later Shelton mental hospital.

Day regarded William Lacon Childe as his best union chairman, describing him as 'Mr Childe, my most excellent chairman of the Cleobury Mortimer union'.[45] Childe, formerly an M.P. for Much Wenlock and an Ultra Tory, was the great-grandson of another William Lacon Childe who, as squire in *c*.1740, is likely to have had a leading hand in building the Cleobury Mortimer workhouse. He approved of the new poor law in principle, although he had doubts about its relevance to pauperism in Shropshire. In his time as chairman he dominated his board, the other guardians finding it difficult to take decisions in his absence. He encouraged almost all the labouring population of his own parish, Kinlet, to join a medical club, to take them away from dependence on the medical relief of the union. Under his leadership the early management of the union appears to have borne a character of enlightened patronage.[46]

The chairman of the first poor law union to be declared in Shropshire, Bridgnorth, was William Whitmore, the squire of Dudmaston. He was a Whig of independent mind and a prominent reformer, untypical of the landed gentry. He had been a Member of Parliament for Bridgnorth in the period before 1832 but, having fallen out with his Bridgnorth electors, had sat in the reformed parliament from 1832 to 1835 as a member for Wolverhampton. He was ideally suited to lead the Bridgnorth guardians, and he was available because he had retired from national politics in 1835 to remain in Shropshire due to the poor health of his wife.[47] Despite the political difference, Whitmore's position initially as dominant squire leading the board was not unlike that of Childe in the neighbouring union of Cleobury Mortimer. Day was initially very favourably impressed with him, although he came to regard him as a weak leader of his fellow guardians.

Figure 5 William Wolryche Whitmore. Whitmore was chairman of Bridgnorth poor law union from 1835 until he was driven out, following an acrimonious dispute with his clerk, Sparkes, in 1838. He was the creator of the South East Shropshire Industrial School at Quatt, an important innovation in the care of workhouse children. (National Trust/John Hammond, from his portrait at Dudmaston.)

Co-operation between Whitmore and the Bridgnorth union clerk, Sparkes, was notably lacking. The rift occurred in 1838 from the fact that Whitmore was a Whig and Sparkes was then the agent acting for the local Tory parliamentary candidate, Whitmore's cousin, Thomas Whitmore of Apley Park.[48]

In 1838 Whitmore was honoured by being appointed to the office of Sheriff of the County of Shropshire, but he realised that the appointment would have a significant unfortunate consequence. It would bar him from being able to act as a magistrate during his year of office, and from this would have followed the loss of his *ex-officio* place on the board of guardians. To prevent any such difficulty Day intervened and ordered the elected guardian for Quatt to resign, to create an opening for Whitmore to return to the board as an elected guardian and so continue as chairman. This involved a legal subterfuge, as Day's action was outside the powers of the Poor Law Commission. He was confident that the Bridgnorth guardians did not have a sufficient knowledge of the law, and would proceed with the election if they believed one had been correctly ordered. Sparkes and his party appear to have caught wind of this and frustrated the plan.[49] Sparkes had been talking critically in Bridgnorth and Worcester about the Bridgnorth board, and his activity as a political agent was in conflict with the strict political neutrality required of him as clerk to the guardians; those, at least, appear to be Whitmore's complaints about him. Whitmore took the odd step of inviting his half-brother, W. Whitmore Jones, to speak to Sparkes about the latter's behaviour. Sparkes took offence and wrote a letter to Whitmore complaining of baseless imputations, which generated an extraordinary correspondence between the two in which Whitmore tried to make his points without particularising any details. Sparkes called a special meeting of the guardians to clear his name and made the dispute public by printing the correspondence and circulating it to all the guardians.[50]

Day found himself too embroiled because of his support for Whitmore to be able to act as an impartial arbiter. The board was split evenly over the issue, and, although by his own casting vote Whitmore won a motion to the effect that 'a chairman is justified in admonishing any of his paid officers', it was clear that he had lost all authority over the board and Day advised him to resign. Sparkes remained in office under a new chairman, Thomas Pardoe Purton of Faintree Hall.[51] The missing records of the union prior to 1859 may have been kept in Sparkes' professional office away from the guardians' boardroom and never returned to the union.

It is safe to conclude that in the period of this dispute the Bridgnorth board of guardians was paralysed and could not emulate other unions in planning better premises for the workhouse inmates.

Thomas Twemlow, chairman of Drayton, was the squire of Peatswood, which he had acquired in 1809, in the Staffordshire parish of Tyrley, and was thought of as an active magistrate. He was a long-serving chairman, leading the Drayton board of guardians from the commencement of the union in 1836 to his retirement, blind and bent double with arthritis, in 1868. His union was an early employer of the young architect-builder Samuel Pountney Smith. In their complimentary address on his retirement his fellow guardians praised his urbanity and impartiality and his care for the interest of the ratepayers, 'as far as was consistent with the claims of the poor and destitute'.[52] He was Sheriff of Staffordshire in 1830 and Deputy Lieutenant of Shropshire in 1846.

A particularly outstanding, but reluctant, chairman was Robert Aglionby Slaney, who became the first chairman of Ellesmere poor law union. Ellesmere, like Atcham, was a reformed 18th-century incorporation. Slaney was a barrister and had been one of the Members of Parliament for Shrewsbury from 1826 until his defeat in 1835. Day was keen for Slaney to be the chairman of Ellesmere, as, like himself, he had been very active in campaigning for a reform of the poor law. Slaney had chaired a House of Commons committee considering poor law abuses and had submitted a valuable report printed in 1828. He had attempted several times to bring in a Poor Law Abuses Bill, with the support of such influential members as Brougham and Althorp. Slaney was everything Day would wish for in a poor law union leader; a duty-driven committed social improver, firmly in the Whig/Liberal/Malthusian/Utilitarian tradition. Relations between the assistant commissioner and the board of guardians led by Slaney were cordial.[53]

Slaney did not share Day's ambitions for him. He was a reformer, not an administrator. As a recently unseated Member of Parliament, Slaney at first retreated into thinking and writing about social questions affecting the lower orders, and spent much time, as always, on his main interests, hunting and shooting. His journal, which is of a very reflective nature, records his thoughts and attitudes. He tried to be very active locally as an improver of the conditions of the labouring classes, encouraging savings clubs and schools. As early as 1818 he had received a silver medal for an essay on 'the best means of employing the unoccupied poor' which he published with the help of the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor. He had many social improvement concerns, and the running of workhouses was only one of them. Probably soon after the loss of his Shrewsbury seat he decided to become involved with the Ellesmere house of industry. In March and October 1836 his journal records his work as a director. He was the leading politically active magistrate involved when Day brought about the dissolution of the Ellesmere incorporation and set up the union, and it was natural for him to be appointed to lead the new board of guardians. As a director of the incorporation it was Slaney's view of the change to a poor law union that it would introduce the important principle of classification, whereby the different categories of inmate were housed apart. His significant comment as a guardian in December was 'As chairman of the Ellesmere union I have attended this irksome but important duty almost every week when at home.' Chairing a board endlessly considering shilling doles to be awarded to poor widows did not appeal to him.[54]

In January 1837 Slaney was already hatching a much more important measure of social utility than leading a board of guardians. He received a positive response from the Statistical Society to his offer to get up an accurate account of the state of education in Birmingham and its suburbs.[55] He also reconsidered standing for Parliament and widened his campaigns for improvement in urban living and recreational conditions. His activities as chairman of the Ellesmere guardians only figure peripherally in his journals. In April 1837 he recorded his current objectives, including establishing provident and medical clubs for the poor of Dawley and Baschurch and the promotion of local education. His aims included '[getting] into useful operation the Ellesmere union, which will affect and we hope improve the permanent habits and welfare of the humbler classes in ten parishes.' In June he was in London tackling the Poor Law Commissioners on his scheme for education in workhouse schools. Slaney was re-elected to the House of Commons as a member for Shrewsbury in July 1837. References to the board of guardians of Ellesmere then cease in his journals. He had become inactive as chairman by 1838.[56]

Choosing a chairman from the gentry and magistracy was not always guaranteed to bring satisfactory results. When the electors of Church Stretton poor law union chose their first board of guardians in early 1836, Day had misgivings about the new board which he felt would prove ineffective for want of leadership. The chairman was William Pinches. Day in a letter to the commissioners expressed fears that the benefits of reform would not be fully felt in Church Stretton union.[57] The chairman of Clun poor law union, Philip Morris, also earned no praise from Day. His union was deemed a 'detestable and irredeemable failure', due to the board's 'sheer stupidity.'[58]

Ludlow was a case in which a non-chairman troublemaker, the Ludlow M. P., Lechmere Charlton, 'a red hot Tory, a **** and a clever fellow' as Day described him, proved dominant. It was a union led by a weak chairman, Charles Walker. Ludlow shared with Clun the discredit of being one of the two unions which Day regarded as the worst in the county, but whereas the Clun guardians accepted the guidance of the assistant commissioner, however reluctantly, Ludlow was far more difficult to deal with and appears to have succeeded in keeping him at some distance.[59]

The difficulties at Wem are documented in Day's papers, and even allowing for the bias of his own political and personal hostility to Sir Robert Chambre Hill of Prees Hall and his colleagues, the facts are evident. Day and the chairman had been well known to each other since their student days together at Brazenose College, and Hill had even then earned Day's contempt. Day was highly suspicious of irregularity in the election of the guardians and their clerk.[60] In 1840 Day wrote

> 'I have had more trouble with this board, or rather the chairman of it, than any other in Shropshire. Sir Robert Hill (the brother of the Commander-in-Chief[61]) proposes himself favourable to the [New Poor] Law and takes credit that being a High Tory he has consented to administer it, but then he must administer it in his own way, and then just to the extent that suits his ideas of Poor Law…it is sufficient to say that I have had several pretty sharp altercations with him…'.[62]

The Wem guardians petitioned to secure Day's dismissal, but he was able to respond by pointing to several irregularities he had detected, particularly on the part of the proposer of the petition, the Rev. John Justice, the guardian for Ightfield: 'No doubt the supervision of an assistant commissioner is not agreeable in the parish of Ightfield.'[63]

The Architects and Builders of Improved Workhouses

The two great periods of workhouse building in Shropshire were the 1790s and the 1830s. Between these dates there was a considerable numerical increase in the architectural profession locally, with recruitment from the building trade.[64]

Limited professional assistance was available to the directors of incorporations when commissioning houses of industry in the 1780s and 90s. The directors of the Shrewsbury house of industry bought it from Captain Coram's Charity, so they were involved only in alterations and adding outbuildings. Nonetheless, Isaac Wood, a prominent director of the Shrewsbury incorporation, showed scant confidence in the professionalism available to incorporations needing to build. His advice marks Shropshire as a provincial backwater. He advised 'all who propose erecting houses of industry':

> 'not only to procure a plan and estimate for the building, but to contract upon that estimate, taking proper care to state every item, together with the quantity of the materials, the scantlings of the timber etc. in the body of the contract; and to appoint a surveyor who has the requisite skill and integrity.'[65]

The directors of the other Shropshire incorporations, requiring workhouses on the Shrewsbury model, needed to build anew. John Hiram Haycock was appointed by the directors of Atcham and Oswestry. Haycock was the son of a Shrewsbury builder and had risen in status to offer his services as both architect and builder. At Atcham he acted as an architect-builder, designing the layout as well as performing the building contract, employing labour to carry out every detail of the construction. Haycock's appointment seems to have been the result of a well conducted competition. His full designs were available to the court of directors with surprising promptness, except that they are not so much an original, well considered design, but simply a version of the Shrewsbury house of industry slightly scaled down. As Haycock was appointed builder no separate fee for the design was paid, and another architect, Joseph Bromfield, was appointed to survey the building work for payment. Haycock would have been paid a professional fee for the design if that had been the limit of his involvement. Bromfield had similarly risen in status. He was originally a plasterer, but had, like Haycock, become an architect and surveyor.[66] For Oswestry incorporation Haycock's role was more detached. He was paid a fee of 5% of the value of the contract to produce the drawings and to act as surveyor. The masonry contractor, George Smith, of Ashford in Derbyshire, can be regarded as the builder. Smith's son and another person were to direct the building work on site. Smith in turn engaged trade contractors who seem to have had some responsibilities for designing their trade work in detail.

At Whitchurch William Turner, a member of a local family of architect-builders with a relative on the court of directors, was appointed as surveyor and planned the buildings and their layout. His professional role was very substantial, including negotiations on behalf of the directors to acquire land. A competition for plans followed Turner's issue of a specification, with prizes of five, four and three guineas, but the specification of the work was so detailed that he had clearly already designed the house of industry fully and he was himself the winning participant in this competition.

At Ellesmere E. Edgcombe (probably related to George Edgecombe, joiner and architect) was appointed, apparently without superior supervision. Edgecombe was a brickwork contractor who directly employed

journeyman bricklayers and advertised for other trades, including masons. These examples show an emerging architectural profession in Shropshire in the 1790s still very closely connected with its trade origins. They also demonstrate the lack of clear distinction between the several functions of architect designing and supervising, surveyor measuring and certifying work for payment, and contractor carrying out the work.

By the time when numerous workhouses were required under the new poor law in the 1830s and later, there was a marked increase in the number of persons offering their services as architect. The new professionalism came at an interesting stage in the history of architecture. The 1830s are a period in which the upheaval of the architectural profession has been blamed for poor standards: 'at no moment…was English architecture so feeble, so deficient in genius, so poor in promise'. In making this point Sir John Summerson noted many factors, including the proliferation of uneducated newcomers to the profession.[67] Many of the architects coming into existence in this period had family building trade origins and so had enjoyed an eminently practical training, although they may have lacked the broad education, the want of which is lamented by Summerson.

Work for boards of guardians and similar statutory and municipal authorities was a factor in the growth of the architectural profession in the early 19th century when so much, not only the poor law, was in a state of active reform. The Poor Law Commissioners, as the central authority responsible for reform in the management of the poor, tended to create a heightened differentiation between the functions of architect and builder. They required plans and specifications for approval before giving their permission to boards of guardians to proceed with building new workhouses. They expected their approval to be followed by competitive tendering for construction work. At this time the ready availability of architects to clients of modest status was a novelty. Architects were in hot competition to provide guardians with impartial building advice, and they were beginning to lose their connection with building trade origins. It has been claimed that nationally 'by 1840 there was an established architectural profession, based on a regular system of pupillage and held together by the newly founded Institute of British Architects', though few members of the active profession in Shropshire were members. In the case of Ludlow workhouse in 1836 thirteen architects competed for the commission, and the same number participated in the competition for Drayton workhouse in 1851.

The evolution of the architectural profession is seen in the work of the Haycock family. J. H. Haycock, the architect of the house of industry for the Atcham incorporation in 1792, who became the county surveyor in 1824 and hence the leader of the profession in Shropshire, was a superior architect-builder working for official clients. He had been apprenticed to his father, a Shrewsbury builder, in 1774. J. H. Haycock's son, Edward Haycock, studied at the Royal Academy and followed his father as county surveyor in 1834, but also combined the business of building with the practice of architecture until about 1845. After this he dropped building and became purely an architect.[68]

The Shropshire workhouse evidence in the 1830s illustrates the presence of large numbers of architects experienced in such work and pressing to obtain commissions. H. J. Whitling had designed or built workhouses at Beaminster and Bridport in Dorset and at Rhayader in Radnorshire.[69] Perhaps in connection with the latter commission, and probably calculating that the wave of workhouse reform was reaching Shropshire, Wales and the north, he had set himself up in business at Shrewsbury. Having designed the new workhouse for Clun union at Bishop's Castle, he let his clients down by fleeing abroad to avoid his creditors. Whitling does not give the impression of having given his clients a first rate service, as he relied for example on the union clerk's penman to write out a fair copy of his building specification, the copy having numerous mistakes because of the legal penman's unfamiliarity with building terms. Whitling also pressed to obtain the commission for Ludlow workhouse, competing with the formidable George Wilkinson of Oxford. Wilkinson, the son of an Oxfordshire carpenter and builder, was an even more experienced workhouse architect, and later succeeded Sampson Kempthorne as the official architect to the Poor Law Commission at the time when the new system was being extended to cover Ireland. Wilkinson appeared earlier in Shropshire as an unsuccessful competitor for Ludlow workhouse. He designed no Shropshire workhouses, but designed one at Tenbury Wells just over the border in Worcestershire.[70]

In a number of cases, boards of guardians appointed architects who were so close to themselves as to give rise to suspicion of unfair competition. It is not easy to see what reasoning lay behind the choice of the almost untried local man Matthew Stead in Ludlow over his competitors, amongst whom were very experienced and well known people. Perhaps the guardians deserved the difficulties into which their workhouse contract fell. At Wem Graham was appointed apparently because he was the favoured architect-builder of the chairman's brother, Sir Rowland Hill. At Madeley the architect-builder Thomas Smith, who carried out numerous alterations without competition, was the son and business partner of one of the guardians, Samuel Smith, a brick and tile manufacturer. At Church Stretton, one of the guardians, Duppa, seems to have designed the new workhouse with the assistance of a local architect, Blakeway Smith, and the latter's position appears to have been proof against competition from Wilkinson. In other cases competitions appear to have been conducted fairly. The Bridgnorth guardians advertised for plans and specifications for their new workhouse in 1847,

promising the commission to the successful competitor at the 'usual fee' of 5%. In 1850 the Liverpool architect Thomas Denville Barry gained his commission for the workhouse at Drayton by competition, although it was a competition in which the workhouse governor apparently took part. Competitors were allowed a month to get their proposals together. Three designs were shortlisted, and then Barry's, which was not the cheapest, was selected. On the grounds that Barry's plan was capable of improvement, the governor, Crutchley (or another person of the same name) was sent to Liverpool to assist Barry to revise the drawings and was awarded part of the prize.

Samuel Pountney Smith was a leading Shropshire architect of the 19th century, launched professionally by work for the poor law. He was born in Munslow in Corvedale on 2 December 1812. His uncle on his mother's side was the architect-builder John Smalman (1783–1852), to whom he appears to have been articled. Smalman was a very successful architect-builder of Quatford near Bridgnorth.[71] In the period in which Pountney Smith is likely to have been his pupil or assistant Smalman was listed in directories as of Quatford Castle, to which building he was said by a contemporary to have made 'considerable architectural additions in 1830 with some reference to the national character of the place'. (The additions were comprehensive enough for Pevsner to imply rather that he built the castle entirely anew.[72]) Pountney Smith was the successful tenderer for Church Stretton workhouse when he was a young man of 26. This workhouse may have been his first substantial project as a builder working independently of his uncle. By June 1838, while he was still engaged as contractor for the Church Stretton workhouse, Pountney Smith was also commissioned as architect for the Drayton workhouse, so the new poor law appears also to have given him his earliest independent commission as architect. Pountney Smith was to become a well known figure in the history of Shropshire, but as an architect, not a builder. His later history indicates that the guardians were fortunate in finding a young man of considerable competence to be their contractor. His uncle enjoyed some social status, and had done important work at Dudmaston Hall. Pountney Smith was thus trained in his formative years in a building firm with architectural ambitions. John Smalman may have been moving towards retirement by 1835.[73]

Pountney Smith set himself up in professional independence as Smalman's career was coming to a close. He moved to Shrewsbury in about 1840 and worked in Coleham as an architect and builder. He started to do major architectural commissions after about 1840. He was architect for St. Mary, Harley, in 1843 when he was 31 – an early commission for a building in his chosen specialism, churches. The significant date in his career is 1850, when he decided to give up his building business and concentrate solely on his professional career as an architect.[74]

The employment of a builder was usually dependent on the provision of sureties. For the new Clun union workhouse at Bishop's Castle the guardians required a performance bond of £2000 from their builder, Joseph Menhennitt. Menhennitt found this money from relatives and others. One of the people standing surety for him was an illiterate widow, Elizabeth Meredith of Rhos, who signed the bond with her mark. Samuel Pountney Smith, when builder of Church Stretton workhouse, had to find sureties, and was supported by his father, Edward Smith, an innkeeper of Munslow, and John Ingram Owen, a draper, of Shrewsbury. John Collins, the builder of Ludlow workhouse, had a bond of £1000 from his father. Although Collins was dismissed from the contract, there is no sign of his father's bond having been forfeited so these bonds might not have been such a draconian feature of early contracting as they appear.

From as early as 1839 the Poor Law Commissioners insisted on proper advertisements seeking tenders[75], but it was hard to kill the habit of guardians employing a builder on a casual basis for minor work. The guardians of Cleobury Mortimer fell foul of this when they imagined that all that they needed to do was to advertise for builders locally by means of handbills, and in 1840 an anonymous complaint about them was made to the Poor Law Commissioners. The clerk was directed to write to the commissioners informing them that 'this board did not consider it necessary for the trifling alterations that are [in the] making, to advertise for estimates for their execution; more especially as the party employed to do them had on several previous occasions (after public competition) done various works for the board much to their satisfaction'.[76]

Accommodation in an Early 19th-century Shropshire Workhouse

It was a paradoxical principle of the new poor law that guardians should provide a shelter for the poor which, it was hoped, even expected, they would decline to accept. It was a common expectation that the new poor law would do away with much pauperism. It was also unclear to what extent it was practical to insist on unions forbidding the alternative to the workhouse, which was the granting of outdoor relief. The questions were related and some persons, notably the poor law commissioner George Nicholls, considered outdoor relief could be forbidden, and expected the consequence to be that if only 'the house' were offered, the poor would decline relief altogether. The Webbs examined these questions minutely, and concluded that, although a draconian

policy of prohibition was supposedly attempted when the poor law was introduced into Ireland, in England and Wales it was never effective, and out-relief to the sick and impotent was never abolished. A Prohibitory Order forbidding outdoor relief was issued in 1847 and applied to about half of the unions of the country for a time, but it was always loosely administered. The whole of Shropshire apart from Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Whitchurch was under this order theoretically prohibiting outdoor relief by the end of 1847. By the end of 1871 only Whitchurch was exempt and by the end of 1906 the whole county was under the order.[77]

The first precedents available to architects designing for boards of guardians in the 1830s were the existing large workhouses in the parts of the county under 18th-century incorporations. Substantial parish workhouses also existed in many places in the county, such as Newport or Claverley, but not on a scale to serve as a precedent to architects in the 1830s.

The leading example, which must have been familiar to all Shropshire architects, was the Shrewsbury incorporation house of industry, built at Kingsland to the south of the river Severn. It was designed in *c*.1758 as an orphanage. The Shrewsbury parishes were united as an incorporation in 1784 and took the building for an experiment in workhouse reform which was at first 'much vaunted'.[78] The workhouse later became the principal building of Shrewsbury School, and although much embellished at that time, it retains its original form as a three-storey range, two rooms deep, with short cross-wings at the ends. At the time of the new poor law, workhouses such as Shrewsbury and its imitators were no longer regarded as acceptable, the lack of segregation of the different classes of inmate being considered a glaring fault.

From its central position in the county and its connection with Sir Baldwin Leighton, Atcham workhouse was probably also familiar to most guardians and their architects in Shropshire. The Atcham workhouse was smaller

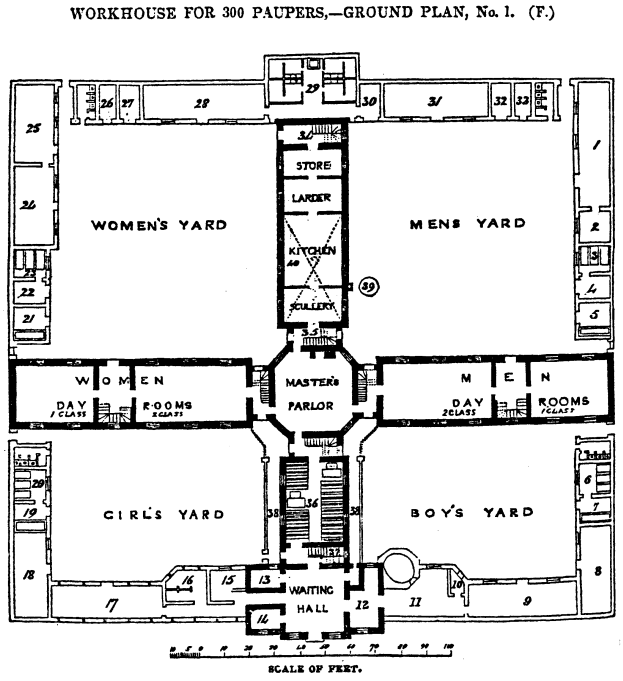

Figure 6 Ground floor plan of a model design for a workhouse for 300 inmates, published by the Poor Law Commission in 1835 (one of several options). This design by Kempthorne strongly influenced the design of several Shropshire workhouses. The cruciform main buildings, shown in darker line, are of three storeys; the perimeter buildings are single-storey. The paupers initially enter the waiting hall before proceeding to the receiving wards (3, 6, 20, and 23) prior to full admission. The governor and matron have their rooms in the central block with access into all wings and with windows overlooking each yard (the 'panopticon' principle). The guardians' boardroom is at the front above the waiting hall.

than the house at Shrewsbury, but it is similarly a long building with terminal cross wings. It lacked the slight architectural embellishment of the Shrewsbury house.

By the time of the reformed poor law in the 1830s, the great new principle dominating design was that of classifying pauper inmates, i.e. housing them separately for the purpose of appropriate management, and so that those who were considered the dregs of society should not contaminate those whose presence was more a matter of misfortune. Sampson Kempthorne's model workhouse plans were dominated by the need to create properly segregated exercise yards as well as segregated wards. These suggestions came too late to influence the design of new workhouses in the southern counties where the new law was first introduced[79], but they were in time to influence the architects and builders drawing up building plans for the unions of south and east Shropshire from 1836 onwards. (See Figure 6.)

Because the introduction of the new poor law in the Midlands was two years later than in the south of the country, Shropshire unions planning to build also had a considerable precedent to follow in the form of other unions' workhouses. In the southern counties many unions had completed their new workhouses by 1836. The guardians of Ludlow union, in particular, took good advantage of the experience of other unions, and their report and observations[80] of an extensive research visit to the south west of England were made available to the boards of guardians of other unions in Shropshire and Wales.

After 1840 the Kempthorne plan tended to be superseded nationally by plans on a corridor principle. Morrison discusses this, the reduction in pressure of workhouse construction generally and the new enthusiasm for building in historically inspired styles.[81] Architects at a slightly later date in Shropshire included Cobb at Newport, and the unnamed architect of Bridgnorth workhouse (probably Robert Griffiths), who produced original designs, reverting to the idea of a building ranging more prominently along its street frontage, but retaining the multiple yards of the plans of the Kempthorne era.

Ludlow Workhouse

The plans for Ludlow workhouse (for 250–300 inmates) are exceptionally detailed and may be examined as an indication of what a Shropshire board of guardians in the late 1830s would think proper to provide. It may be regarded as an example of very good practice, but lack of comparative information prevents it from being cited as typical. The plans drawn up by Matthew Stead and accepted by the guardians and the Poor Law Commissioners were for a highly integrated workhouse serving multiple hospital functions. One of the guardians was Dr. Stocker, a leading medical practitioner in Ludlow, who is likely to have had some input. (See Figure 7.)

As designed, at the front of the building there was an administrative and admissions block; on the upper floors of this and behind it the workhouse was set out in a prioritised manner following Kempthorne's precedent: children's accommodation at the front, infirm adults next, then the able-bodied adults, and finally the hospital cases at the rear. The whole arrangement was symmetrical, with only slight exceptions: the females were placed to the left (with better sunlight in their yards) and the males to the right. As the result of a curious decision no provision was made in the original plans for vagrants.

Persons seeking admission or out-relief would come to the administrative block and enter the waiting room. Here they could be paid out-relief or admitted to the house. They would be divided at once into males and females and admitted to the probationary wards at the front, where they could be bathed. Their own clothes would be changed for those of the workhouse, and left in the wardrobe for re-issue when they were discharged. They would then proceed by a segregated path to the centre of the workhouse, for admission to the appropriate department. Infirmary cases appear to have taken the same route on admission, although this appears somewhat inefficient, as some cases would be emergencies. There is no indication of any direct access from the street to the infirmary. A well documented case in Shifnal illustrates such an emergency, when a carter, crushed under his vehicle, was admitted to that workhouse for an amputation. Dead bodies from the infirmary could be removed without passing through the house.

The older Ludlow children (over the age of seven) occupied the front yards and two upper storeys. Boys and girls each had a yard with two latrines. Their day departments were at first floor level, reached by a staircase from the yard and were used for work, schooling and dining. Their food would be brought up by an internal staircase from the kitchens below. At second floor level each sex had a dormitory, a small washing space and a further latrine. The matron had a room with easy access to the dormitories. These older children were almost as well segregated from contact with other inmates as if they had been placed in a separate building. The infirm inmates provided a buffer between the older children and the able-bodied paupers whose influence upon them might be harmful. The younger children (under seven) were housed at ground floor level in the rear wing of the cruciform plan, but had no separate yard.

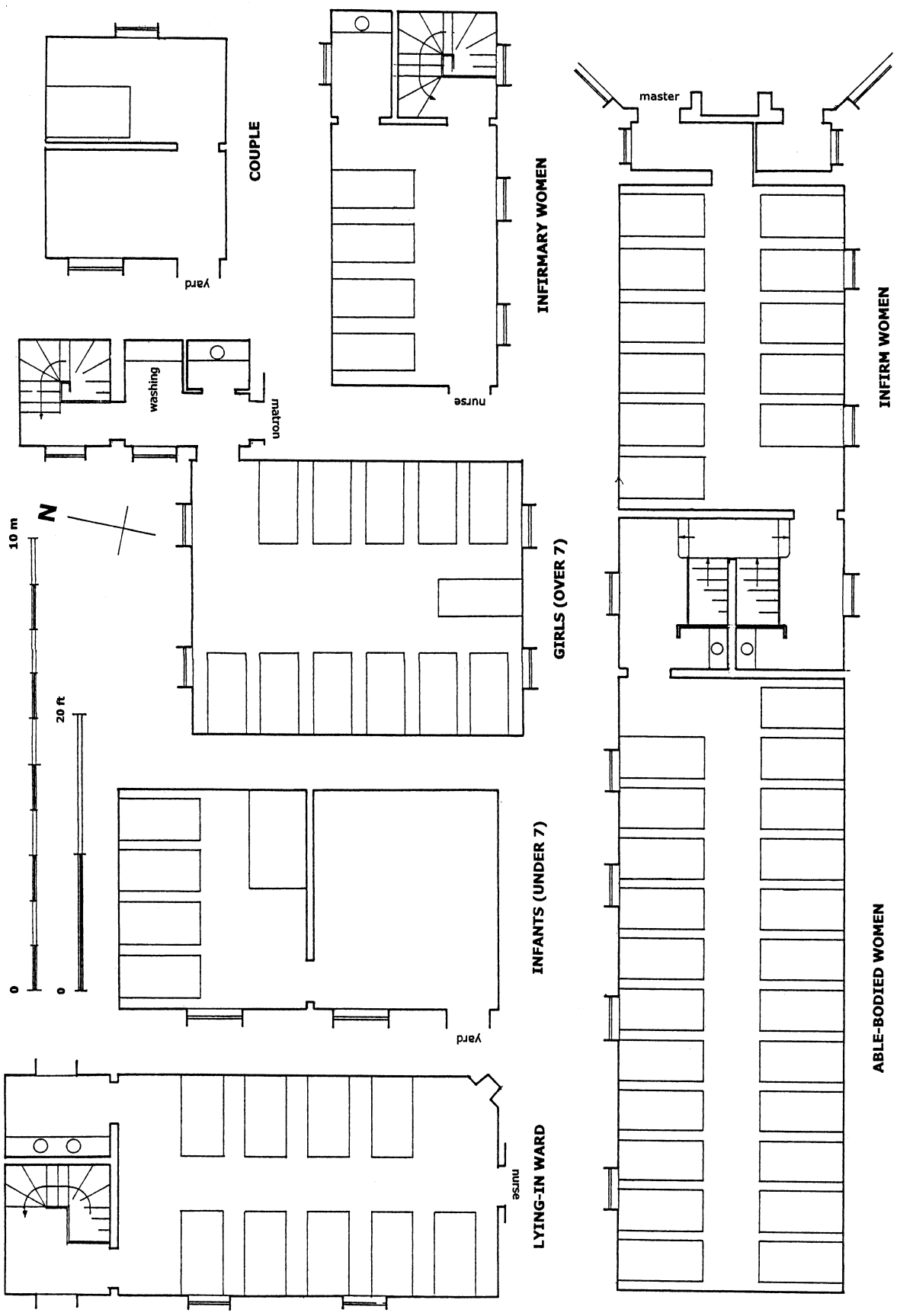

Figure 7 Intended sleeping accommodation in Ludlow workhouse as designed, 1836.

The infirm adults of each sex occupied a yard and ground-storey day room with a bedroom above, close to the governor's accommodation, probably for his easy supervision. Each yard had two latrines and a washing trough. There was an additional latrine for each sex at first floor level between the stairs and dormitories. No concession was made to inmates unable to manage stairs.

The able-bodied males and females, conventionally the classes of pauper least sympathetically regarded, occupied larger ground floor day rooms and first floor bedrooms in the left and right wings, with similar latrines. In their yards the able-bodied inmates of each sex had two latrines, workrooms in the perimeter buildings, and a punishment cell with its own latrine.

There were two cottage-like single storey apartments. These were probably intended for the most elderly and infirm couples, the separation of whom would serve no purpose. The occupants of the latter apartments would be spared having to climb stairs, but the disadvantage was that access to their accommodation was through the lunatics' yards.

The first floor of the rear arm of the cruciform plan, above the rooms allocated to the infants, was a lying-in ward, with a nurses' room, wardrobes and a double latrine.

The lunatics of each sex had a small day room (with a fireplace) and two cells, and there was a keeper's room. No bedrooms were provided for lunatics, the cells being their sleeping accommodation. The cells would probably be suitable, if necessary, for the containment of the most disorderly cases, although the department might have been intended more for the care of harmlessly demented patients than for that of dangerous ones. They were to be trusted with a fireplace and allowed to be in close proximity to the youngest children.[82]

The infirmary at the rear is one of the most interesting departments, symmetrically planned like the rest of the establishment; at ground floor level there were wards with baths and latrines, and separate nurses' rooms. At first floor level the plan was similar but without the baths. At the ends of the building were the mortuaries, the only rooms in the rear of the workhouse with direct external access. At the centre of the infirmary was a surgery with a light well, and nearby was the infirmary kitchen. The surgery was screened from the sight, and probably from the hearing, of the patients in the wards.

The Ludlow layout enabled the governor and matron, in their premises at the hub of the building, to have optimal supervision of the yards. On the ground floor at the centre was the adult dining room, doubling as a chapel. The seating was in four blocks and there was a pulpit. This room was linked to the kitchen in the front wing. At first floor was the governor's day room and at second floor his bedrooms. The matron also had a room at the front of the building, from which she could supervise the children's bedrooms, and there was easy access at first floor level to the guardians' boardroom. Beneath the centre block was a cellar for the heating apparatus, as it was the intention (initially at least) to heat the entire establishment by circulating hot water. The cellar was lit by four corner windows, each within a small ventilating area.

The committee of Ludlow guardians which visited numerous West Country workhouses to examine systems of heating also brought back observations on the furniture and fittings to be provided in their own workhouse.[83]

At Ludlow it was intended that most of the inmates should be provided with beds represented on the plans as rectangles 3 ft. by 6 ft., which may be the size of a standard bed. In some cases these were evidently to be single beds; in some cases the beds would be for multiple occupation or in tiers. The example of Shifnal workhouse shows that single beds would be considered necessary for infirmary cases, but healthy adults and children might be provided with beds at the rate of one bedspace to two inmates.

In the lying-in wards the beds would evidently be single. The beds are shown arranged against both walls at 4 ft. 6 ins. per bed. The central passage between the feet of the rows of beds is about 4 ft. wide. The beds for sick patients in the infirmary are slightly closer, allowing about 4 ft. 2 ins. per bed. The latter are planned on a single side of the room, away from the windows, allowing a passage width of 6 ft. The provision indicated at Ludlow falls far below that later recommended by the Poor Law Board (lying-in cases should have 7 to 8 ft. per bed, and patients in ordinary sick wards 6 ft. per bed).[84] It was also a recommendation of the assistant poor law commissioner that beds should not be located beneath windows.

The youngest children, occupying the under 7s department, and the older ones in the front building at Ludlow, had beds occupying about 4 ft. There was also, in the youngest children's room, a bigger bed which might have been a cot for a number of babies. The adults, able-bodied or infirm, had beds placed in rows against both walls, each occupying about 3 ft. 8 ins. Between the rows there was a passage 4 ft. wide. A few of the adult bed positions were under windows. Two rooms for couples are indicated, with what appear to be double beds about 3 ft. 9 ins. wide.

Notes

1 K. Morrison, *The Workhouse*, 1999.
2 S. and B. Webb, 'English Poor Law History, Part 1: The Old Poor Law' (*English Local Government*, **7**, Cass reprint 1963) and 'English Poor Law History, Part II: The Last Hundred Years' (*English Local Government*, **8**, Cass reprint 1963).
3 R. A. Lewis, 'William Day and the Poor Law Commissioners', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, **ix,** 1963–4.
4 V. J. Walsh, 'Administration of the Poor Law in Shropshire', Univ. of Pennsylvania Ph. D., 1970.
5 Shropshire Archives [henceforward SA]: 3990/9, agreement for farming the poor of Newport.
6 Reports of Assistant Commissioners: A. J. Lewis, 'Salop, Hereford and Monmouth' in 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws', PP [Parliamentary Papers] 1834, xxvii Appendix A: Report no. 18. p. 660A.
7 In 1797 the Madeley vestry advertised for a master who possessed 'knowledge of the manufacturing of coarse linens and woollens': *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 5 Jan. 1797.
8 S. and B. Webb, 'The Old Poor Law', *op. cit.* 120 ff.
9 A. J. Lewis, *op. cit.* 659A.
10 'Houses of Industry' were set up in East Anglia and the Isle of Wight earlier in the 18th century as big multi-parish workhouses under a reformed management policy. The first to use this name was Bulcamp (Blything) in Suffolk in 1763, 4 Geo. III c.56.
11 H. Owen, *Some Account of the Ancient and Present State of Shrewsbury*, 1808, 340. Persons in these parishes with property worth £30 per annum or rated at £15 were incorporated as 'guardians' and elected a board of twelve 'directors' to serve in rotation. The directors met twice weekly.
12 H. Owen, *op. cit.*, 340–341.
13 SA: 6001/299 no. 59, drawing of the orphanage.
14 The Charities Inquiry Commission reported £48 laid out from Thorne's Charity and £120 from sale of land for building a workhouse in Claverley: *Reports*, 1839, 502.
15 'An Act for the Amendment and better Administration of the Laws relating to the Poor in England and Wales', 4 & 5 Wm IV *c.*76 (The Poor Law Amendment Act, 14 Aug. 1834); S. and B. Webb, 'The Last Hundred Years' *op. cit.* 90ff; A. J. Lewis, *op. cit.;* Report no. 18, 659Aff.
16 A Member of the Shropshire County Committee, *Some Facts, shewing the vast Burthen of the Poor's rate…*, 1817, 2.
17 In 1722 Knatchbull's Act had permitted parishes to combine to set up workhouses, with the expectation that a 'workhouse test' would result in many poor people declining to accept such assistance. In 1782 Gilbert's Act again sought to get parishes to combine to create workhouses, but with the more benign intention of housing only the deserving poor such as the elderly, sick and orphans: S. and B. Webb, 'The Old Poor Law', *op. cit.* 151.
18 Sir Francis Head (1793–1875) was briefly an assistant poor law commissioner for East Kent. He is better known to history as a Governor of Upper Canada: S. and B. Webb, 'The Last Hundred Years', *op. cit.*, 125n.
19 S. and B. Webb, 'The Last Hundred Years', *op. cit.*, 126.
20 Poor Law Commissioners, *1st Annual Report*, 1835. Appendix A no. 10.
21 A Member of the Shropshire County Committee, *op. cit.*, 39.
22 'An Act for the better Relief and Employment of the Poor', 22 Geo 3 c.83 [Gilbert's Act, 1782]; Poor Law Commissioners, *1st Annual Report*, 1835, 18.
23 A village poorhouses at Wistanstow was probably also temporarily retained.
24 Also Lilleshall 'school' in process of closing.
25 A new workhouse at Wem was about to be opened and the old workhouse at Prees closed.
26 Based on National Library of Wales [henceforward NLW]: MS 3142F f.643, return of unions.
27 Poor Law Commissioners' *1st Annual Report*, 1835, 29: 'We have great satisfaction in being able to report that in several extensive districts we have been able to direct the change of system without incurring any considerable expense in the erection of new buildings'.
28 Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, clause XI.
29 *Ibid.*, clause III.
30 Poor Law Commissioners, *1st Annual Report,* 1835.
31 Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834, clause XX. The Webbs stress the peculiarly English nature of the assistant commissioners and their successors, the poor law inspectors and general inspectors, as a tool of government, a body of gentlemen of superior education theoretically without substantial powers but actually supervising Poor Law unions with the full authority of their principals in Somerset House or Whitehall: S. and B. Webb, 'The Last Hundred Years' *op. cit.*, 206ff: 'The Inspectorate.' In the early days of the new poor law the local assistant commissioner in Shropshire, who can be credited with setting up the new system there almost singlehandedly, was William Day, and much of his correspondence with the Commissioners in London was addressed to his particular mentor and ally, the Commissioner W. Shaw Lefevre.
32 For many purposes the Poor Law regarded young persons as adult on reaching the age of 16: e.g. Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, clauses LXI, LXII, LXXI. There is no definition of what was regarded as impotent old age; the guardians of Madeley, for instance, appear to have separated their elderly poor at the age of 60.
33 Based on 1841 Census data. Workhouses, as institutions, were always returned in the 1841 census in separate enumerator's books, the governor generally making the return.
34 SA: PL5/1-7, Cleobury Mortimer Guardians' Minutes, *passim*; Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of England*, 1840: 'Cleobury Mortimer'.
35 SA: PL7/7, Drayton Guardians' minutes, 3 Mar. 1841, quoting Commissioners' circular.
36 SA: PL7/7, Drayton Guardians' minutes, 13 Feb. 1837.

37 Workhouse buildings for vagrants are discussed by Harrison, *op. cit.*, chapter 10.
38 A. L. Bowley, 'Miscellanea' in *Jnl. Roy. Stat. Soc.*, **LXIV**, 1901, 107–8, gives 43:60 proportion rise of building wages in provincial towns, and E. H. Phelps Brown and S. V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of Building Wages' in *Economica*, August 1955, 199, fig. 2, indicates typical craftsmen's wages in Southern England approaching 3*s*. per day in 1795 and at 4*s*. per day in 1840.
39 J. S. Mill, *Representative Government,* Everyman 1971, 349.
40 R. A. Lewis, *op. cit.*, 167.
41 F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth century*, 1971, 113–14, 124.
42 At first, when under the misapprehension that Lilleshall Hall was in Lilleshall parish, Day had sought to get the Duke to be the chairman of Newport union.
43 NLW: MS 3149F, Day to Thomas Whitmore, 26 June 1836.
44 Opinion of William Day on his early acquaintance with Leighton: quoted by R. A. Lewis, *op. cit.*, 173.
45 NLW: MS 3157F, Day to Lefevre, 30 Jan. 1838.
46 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 17 Dec. 1880: obituary of W. L. Childe; NLW: MS 3157F, Day to Childe 10 Feb. 1837, Day to Lefevre 30 Jan. 1838.
47 Lucy Elizabeth Georgina Bridgeman, d. 1840, daughter of the 1st Earl of Bradford.
48 Thomas Whitmore was the acting chairman of the neighbouring Shifnal union.
49 W. Hughes (ed.), *The Sheriffs of Shropshire 1831–1886,* 1886 21–2; NLW: MS 3147F, Day to Lefevre, 13 Jan. 1838.
50 NLW: MS 3147F, correspondence, 5 Feb. 1838 to 27 Feb. 1838, between Sparkes and Whitmore.
51 SA: PL3/2, Guardians' Minutes, 24 Jan. 1863.
52 Staffordshire Record Office: D952/3/2/13, 'Address to Thomas Twemlow on the occasion of his resignation as chairman of the Market Drayton union'; William Salt Library B1 TWE/1: F. R. Twemlow, *The Twemlows, their Wives and their Homes,* 1910, 46–7 and portrait opposite p. 46. Thomas Twemlow's nephew Thomas Fletcher Twemlow was chairman of Newcastle-under-Lyme guardians from 1857 to 1894 (*op. cit.* 53).
53 'Select Committee on that part of the Poor Laws relating to the Employment or Relief of able-bodied Persons from the Poor Rate' in *British Parliamentary Papers, Agriculture 1, 1820–28*, no. 494 (3 July 1828); SA: 6003/5, R. A. Slaney's Journal, 1828–1829, Jan. 1829.
54 SA: 6003/6, R. A. Slaney's Journal 1829–36, 24 Mar. 1836, October 1836, 17 Dec. 1836.
55 C. Gill, *History of Birmingham*, **I**, 1952, 389.
56 SA: 6003/7, R. A. Slaney's Journal 1837–41, 7 Apr. 1837, June 1837.
57 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commission, 22 July 1836.
58 R. A. Lewis, *op. cit.*, 174.
59 NLW: MS 3148F, Day to Commissioners, 14 Sept. 1836, 21 Sept. 1836. Day found politics in Ludlow 'higher even than Shrewsbury': cf. *VCH Salop*, **III**, 336–7. A recent study of the calibre of the Ludlow guardians is Derek Williams, 'The Ludlow Guardians 1836–1900' in *Trans. Shrops. Archaeol. Soc.*, **LXXVII**, 110–118.
60 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 17 Nov. 1836.
61 Sir Rowland Hill was the successor to the Duke of Wellington as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.
62 NLW: *op. cit.*, Day to Lefevre, 13 Apr. 1840; SA: PL15/2, Minutes, 23 Apr. 1840.
63 NLW: *op. cit.*, Day to Lefevre, 29 Apr. 1840.
64 For the history of the development of the architectural profession as led by London practice, see the introductory essay, 'The Practice of Architecture 1600–1840', in H. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840,* 1995.
65 I. Wood, *Some Account of the Shrewsbury House of Industry* (4th ed.), 1795, vi.
66 Colvin, *op. cit.*, 162.
67 J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530–1830*, 1953, 322ff: 'Architecture in 1830'. The story of the building work generated by the Poor Law has been told on a national basis by K. Morrison, *op. cit.*
68 Colvin, *op. cit.*, 478ff.
69 Colvin *op. cit.*, 1045; *BAL/RIBA Directory of British Architects 1834–1900* (R. I. B. A., 1993). Whitling was elected as an Associate of the R. I. B. A. in 1837.
70 This workhouse survives, having been used as offices by the Tenbury Rural District Council, the local authority which succeeded the Tenbury union.
71 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 13 July 1838; *Salopian Journal*: Obituary of S. Pountney Smith, 7 Nov. 1883, reprinted in *Salopian Shreds and Patches*, **5,** 209; H. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (3rd ed.), 1995, 874–5 (*re* John Smalman); *BAL/RIBA Directory of British Architects 1834–1900*. (Pountney Smith was apparently not a member of the R. I. B. A.)
72 Pigot, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1835, 346; N. Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 1958, 233.
73 In 1835 Pigot's directory still lists Smalman as an architect-builder but refers to his 'former building establishment' at Quatford Castle. In 1835 Smalman became a Bridgnorth alderman, and served as mayor in 1837–9. He was unmarried and is buried at Quatford: H Colvin, *loc. cit.*
74 Other early church commissions were Longden Road cemetery chapel in 1855–6, Holy Trinity, Uffington in 1856, Holy Trinity, Leaton in 1859, and the restoration of Battlefield church in 1861–2. Pountney Smith was later a Conservative councillor, alderman, in his last year mayor of Shrewsbury, and died in 1883. Obituary, *loc. cit.*; Pevsner, *op. cit.*, 70, 164, 265, 305; Advertisement for lease of builder's yard: *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 30 Aug. 1850.
75 This was made cheaper by the exemption of stamp duty from union advertisements: Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, Clause LXXXVI.
76 SA: PL5/4, Cleobury Mortimer Guardians' Minutes, 24 Aug. 1840.
77 S. and B. Webb, 'The Last Hundred Years', *op. cit.*, 142ff: 'The Abolition of Outdoor Relief'; 'English Poor Law Policy' (*English Local Government*, **10**, Cass reprint 1963), Appendix A.
78 F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, 1797 (ed. Rogers, 1928), 127.

79 This is discussed in detail by Morrison, *op. cit.*, chapter 5.
80 SA: PL9/2/1/2, Ludlow Guardians' Minutes, 20 Aug. 1838: 'Report on mode of warming and ventilation and general fitting up of a poor house'.
81 Morrison, *op. cit.*, chapter 6.
82 Morrison, *op. cit.*, 161, discusses the distinction between dangerous and non-dangerous lunatics, which tended to be disregarded in workhouse planning until about 1845.
83 SA: PL9/2/1/2, Ludlow Guardians' Minutes, 20 Aug. 1838.
84 'Points to be Attended to in the Construction of Workhouses', PP 1868–9 (4197), xxvii, 47.

CHAPTER 2

THE SHREWSBURY HOUSE OF INDUSTRY

Shrewsbury possessed workhouses from the early 17th century[1], but in 1784 the poor-rate payers of six parishes of the town formed themselves into an incorporation under a local Act to embark on the ambitious experiment of establishing a 'house of industry' which it was hoped would improve on the traditional idea of the workhouse. For this purpose the guardians (the major poor-rate payers) of the incorporated parishes purchased a very large redundant building at Kingsland. At the end of the 18th century, with the realisation that they were embarked on an experiment which was not working, their policy changed and they discarded many of their illusions of improving the state of the poor. The directors (board of management) sought to reduce the number of inmates. The incorporation was reformed to become a looser association known as the United District. Some of the parishes even set up rival workhouses rather than contribute to the costs of the house of industry, which they regarded as expensive. Despite this, with some diversification (the house included a lunatic asylum), the Shrewsbury Poor United District survived for several decades under the new poor law. The United District came to be the equivalent of a poor law union, and the house again became their only workhouse. It defied all attempts to persuade it to dissolve until 1871, when the parishes briefly formed a poor law union as a first step in merging with Atcham poor law union, and they sold the house at Kingsland to Shrewsbury School. The incorporation was finally wound up in September 1878.[2]

The 1784 Act states the original purpose of the incorporation to be

> 'the establishment of a house of industry [which] would tend to the employment of the industrious, and such as are able to work; to the correction and punishment of the idle, refractory and profligate; to the education of the infant poor in the habits of industry and religion; and to the advantage of themselves and the said parishes, whereby the said poor, instead of being wholly supported by the public, would contribute to the support and assistance and relief of each other, and be of some advantage to the community'.

Furthermore, the contingency was anticipated that the work of the poor in the house might prove to be so profitable that the charging of rates might cease, and the directors have surplus funds to invest in property. This never happened, and was probably never expected to. The Act authorised the incorporation to borrow £10,000 to acquire a building.[3]

The incorporation acquired the former Shrewsbury Foundling Hospital, built in 1759–65 to the design of Thomas Farnolls Pritchard (1722–1777). The history of its original design and construction has been told in detail by Ionides.[4] Children from London were sent to it and when sufficiently old were employed in the manufacture of wool or sent out into apprenticeship. At its start (1764) the hospital housed 435 orphans, all but two from London. It was closed in 1774 when the London Foundling Hospital ceased to send children. It was subsequently used as Baker's woollen manufactory and as a place of confinement for foreign prisoners. The adjacent unenclosed land of Kingsland had been leased to the Foundling Hospital in 1758 for 99 years.[5]

The building had originally cost the Foundling Hospital over £14,000, but it was sold to the newly formed incorporation together with freehold and leasehold land of 20 acres for only £5,500. The incorporation Act cost £391 and additional buildings cost £771. With other costs by the time that the house of industry opened in 1784 the total debt was £7,000. The directors of the house of industry paid off a mortgage for their debt in five years.[6]

Isaac Wood came to be regarded as the main promoter of the house of industry and he was credited with having superintended the experiment with 'parental watchfulness and with enthusiastic hopes and promises of success'. Wood himself dismissed talk of his having played such a central role. He did not become a director until 1787, but he was always a prominent publicist and campaigner. An essential feature of the management was what Wood called the 'excitement to industry' created by allowing inmates to retain a sixth part (2*d*. in the shilling) of their earnings as a 'gratuity' paid to them each Saturday. Wood tells the story of a ten year old boy

who was able, after a week's work, to bring 4*d*. home to his sick mother. The steward (workhouse master) acted as a savings banker for these gratuities and seems to have had some control over how they were spent. In the late 18th century the establishment was a widely regarded model for workhouse management, influencing Oswestry, Ellesmere, Atcham and Whitchurch in the County as well as Chester and Forden (Montgomery and Welshpool). In 1790 Wood was still claiming results of 'decency, industry and virtue'. In a candid acknowledgement of the faults of the institution Wood admitted that one of these was the lack of separation of the different classes of inmate. This looked ahead to the strict rule of classification which was such a strong feature of workhouse management under the new poor law. A contemporary, Archdeacon Owen, at first described the incorporation as 'a model to almost all succeeding institutions of the kind throughout the kingdom', but he admitted in 1808 that the initiative was 'in a great measure abandoned'.[7]

Drawings and photographs of the main building before it was embellished for Shrewsbury School in the late 19th century show a plain regularly fenestrated structure with a nine-bay central block terminating in short crosswings each two bays wide. (See Figure 8.) Terminal crosswings are a commonplace of architectural design of large institutional or industrial buildings in this period, such as Boulton's works at Soho, Birmingham, completed in 1764. The Shrewsbury Foundling Hospital was a building built of brick and roofed in slate, to which dormer windows had been added. The side elevations to east and west were four bays wide. It had a pedimented central unit of three bays facing north, and probably a similar one facing south. There was a roundel in the pediment. School embellishment has not altered the dimensions of the house: including the crosswings it is about 180 ft. in length by 60 ft. deep. Excluding the crosswings, the central part is about 120 ft. long and 43 ft. deep. It had remarkably high ceilings, as described in 1836:

> 'The main body of this house is four storeys in elevation (including the ground floor [and attic]) and the rooms are all of sufficient altitude to admit if necessary to two tiers of beds…the house would easily accommodate 600 paupers. I have no doubt if necessary I should say from 800 to 1000 might be placed there.'[8]

From its start as a foundling hospital the house had ornamentally fenestrated annexes at east and west plus an L-shaped range of low buildings further to the west. Each annexe had a lunette above a three-light Palladian window. An illustration early in the time of the house of industry is Hulbert's ill-proportioned engraving of 1800 depicting the buildings from the north, as seen from the town, with the house still flanked by its annexes. Any other buildings are concealed by trees.[9]

The house was a 'brick building of considerable magnitude and solidity, with oak floors'. It was 'strongly constructed' and the rooms were 'spacious and of good elevation'. 'Substantial oak beams support the roof, and there is a fine central staircase', which must have been added by the directors. The boardroom, and probably the dormitories, kitchens, chapel and classrooms were already present in the house when the incorporation took possession. The hospital's council room was described as absurdly expensively decorated and had a fine chimneypiece. (The chimneypiece was later taken for the study of the headmaster of Shrewsbury School.) The directors were able to hold their board meetings at the house from the start. It was noted by Wood that there were rooms on all floors which were 120 ft. long by 20 ft. wide and 12 ft. high. These large rooms were the dining hall, the principal working rooms and dormitories. The length stated corresponds with the whole nine-bay length of the central part of the building between the crosswings. These long rooms were half the depth of the building. The 20 ft. dimension conforms to the maximum practical beam length generally observed in traditional carpentry. The existence of a chapel is confirmed in 1784. Owen described it in 1808:

> 'Parallel with the hall is a plain decent chapel, in which divine service is performed twice every Sunday, and the children are at other times instructed by the chaplain in the principles of religion. Prayers are also read to the whole family every morning and evening'.[10]

As originally built, the house was considered to face north towards the town. In 1797 the directors decided to divert the road from Coleham to enter Kingsland Common and serve the south of the house, and from this time the question of which to regard as the front becomes less clear. Their proposal was to route the new road between the butchers' and shoemakers' arbours on Kingsland. The new road actually passed to the north of both arbours, and brought newcomers to the west end of the main building, where the industrial premises and the reception wards were located.[11]

The property of the house of industry was listed for insurance purposes in 1786. The list indicates that in addition to the house itself there were a kitchen, washhouse, brewhouse, shops and offices adjoining at each end, an infirmary, cowhouse and stables. There were also a porter's lodge and boathouse.[12]

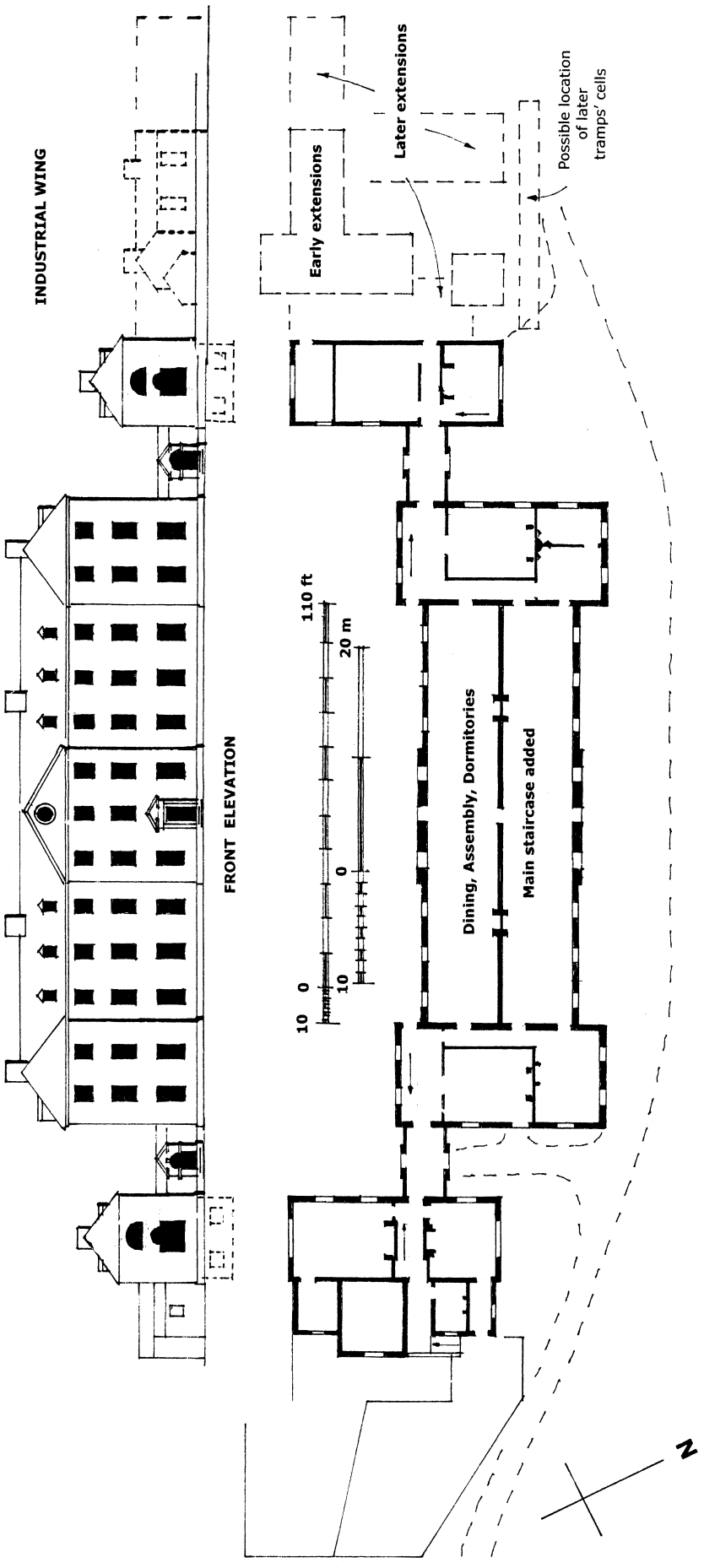

Figure 8 The north face and conjectural plan of the Shrewsbury house of industry. (Mainly after Pritchard's original drawing.)

An inventory of 1792 gives the rooms of the establishment with their equipment and its value; some of these rooms are evidently within the main building:[13]

Bakehouse: Kneading troughs, tables, boiler &c.: £7 8*s*. 0*d*.
Store-room over: Bins for peas, oatmeal, salt &c.: £4 15*s*. 0*d*.
Brewhouse: Water reservoir, copper furnace, underback, mashing tub, coolers, wort pump, pipes &c.: £45 0*s*. 0*d*.
Cellar: Ale vat, hogshead, barrels, stillions, cocks, pipes: £37 10*s*. 0*d*.
Laundry: Boilers, washing troughs, lee tubs, cocks, pipes &c.: £23 11*s*. 8*d*.
Bucking room: Boiler, tubs, block &c.: £8 6*s*. 8*d*.
Meat vault: Salting table, pickling tubs: £6 10*s*. 0*d*.
Bread room: Cutting knife, blocks, table, shelves &c.: £2 5*s*. 0*d*.
Back kitchen: Boilers, cullenders, troughs, crane &c.: £10 19*s*. 9*d*.
Larder and pantry: Tables, shelves &c.: £3 5*s*. 0*d*.
Kitchen: Grate, crane, jack, dresser, table, chairs and utensils for the use of the matron and secretary with trenchers, cans, spoons, drinking cans &c for the paupers: £41 15*s*. 0*d*.
Matron's Parlour: Glass, china, tables, chairs, cupboards, presses &c: £7 15*s*. 0*d*.
Matron's Bedroom: Bed, hangings, tables, drawers &c.: £13 4*s*. 0*d*.
Secretary's *ditto*.: *ditto*.: £13 4*s*. 0*d*.
Secretary's Office: Desk, bookcase, shelves, chairs: £4 10*s*. 0*d*.
Boardroom: Chairs, table, cloth, grate &c.: £19 4*s*. 0*d*.
Store-room: Shelves, counter &c.: £6 15*s*. 0*d*.
Chapel: Forms, desk, communion table, rails, lamp &c.: £24 4*s*. 0*d*.
Dining Hall: Tables, forms, lamps: £30 6*s*. 0*d*.
Dormitories: 73 large bedsteads, beds, bolsters, sheets, blankets, rugs and presses £105 1*s*. 8*d*.
Dormitories: 121 smaller bedsteads, beds, bolsters, blankets, sheets and coverlets: £131 4*s*. 0*d*.
Schools: Forms, benches &c.: £4 15*s*. 0*d*.
Baker and brewer with spinning master and weaver's houses furnished: £36 0*s*. 0*d*.
Machines: Wheels, cards, looms and other utensils used in the manufactory: £270 0*s*. 0*d*.

The large bedsteads were evidently multi-occupied, so there was bed accommodation for at least 267 inmates. Not mentioned are punishment cells, which certainly existed, the order having been given in 1785 to provide 'one or two apartments…for the separate confinement of disorderly paupers'.[14]

Another inventory listing rooms with their furnishings exists for 1802. It is less comprehensive, but adds interesting details. The boardroom contained three tables and thirteen mahogany chairs. The chapel contained a pulpit, two reading desks, a communion table with rails, a large pew and 21 benches. The dining hall contained 18 tables and 27 benches. The brewhouse contained two brewing furnaces, two mashing tubs and five coolers. Other departments were the lunatic asylum and a lazaretto. There were approximately 170 beds, so beds were evidently mostly multi-occupied.[15]

According to Eden in 1797: 'The paupers in the house are chiefly employed in the woollen manufactory…. Several weavers are constantly employed. Those who have been shoemakers, tailors, carpenters etc., are set to work at their different occupations.' A complaint was raised in 1785 that it was necessary to go through the schoolroom to get to the scribbling wool and yarn rooms. To fit up the manufactory 'necessary machines and implements, with a supply of raw material, were…procured; and persons versed in scribbling, carding and spinning wool were hired. Weavers were likewise engaged, a shop with looms fitted up…and a detached wing of the building divided into little habitations and allotted for their accommodation. At the same time working rooms or shops were set apart for the shoemakers, tailors, carpenters etc.' The largest apartment was that for carding and spinning. One of the persons hired was Jeremiah Hill, superintendent of weavers and spinners.[16]

The inventory of 1802 covers the manufacturing and farming activities more fully: in the clock room in addition to an eight-day clock, the inventory includes a wool willy (for cleaning raw wool) and a carding machine; also a separate willy room with scales. There was a weaver's shop with 23 looms and nine winding wheels, a spinning room with ten jennies, six scribbling and carding machines and 23 slubbing wheels. There is also mention of a room called the 'long dinnery' with warping mills, scribbling stocks, jenny stocks and spinning wheels; and the farm department included a cowhouse for eleven cows, a bull and a calf; hay and husbandry 'requisites' and sties for nine pigs. Other buildings were the gardener's house and the house of John Hills.

There are farm accounts from 1792. The farm and school gained from 1797 at the expense of the woollen manufactory in a change of policy when the (paid) weavers were dismissed. At some time after the abandonment of the manufactory in 1802, a school was held in the building formerly used for hand-loom

weaving. Adjoining this, four acres of land, cultivated by the scholars, were mentioned in 1851: the 'farmhouse' about 150 yds. west of the main building, at the later location of the baths of Shrewsbury School, was probably the house of the steward or master of the workhouse.[17]

The management of the workhouse school in the early years may have been informal but later it appears to have been organised on Lancasterian lines. The Rev. Henry Campbell urged the directors to run the schools in this manner in 1813 and the directors went to some expense obtaining writing slates and other equipment, and sending women to be trained as teachers.[18]

A detached reception department was described in 1791:

> 'At a bow-shot from the house, are two ranges of building, that run parallel to each other: the one contains apartments where the poor are sent upon their admission to be stripped and washed; and if found to have any cutaneous or other infectious disorder they remain till they are cured; there are separate wards for the women and the men'.

Adjoining these were a dead house and burial ground. There was a fever room in one range and the house infirmary with separate wards for men and women in the other.[19]

The burial ground was formed soon after February 1785. Although there had been plague burials at Kingsland since 1630, the house of industry burial ground was a new site. It was unconsecrated ground, but the Rev. T. Stedman, officiating at the first interments, considered it would not be justified to call the bishop in to consecrate it and assured the poor in the house that consecration was not essential, and in any case this was a matter about which poor people should not be concerned, provided their betters were content. Burials carried out at the house of industry are recorded in the registers of the incorporated parishes; the first from St. Chad's was Edmund Wynstanley, buried in November. For burials a coffin and a 'jersey' were provided.[20]

The mad house yard adjacent to the east annexe is shown in a sketch plan of 1785. In time a policy grew of treating insane paupers separately from other impotent poor and an asylum was established. It was referred to as 'adjacent to the sick house and yards and gardens' in 1796.[21]

In 1795 a windmill was built on a small circular enclosure of land, about 300 yds. south of the main house at SJ 484 118. This was the 'shoemakers' race', purchased from the Shoemakers' Company. Materials of a disused windmill at Uffington were purchased for £150. The mill was re-erected by Simpson at a cost of £631. Hazeldine valued and re-erected the millwork. An architect, Haycock, was employed to value the work for payment, for a fee of one guinea. In the following year a miller was engaged. The mill is later referred to as a corn grist mill. In 1829 Hazeldine estimated the cost of repairing it to be £200, including the supply of two new pairs of French stones. The windmill survived until the late 19th century.[22]

A lazaretto (isolation hospital) was added at some date after 1795. Wood refers to the intention to build an 'asylum for the sick poor', with one ward for men and one for women, including water closets, two further wards for convalescents and a room for nurses. It was mentioned in 1808 as being 'at a little distance from the house'.[23]

Despite the limited territory of the Shrewsbury incorporation, a mere six parishes, its initial policy was such that the house amassed a large numbers of paupers. There were average numbers of 346 in 1787, 340 in 1790, 395 in 1796 and 314 in 1798. High numbers were connected with the fact that by 1797 most out-relief had ceased in the Shrewsbury parishes. Out-relief was resumed later, as salaried overseers were appointed in 1818 to manage the out-poor.[24] Some fall in the number of pauper inmates is found after the abandonment of the industrial training policy in the early 1800s. In 1813 there were on average 223 pauper inmates, made up of 145 adults and 78 children. In the 1821 Census there were 290 inmates. Further reduction in numbers reflects the withdrawal of support for the house by the parishes of the United District; in the 1831 Census there were only 120 inmates.[25]

Decay of the Institution

The problems of the house of industry as managed by its early directors were exacerbated by a series of dishonest stewards.[26] A recommendation to dissolve the incorporation and re-establish a measure of independence of the parishes on the basis of Sturges Bourne's Select Vestries Act was accepted in 1824.[27] The parishes of the original incorporation were to be individually governed by select vestries and were to employ salaried overseers whose task was to know the poor personally sufficiently well to be able to distinguish between fraud and genuine want. The parishes, again responsible for their poor, were to constitute a looser incorporation under the name of the Shrewsbury Poor United District and to own the workhouse in common, paying its costs in proportion to the use they made of it. The original incorporation was dissolved in 1826 and the reformed District took its place under a new Act. For a time the house was virtually disused. The assistant

poor law commissioner complained in 1836 that improvements had failed to follow: 'there is still no discipline, no classification, no labour, no instruction.' The parish officers were failing to exert a beneficial influence, and increasingly disregarding their house of industry because they realised that if they sent no paupers to it they would have little to pay. St. Chad's parish resolved to send no more paupers, and hired a poorhouse for its own separate use. St. Alkmund's also acquired a separate poorhouse for its aged and infirm: in 1834 it was reported by the overseers that 'we have a workhouse, and about 40 poor persons in it, who are either weak in intellect or too old or too young to work'.[28]

A temporary infirmary was formed in the east crosswing of the main building, the east annexe and some adjacent buildings in 1827 by agreement with the Salop Infirmary. (See Figure 9.) To make space for the temporary infirmary at the workhouse, pending the completion of the hospital in St. Mary's Place, the married paupers' ward and the working men's ward had to be given up. When the east part of the workhouse was vacated by the Infirmary, the Kingsland Lunatic Asylum was established there. In July 1832 Robert Oakley, builder, was paid £73 to build lunatic asylum cells. The assistant poor law commissioner remarked in 1836 that 'the directors have let off at a rent to the present governor a portion of the house as a licensed lunatic asylum, from which he says that they cannot eject him during his tenancy.'[29]

The House of Industry under the New Poor Law

The steward or master at the time of the new poor law was James Jacob (born *c*.1775), who had started farming the poor under a contract of January 1829, and who continued the tradition of bad stewards. Jacob acquired a dual role when he became superintendent of the lunatic asylum under a contract of April 1832, but his workhouse and lunatic asylum roles have to be distinguished. Jacob paid £36 per annum for land for occupying the paupers, and £40 (raised in 1833 to £50) for the asylum. In 1834 he demanded to be paid 7*s*. per week per lunatic but the directors allowed him only 6*s*.[30]

In 1836 Day visited to inspect the workhouse as managed by Jacob. Day was made more suspicious by Jacob's furtive and obstructive behaviour during the inspection, on which occasion he found a woman and baby concealed in a cupboard. He insisted on Jacob's behaviour being investigated. The directors of the incorporation carried out an investigation, but decided that the woman was not a pauper, and therefore it was no concern of theirs. Another investigation by the directors into Jacob's behaviour in 1842 again found him not guilty, but admitted that vice was rampant in the house. Jacob continued to farm the paupers until this date, when he left the service of the incorporation. The directors did not accept his offer to remain temporarily in office. His last rent payment (probably for the asylum) was in September 1842. Later stewards were Shaw, Harries, and Kendillon.[31]

Jacob's private asylum was at first known as the Shropshire Lunatic Asylum. In 1841 it contained 11 staff and 92 patients, and in 1851 14 staff and 53 patients. From 1845 it was known as the Kingsland Lunatic Asylum or the Kingsland (Private) Lunatic Asylum to distinguish it from the Salop Lunatic Asylum at Bicton Heath (Shelton).[32]

The Tithe Survey, 1843, shows the house in the early years of the new poor law. (See Figure 10.) Its east end was separately tenanted by Jacob as proprietor of the lunatic asylum. A detached building with a fold at the west extremity of the group was also occupied by Jacob, together with a large field to the south-west of the house in front of a group of farm and other buildings. There was still a ferry directly from Shrewsbury, as a proposed bridge over the Severn was not yet built. The tenant of the boathouse was Evans, who was also tenant of one of the buildings in the farm group.

The United District's unsatisfactory situation in this period was evident from the outstanding debt of £5,218 for which 4½% was being paid. The annual cost of repairs was about £200. A court of guardians in January 1840 resolved that the 'system [forbidding out-relief] as administered by the Poor Law Commissioners…is quite unnecessary and uncalled for,' but for in-relief paupers they decided to give up farming the poor and adopt classification and other features of the new poor law. In 1841 there were only 79 inmates in the workhouse and in 1851 only 73. In the latter year it was said that 'there is accommodation for 350 inmates, exclusive of that portion of the building which has been let off as a private asylum.'[33]

Almost no building work was required in this period. The court of guardians resolved 'that the present house of industry [could] be made capable of furnishing the requisite means for obtaining a proper and humane classification of the inmates, provided some of the larger rooms were divided and altered' Two years later some internal alterations were carried out, 'for the purpose of classifying the paupers'.[34]

The principal outbuilding noted by Day in 1836 was of two storeys, 80 by 15 ft., evidently referring to the manufactory wing of the house to the west. He also noted the existence of an outbuilding appropriated to vagrants 'with which it seems Shrewsbury is particularly infested'. Parish overseers could give the governor an

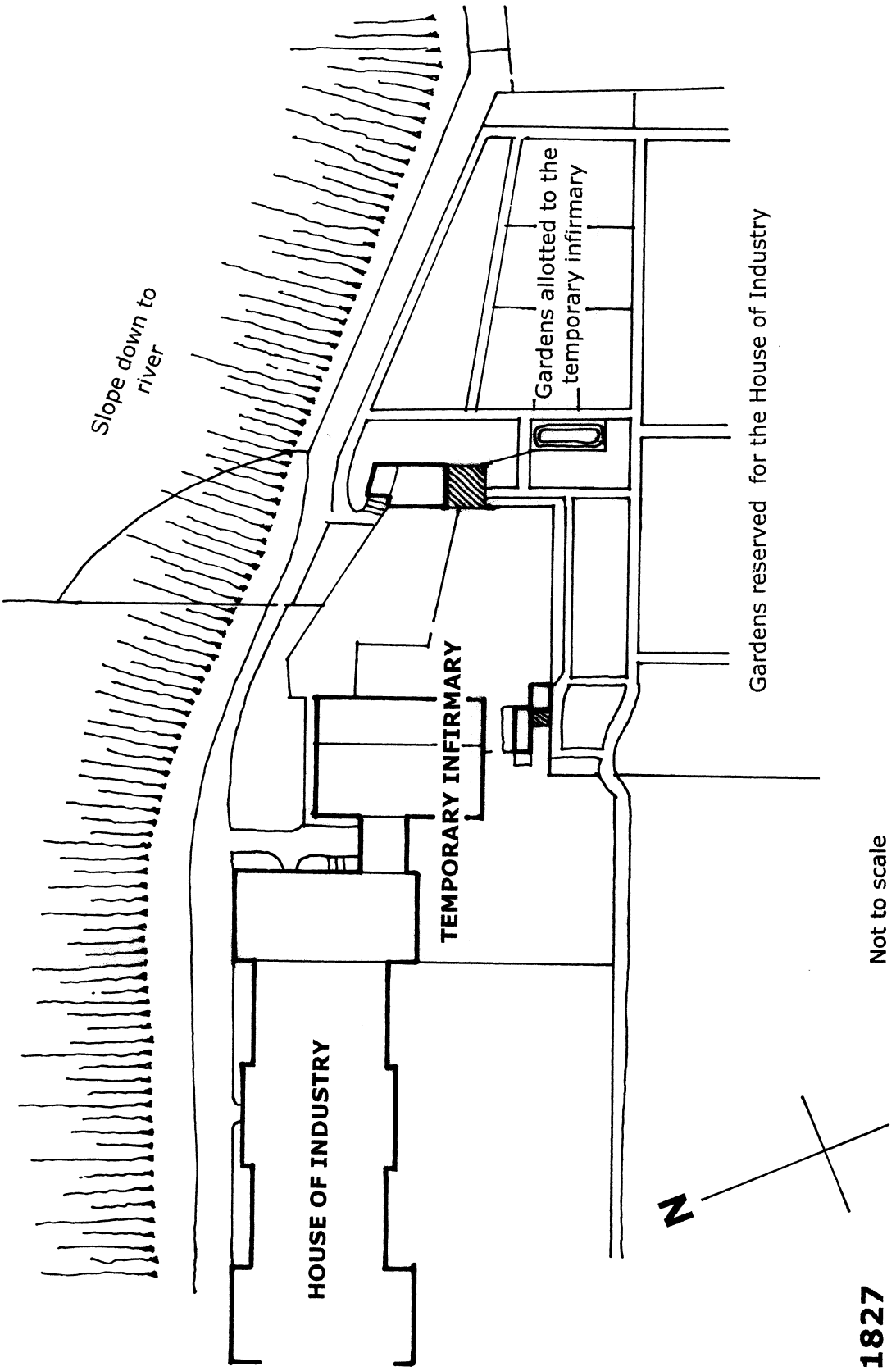

Figure 9 Temporary Infirmary, Shrewsbury house of industry, 1827.

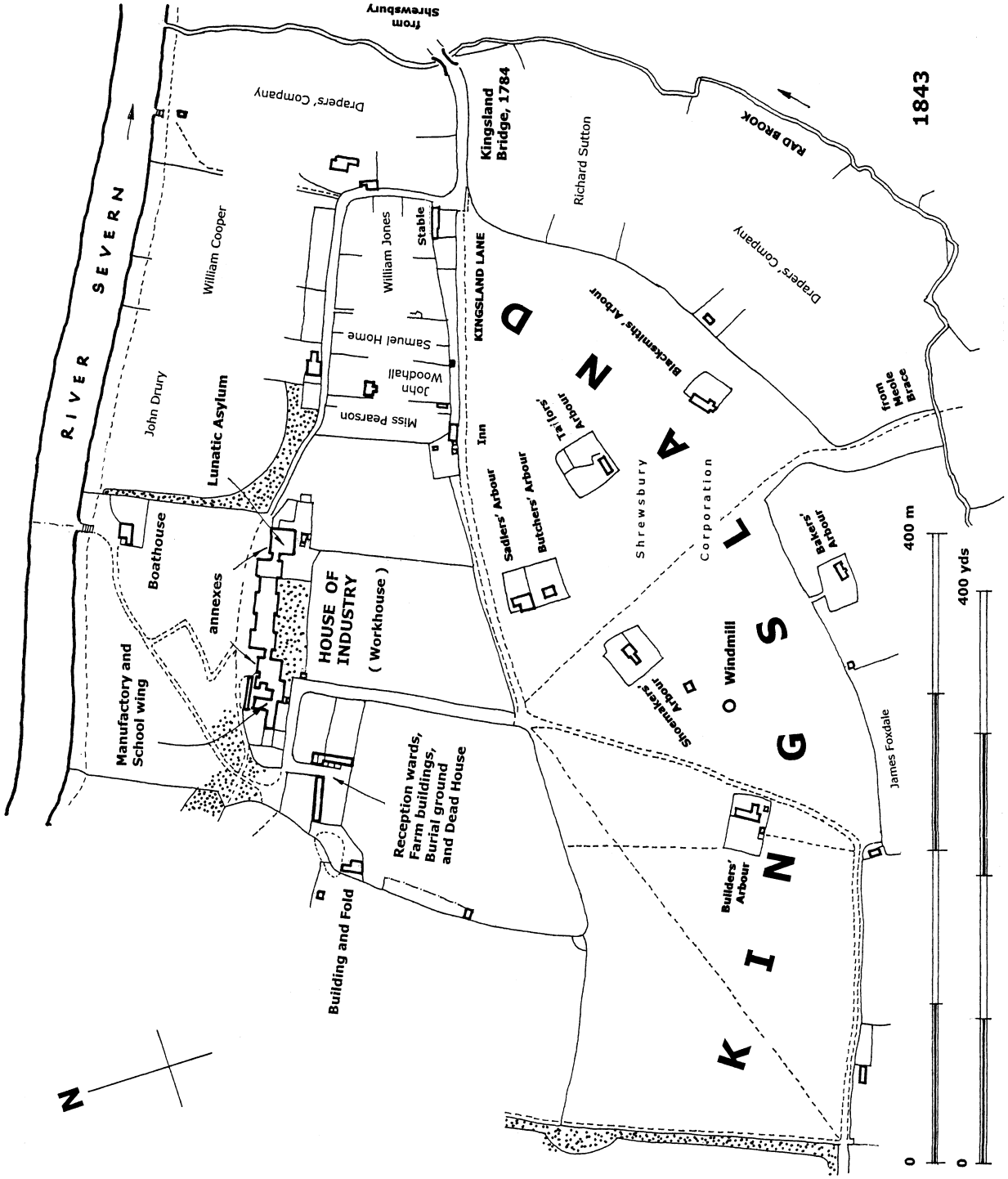

Figure 10 Site and grounds of Shrewsbury house of industry at Kingsland, *c.*1843. (Based mainly on the Tithe Survey plan of Meole Brace.)

Plate 1 Shrewsbury. The former house of industry, altered in the 1880s to serve as the main building of Shrewsbury School. View of north face (originally regarded as the front). River Severn in foreground, ferry at left.

order to house vagrants at 4*s*. a head. 'They are given supper, bed and breakfast but no work is demanded. [Jacob] has no interest in discouraging vagrants, as he is paid per vagrant.' In 1851 a vagrant ward was again mentioned, at the rear (probably meaning the north side) of the house.[35]

In April 1871 the Shrewsbury Poor United District was converted into a poor law union, which merged with Atcham union in July. The house of industry building was retained briefly while enlargements were carried out at Cross Houses, but it was sold in 1878 to the Governors of Shrewsbury School, together with a considerable area of land within Kingsland. The school removed from Castle Street in 1882.

After its sale to the school, the main building of the house of industry was the only structure retained, considerably beautified by Sir Arthur Blomfield. (See Plate 1.)

The school chapel, also designed by Blomfield, was located adjacent to the former pauper burial site, and so the paupers in it belatedly obtained their consecrated ground.

Notes

1 There were plans in 1604 for 'raising a sum of money for setting the poor to work', coupled with proposals to repair the castle to serve as a general workhouse, and subsequent references to one or more 'jersey houses' in which wool was spun or woven by poor persons. The jersey house in St. Austin's Friars became the workhouse of St. Chad's parish in 1728: Hobbs, *Shrewsbury Street Names*, 1982, 23 ('Castle Gates'); Owen, *Some Account of the Ancient and Present State of Shrewsbury*, 1808, 333–346; St. Chad's Parish Registers, 1913–18, x.

2 SA: PL2/3/4/3, half-yearly account book and winding up ledger.

3 24 Geo III, sess. 2 c.15, 1784; I. Wood, *Some Account of the Shrewsbury House of Industry*, 1st ed. 1791, 10–11.

4 J. Ionides, *Thomas Farnolls Pritchard of Shrewsbury*, 1999, 71 ff. 'The form and style of the Foundling Hospital…were dictated by the precedent of London and Ackworth. The function for them had already been worked out, so it would appear…that Pritchard's contribution…was limited to the architectural expression of the function. His main role was to interpret the plans of the other buildings [Capt. Coram's Foundling Hospitals in London and Ackworth, Yorkshire] and the instructions of the Committee as well as making up working drawings for the builders and craftsmen. He also procured materials and carried out the valuations': *ibid*., 84.

5 Owen, *op. cit.*, 339–340; *VCH Salop,* **II**, 157; J. E. Auden, 'Kingsland and its Associations', in *Trans. Shrops. Archaeol. Soc.*, **LII**, 40–58. The building replaced the hospital's temporary orphanage in Dog Lane (Claremont St.) The southern part of the site was held as a tenancy under Shrewsbury Corporation: SA: Tithe Survey of Meole Brace, 1843; SA: PL2/12/3/1, MS 'Notes for a Talk' (anon., perhaps by Edward Percy Everest, clerk to Atcham union, *c.*1920; PL2/2/1/3, Directors' Orders, 18 Feb. 1828.

6 SA: PL2/3/12/1, Assignments Book; I. Wood, *op. cit.* 1st ed. 1791, 13. In the 4th edition of his pamphlet (1795) Wood revised the date of opening to December 1783, but this is questionable; formal minutes of the board of directors start in August 1784; Sir F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, 1797, **2**, 638.

7 I. Wood, *op. cit.* 1st ed. 1791, 23, 25, 34, 5th ed. 1800, 37; Day, 'Report on Salop' in Poor Law Commissioners, *2nd Annual Report*, 1836, 390; SA: D21.3, I. Wood, *Letter to Sir William Pulteney*, 1797, 27–40; Owen, *op. cit.*, 341, 555. The realisation that the Shrewsbury scheme was hopelessly utopian occurred at the time when public debate was dominated by Pitt's proposed magistrate-driven School of Industry policy but this received no support from the Shrewsbury directors: S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government*, **7**, 'English Poor Law History, Pt. i: The Old Poor Law' (Repr. 1963), 34.

8 W. J. Pendlebury and J. M. West, *Shrewsbury School – Recent Years* (new ed., 1934), frontispiece photograph; NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 6 Feb. 1836.

9 SA: Map of Borough of Shrewsbury by A. Hitchcock, 1832; I. Wood, *Some Account...op. cit.* (5th ed., 1800), frontispiece.

10 Auden, *op. cit.*, 45–46; I. Wood, *Some Account...op. cit.* 5th ed. 1800, 41; Chapel: SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 10 Aug. 1784; Owen, *op. cit.*, 344.

11 SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 1 Nov. 1784, 19 June 1797.

12 SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 20 Mar. 1786.

13 SA: PL12/2/1, Oswestry Directors' Minutes, 10 Mar. 1792. The compiler of this inventory, Pearson, who was both master and clerk, commented that many paupers arrived from their parishes well clothed, and much of the equipment was also provided.

14 SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 10 Oct. 1785.

15 SA: PL2/3/9/6, Inventory, bound with Abstract of Cash Accounts.

16 F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, 1797, **2**, 623ff; I. Wood, *Some Account...op. cit.* 1st ed. 1971, 20; SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 12 Dec. 1785; P105/L/1/1-2, Letters concerning Hill.

17 SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 27 Nov. 1797, 20 Dec. 1798; Pendlebury and West, *op. cit.*, quoting article in *The Salopian,* 1882; Bagshaw, *Directory*, 1851, 66.

18 SA: PL2/2/2, Directors' Orders, 20 May 1813.

19 I. Wood, *Some Account...op. cit.* 1st ed. 1791, 36.

20 Auden, *op. cit.*, 56; SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 28 Feb. 1785; SA: C01 1643: Rev. T. Stedman, *Address to the Poor,* 1786, 2, 15; St. Chad's Registers, 1465. The same ground was used for victims in the Shrewsbury cholera outbreak of 1832.

21 SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 3 Jan. 1785, 9 May 1796.

22 SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 2 Nov. 1795–1 Feb. 1796, 20 Dec. 1798; PL2/2/3, Directors' Orders, 23 Mar. 1829; PL2/3/6/1, Kingsland mill ledger. The shoemakers' 'race' was an antique labyrinth, 'that contained a measured mile in the diameter of a few yards'. Auden, *op. cit.*, 55. There is a sketch plan of it in an 18th-century plan of Kingsland in SA: 6001/299.

23 I. Wood, *Some Account...op. cit.* 4th ed., 1795, 45; Owen, *op. cit.,* 344.

24 SA: D21.3 (in volume labelled on spine 'infirmary, house of industry, gaol'): I. Wood, *Correspondence with Rev. J. Howlett*, 18 June 1791, 78; SA: PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 10 Sept. 1798; F. M. Eden, *loc. cit*; Day, 'Report on the administration of relief…' in Poor Law Commissioners, *9th Annual Report*, 1843, 278 ff.

25 SA: PL2/2/2, Directors' Orders, 3 Dec. 1813.

26 SA: PL2/12/3/1, Notes for a Talk *op. cit*; I. Wood, *Some Account...op. cit.*, 4th ed., 1795, 61; *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 24 Jan. 1801; PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 21 Aug. 1797, 10 Sept. 1798; PL2/2/1/1, Directors' Orders, 16 Jan. 1806; 'Report of Sub-Committee on Shrewsbury Act of incorporation', 1824, quoted in Poor Law Commissioners, *9th Annual Report*, 1843, esp. 284–296; SA: PL2/2/1/3, Directors' Orders, steward's and matron's reports, 7 May 1824. Mr. and Mrs. Owen's salary in 1824 was recorded as £150 per annum.

27 59 Geo III, c.12; SA: PL2/2/1/2, Directors' Orders, 12 July 1824.

28 Day, 'Report on Salop', in Poor Law Commissioners, *2nd Annual Report*, 1836, 392; 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' (PP [Parliamentary Papers] 1834 xxvii): 'replies to queries'.

29 Royal Salop Infirmary, designed by Haycock, built 1826–30: Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 1958, 269; SA: PL2/2/1/3, Directors' Orders, 9 Feb. 1827; PL2/3/1/2, Ledger, f. 515, 1832; NLW: MS 3149F, Day to Lefevre, 10 Oct. 1836.

30 SA: PL2/2/1/3, Directors' Orders, 9 June 1834, 2nd letter from Jacob; PL2/3/1/2, Ledger, f. 518; PL2/2/1/3, Directors' Orders, 7 July 1834.

31 Day, 'Report on Salop', in Poor Law Commissioners, *2nd Annual Report*, 1836, 392; NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Directors of house of industry, 19 Feb. 1836; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 27 Jan. 1837, 24 July 1840; SA: PL2/2/1/3, Directors' Orders, 6 June 1842; PL2/3/1/2, Ledger, f. 30 (1842); V. J. Walsh, 'The Administration of the Poor Law in Shropshire 1820–1855', Univ. of Pennsylvania Ph. D., 1970, 104ff, however, treats Jacob's behaviour more sympathetically.

32 Census; *VCH Salop,* **III**, 160.

33 Bagshaw, *Directory*, 1851, 66.

34 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 10 Jan. 1840, 15 May 1840, 4 Sept. 1840; SA: PL2/2/1/3, Directors' Orders, 6 June 1842.

35 NLW: MS 3142F, Report on Shrewsbury incorporation, 6 Feb. 1836; Bagshaw, *Directory*, 1851, 66.

CHAPTER 3

WORKHOUSES OF LATE 18TH-CENTURY SHROPSHIRE IN IMITATION OF THE SHREWSBURY HOUSE OF INDUSTRY

Atcham

When Atcham poor law union was formed in 1836 it was the largest in Shropshire, covering 43 parishes, and its character was very much formed by its first chairman, Sir Baldwin Leighton. It used one workhouse, the former house of industry of the ten-parish Atcham incorporation at Crosshouses (SJ 5387 0757). The poor law union made no substantial improvements to the buildings until the 1850s. Despite the much greater population served by the union compared with the preceding incorporation, the house was considered big enough for the demands which would be placed on it under the reformed poor law. The buildings become a hospital in the early 20th century and redundant in the late 20th century, but the original workhouse was protected as a listed building. The site around it has now been redeveloped for housing. Architectural and archaeological studies of the old buildings were carried out in preparation for recent redevelopment.[1]

The incorporation had been set up under an Act of 1792 and united a group of parishes, all lying to the east of Shrewsbury. Its house of industry was designed and built between 1792 and 1794. The directors of the incorporation held their first meeting on 2 July 1792, and immediately turned their minds to the acquisition of a workhouse. The Rev. Edward Dana, the vicar of Wroxeter, proposed that it should accommodate 150 inmates. Four of the directors were appointed to examine an old workhouse at Cound to see if it was 'a proper building' for them to use, but they discarded it at the first opportunity. There was need of a large building because it was their initial intention to run the workhouse not as a Gilbert's Act workhouse but on the Shrewsbury model. (They at first intended not to provide out-relief labour for the able-bodied.) Accordingly, they were prepared for the considerable cost of a special Act, which was £450. Their Act was written in terms very similar to the Shrewsbury Act. They hoped that the 'industrious poor' in the house would be made to work profitably and be content to be paid gratuities regardless of the wages paid for similar work in the outside world.[2]

An advertisement was inserted in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* for architects and builders to submit sealed 'plans and reports' for a workhouse building by 15 July 1792. Persons submitting designs were to be identified only by a secret cipher to be revealed in a letter which would not be opened until the winning design had been chosen. The designs were to be drawn up without any information about the site, which was only stated to be 'within 6 Miles of Shrewsbury'. If the winner of the competition were not to be appointed builder, he was to be paid 5 guineas. At their meeting on 16 July a plan by the Shrewsbury architect-builder John Hiram Haycock was approved.[3] (See Figure 11.)

Crosshouses is in the township of Brompton in the parish of Berrington, and the parish consisted almost entirely of Berwick (Attingham) estate, apart from a few roadside cottages and gardens. One of the latter sites, free of Berwick control, comprising a house, barn, cowhouse and garden, was purchased in August from William Ford for £140.[4]

Haycock signed his contract as builder in August. The workhouse, infirmary and outbuildings were to be built for £3,000 and to be completed by 29 September 1794. Haycock was paid an advance of £400, and was to be paid £350 on reaching the first floor, £350 on reaching the second floor, £350 on reaching the third floor (perhaps signifying respectively ground, first and second floors, as now counted), £350 on covering the roof, £300 on boarding the floors, £300 on finishing the plastering and £300 on completion. £300 was to be paid for completing the infirmary and outbuildings, but these were not to be built unless and until instructed. In June 1793 Joseph Bromfield was appointed surveyor to the directors, to ensure that the work was approved and correctly paid for. Haycock was paid the final £300, completing his contract for the main building, in October 1794, and an instruction to him to expedite the completion in November must refer to the delayed infirmary and outbuildings.[5]

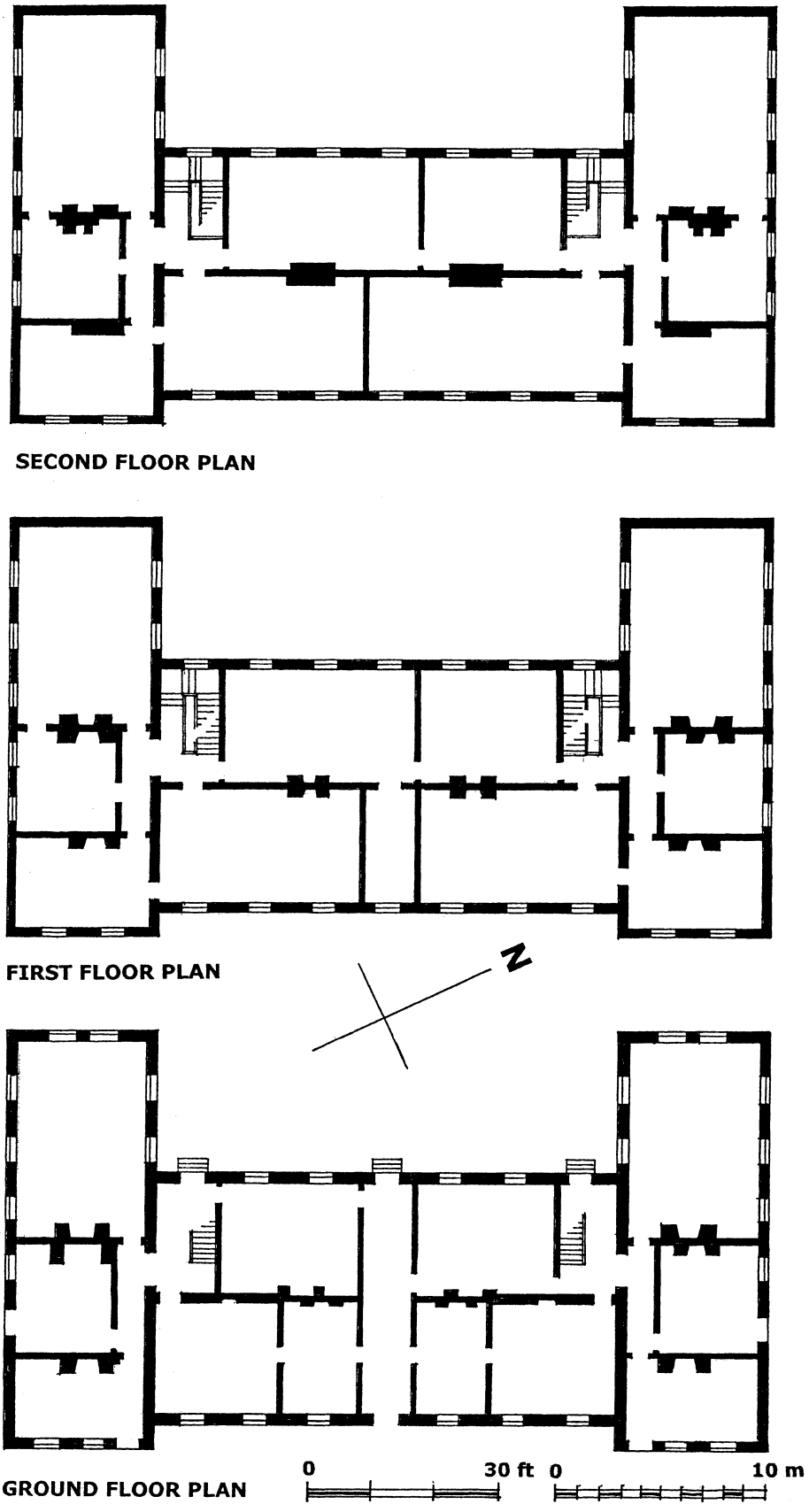

Figure 11 Conjectural plan of the original Atcham workhouse.

The house was a three-storey brick building with a main range of seven bays terminating in two-bay wings projecting to a little to the front and considerably to the rear. The east face was the front. The design superficially followed the precedent of Shrewsbury, but at a reduced size. It also differs from the Shrewsbury model in lacking a pedimented centre. It was built of very large bricks, and the first two storeys were to have 11 ft. ceilings and the top storey a 10 ft. ceiling. The window sills are in Grinshill stone and the heads consist of flat brick arches, those to the front being slightly cambered. The roofs are hipped and in Welsh slate.[6]

The plan of Haycock's building is conjecturally known. It was clearly designed to certain 'round' overall dimensions: the main range between wings is 72 ft. in length by 40 ft. wide. As in Shrewsbury this range is bisected longitudinally by a wall extending through the full height of the building. The central wall carries several fireplaces and was crossed by a pair of walls defining an entrance corridor. The external door positions are symmetrically placed, and are by inference original, but the original doors themselves have long since disappeared. The nature of the central main door is unknown; there is now a large arch in that position, but it is architecturally alien, and the original probably had a door in a simple classical doorcase, similar to the main doors of Forden or Morda workhouses. The symmetrical staircases are by inference original, and suggest a basic division of the house into male and female quarters (on later evidence, probably males to the north, females to the south). Most of the rooms on the first and second floors were probably dormitories, but there might have been many partitions which were later lost. The ground storey probably incorporated day rooms, a school and the boardroom.

In May 1794 John and Jane Wigley were appointed as governor and matron. In August the incorporation advertised for 46 beds (probably for multiple occupation). It was regretted at an early date that the house was not bigger. The parishes were instructed to move their in-paupers to the new house in turns from 3 to 7 November 1794. In November a surgeon and chaplain were appointed. An order was given in December to sell off the goods of the old Cound Moor workhouse. Another old parish workhouse, at Upton Magna, was to be sold in 1801.[7]

It has been suggested that political differences dissuaded the Atcham promoters from simply joining the Shrewsbury incorporation[8], but a difference in management policy might also have been significant. The Atcham directors continued to make considerable out-relief payments, but such payments ceased at Shrewsbury at an early date. There is no mention of industrial activities at Atcham on any scale beyond ordinary agricultural work and the spinning of yarn. The evidence gives the impression that the early directors of Atcham were less keen than their Shrewsbury colleagues to exploit the special features of their Act.[9]

By 1831 the incorporation was in financial crisis, partly said to be due to slack management and partly under the effects of an increased numbers of inmates. If there were increased paupers in the house, this was in contrast to the case of Shrewsbury where the house in the early 19th century was starved of inmates. The number of inmates in the last five years of the Atcham incorporation was not remarkable; it varied from about 95 to just over 160. At the close of the incorporation's regime on 21 November 1836 there were 99 in the house. The incorporation used powers under Gilbert's Act to exclude able-bodied paupers, giving it more the character of an almshouse. Slack management might have been a larger factor. 'Irresponsible power soon degenerates into laxity' was Day's comment about Atcham. The directors made resolutions to enforce their regulations more carefully, and directors or overseers failing to attend board meetings were to be fined.[10]

The exceeding of an expenditure limit of £1,099 was supposed by section 42 of the Act to lead to the automatic dissolution of the incorporation and reversion of its powers to the parishes, but this provision had long been a dead letter. The incorporation had originally borrowed £5,000 which was still a debt at the time of its final winding up in the early 1840s.[11]

Under Atcham Poor Law Union

In March 1836, by an 11 to 4 vote, the directors of the incorporation consented to dissolution and on 16 November the Poor Law Commission re-constituted Atcham as a union of 43 parishes. The enlarged Atcham, together with Shrewsbury, was to be considered as potentially one big union, the achievement of which was administratively and politically impossible in the 1830s, but hoped for in the future.[12] Criggion and some lesser places in Montgomeryshire were initially included in Atcham union. Later in the year the directors of the incorporation had second thoughts about dissolving but the decision was irrevocable.[13] It was decided to have two alternating places of meeting, Crosshouses and Shrewsbury. The first chairman of Atcham union was Sir Baldwin Leighton. In view of the extreme size of the union two vice-chairmen were appointed, John Richards and Joseph Dickenson. Most of the guardians of the new union were farmers.[14]

Within the area of the union were several parish workhouses, none deemed fit to retain. Condover workhouse was sold off in 1837 and Astley in 1839. The union purchased the former house of industry from the

incorporation in March 1838 for £3,507. Leighton reported in 1838 that £507 had been already been paid and the loan for the remainder would be paid off in nine years. Only minor repairs and alterations, worth £222, were initially required. Yards were gravelled, privies improved and a wall built to separate the men and women. Improvements were inhibited by the expectation that before long the union would absorb Shrewsbury and the guardians would get their hands on the Shrewsbury house of industry, though this did not happen until 1871.[15]

The guardians decided in 1837 to spend £1,000 on furnishings and repairs. In the same year they set up a union school, but it was soon found that, with only 17 boys between the ages of 6 and 16, numbers were too few for efficiency. Approaches were made to the adjacent unions of Wem, Ellesmere and Llanfyllin to send children. Llanfyllin union proved slow to pay the fees demanded, and the clerk was instructed to write to the Llanfyllin guardians, threatening to send their children back. In 33 years the Atcham School was in the care of only four masters. The schoolroom earned unfavourable comment in 1845, when it was described as 'ill-ventilated'.[16]

A map of the workhouse buildings in the 1840s shows the original Haycock building without any additions, apart from a small separate infirmary to the west on the same axis. These buildings were linked by two exercise yards.[17]

The directors of the house of industry had not used their power to establish a burial ground. When the union took over in 1836 the guardians continued the long established practice of burying paupers who had died in the house in the churchyard of Berrington parish, but in 1848 an unsavoury dispute broke out with the parish over this practice. At this time the rector of Berrington was the Rev. Thomas Henry Noel-Hill, third son of the fourth Lord Berwick. The parish of Berrington objected to any more alien paupers being buried in their churchyard. This was a problem for a union of such size as Atcham, where deceased paupers could not always be removed for burial in their proper parishes in reasonable time. There were health problems about removing infectious diseased bodies through populous districts. Also, a few of the places constituting the union were said to be parishes without graveyards. The guardians could not persuade the Berrington parish authorities to permit a pauper extension to the graveyard to be made, but fortunately there was a slip of unwanted land to the immediate west of the workhouse which was not in Berrington but in Atcham parish, and with the agreement of the Diocese (but not of the Poor Law Board) they decided to establish a pauper burial ground there.[18]

Lunatics under the care of the union were not sent to Jacob's asylum attached to the Shrewsbury house of industry. The guardians preferred to send lunatics to an alternative asylum in Shrewsbury, run by Tipton, or to Chester. Sir Baldwin Leighton was notably dissatisfied with the provisions for lunatics, and he was a leading figure in establishing the county lunatic asylum at Bicton Heath in 1845.

R. A. Slaney, visiting the house in 1845, commented very unfavourably in his journal[19] on the lack of modern standards. The old people's rooms he found close and uncomfortable, their yards damp, and they lacked books; he also found they were troubled by lack of segregation from 'disgusting' paupers of unsound mind.

Many additional buildings were erected after *c*.1850. Improvements were at first restricted by the amount of land available to the guardians. Plans and estimates for alterations 'for improving classification' were commissioned from Edward Haycock, architect, of Shrewsbury (the son of the original architect-builder), and were approved in August 1849 by the Poor Law Board. In 1850 the poor law inspector, Doyle, advised the guardians to proceed with the plans already approved. At the rear (west) was the new infirmary, probably completed in 1851. Haycock was appointed as surveyor in June, and his fee was set at 5% of the cost of the work. The new infirmary replaced an original one at the same location. The new infirmary was also a three-storey building, with short wings at each end, lying parallel to the main workhouse. In July John Dickson won the contract to build it for £1,510. It survives, and is a building of utilitarian appearance with round-headed cast-iron windows. It was administered as a separate department. The addition of a chapel was first considered at about this time. Several sites for a chapel were examined by the building committee in August 1849.[20]

In its final years the workhouse functioned increasingly as a hospital. Following an acquisition of land at the north of the site from the Berwick Estate in 1872, a very large infirmary of 22 bays was constructed in line with the original workhouse. It had a simple pedimented centre over four bays. Also using the newly acquired land, a boys' school was added as an elongation of the original workhouse to the north, and a corresponding and nearly symmetrical girls' school was built on land already in the guardians' possession to the south. Each of these school additions had its own integral staircase enclosure projecting at front. They are shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1881, together with the detached infirmary, but they are now demolished. Another improvement in this period was the addition of a large dining hall (also now demolished), linking the original workhouse and the early infirmary to its west, on the site of the original exercise yards. By this time the infirmary building contained kitchens. The improvements of *c*.1873 (for which Wetherby was the architect) were linked to an increase of the maximum capacity of the house from 300 to 600 paupers, prompted by the dissolution of the Shrewsbury incorporation in 1871 and the addition of the Shrewsbury parishes to Atcham union. During construction, the paupers from Atcham workhouse were temporarily moved to the Shrewsbury house at Kingsland.[21] The chapel was finalised and built shortly after this period. It stands in isolation to the east of the

Plate 2 Atcham. The former house of industry (later Berrington Hospital) at Crosshouses, following demolition of the wings at left and right and conversion into dwelling units (2005). The chimney at rear belonged to a laundry in the former infirmary building.

original workhouse and, like the infirmary, on the same axis. It is a brick building in a very rudimentary Gothic style, with a buttressed nave in five bays, cheaply decorated with coloured brick bands. Tramps' wards and cells were added near the roadside in 1896.

A nurses' home was built at the rear of the site in 1903, to the design of G. W. Deakin. All workhouse functions (except the tramps' wards) ceased in the early 20th century in favour of out-relief, and any remaining in-paupers were transferred to other workhouses. During the First World War the buildings were taken for Berrington War Hospital. After a period of post-war disuse they became Berrington Hospital in *c*.1927. Plans for this conversion by Deakin, dated 1924, show the original workhouse building designated principally as a nurses' residence. At the close of the poor law Atcham was designated the hospital for the county poor. The establishment was re-named Cross Houses Hospital in 1948. It served as a geriatric and maternity hospital, and it was subsequently used in the closing years of the 20th century as administrative offices for Shropshire Health Authority. Much was demolished in 2003–4 when the land was redeveloped for housing, but the original workhouse of 1794, the mid-19th century infirmary to its west and the chapel to its east survived, converted and much renovated.[22] (See Plate 2.)

Ellesmere

A very large workhouse was set up after 1791 as the house of industry for Ellesmere and three other ancient parishes, Myddle (including Hadnall), Baschurch and Hordley. Although this odd group of parishes was included in the Ellesmere scheme, by far the greatest number of the paupers who took refuge in the house were from the parish of Ellesmere. Like several others, the house of industry was conceived in imitation of Shrewsbury during an early period of success and enthusiasm before the shortcomings of the Shrewsbury policy became apparent. At the time of the new poor law the incorporation was dissolved and a union took its place, but 'the big house' continued in use as the workhouse and continued to the end of the poor law in 1930 with few alterations or improvements.[23]

The house of industry was the successor to an Ellesmere parish workhouse. This had been established probably after a general authority to set up workhouses was created under Knatchbull's Act (1722). An order of the vestry to spend £30 on repair to an old building in 1733 may mark its start. The equipment in the parish workhouse indicates spinning and weaving activity.[24] The house was run by a superintendent, whose duties included taking care of the poor both 'within and without the workhouse'. Superintendents were 'allowed a servant'. Bickley, appointed in 1741, 'should have the management of the workhouse but not live in it'. At the

time of Bickley's appointment, Barbara Jones was appointed 'to live in the house to look after the poor', doubtless on a par with them, at a salary of £4 a year. In the course of the 18th century the annual payment of the superintendents gradually rose from £10 to £18.[25]

Dissatisfaction with the parish workhouse in the late 18th century led to an experiment with farming the poor, followed by more radical ideas. Following the resignation of their superintendent, Thomas Jackson, in 1774 the overseers decided to advertise for a new superintendent 'to employ the poor in some manufactory'. In 1781 the parish decided to farm the poor out to a contractor, using the existing workhouse, and advertised for a person willing to take them at so much 'per pound'. This odd expression perhaps signifies that the contractor was to profit from the productive work that he could get out of them. The workhouse was enlarged and a resolution was passed that its manager was to employ any persons sent to him who were capable of working.[26]

The Ellesmere vestry was conscious that in the Shrewsbury parishes all indigent persons capable of working were being brought into the house of industry under what was considered a completely novel management philosophy. Discipline, it appeared, was transforming the idle poor into industrious poor. Aware of this, but not of the failure of such schemes elsewhere in the country, the vestry resolved unanimously in the following year that 'it is the opinion of this vestry that the affairs of the parish relating to the management of the poor are in such disorder that it is necessary to apply to Parliament for an Act to enable us to provide better for the poor,' and they acquired an Act in terms very similar to that of the Shrewsbury incorporation.[27]

The promoters of the Ellesmere incorporation obtained their Act on 7 June 1791. As with other incorporations set up on the Shrewsbury model it is significant that public opinion in Ellesmere was not prepared to proceed under the already available terms of Gilbert's Act, and the local vestry was put to the expense, at £431, of obtaining a special Act for their own purposes. Under Gilbert's Act the parishes would have taken no able bodied persons into the house. The Ellesmere policy was to refuse out-pay to any person under the age of 70, and to allow persons above that age only 1*s*. per week. The ratepayers of five parishes joined the scheme and were incorporated as 'the Guardians of the Poor of the Several Parishes', and empowered to elect 15 persons to serve as directors. The Act was not specific as to whether the house of industry was to consist of one building or of several, although clearly it was the intention to erect a large building similar to that at Shrewsbury. The Act would have permitted the directors to have set up several workhouses dedicated to different classes of the poor if they had so wished.[28]

The Act contained the same provision as the Acts of the other Shrewsbury-type incorporations, empowering the directors to employ the poor profitably, and anticipated the same improbable contingency that the scheme could succeed so amply that the poor rates might cease and the directors have surplus funds to invest. The industrious poor, working at their spinning wheels or looms, were to be paid 'reasonable' gratuities, and there was provision that gratuities should not be spent on 'unwholesome and unnecessary liquors'. The normal law of settlement was set aside. The poor employed in the house were to gain no legal settlement in Ellesmere, no matter how long their stay, and a bastard was to take the settlement of its mother, wherever that might be, even though born in Ellesmere.

The directors raised funds by the issue of bonds. They had authority to purchase up to 20 acres upon which to erect the house or houses 'which shall be called the house of industry'. Part of the ground, which had to be freehold, was to be enclosed with a wall to serve as a pauper graveyard and be consecrated. Under these terms the directors acquired about 15 acres of land at Haughton on the north side of the Mere, four of which were used for the new house and its outbuildings, yards, gardens, and burial ground.[29]

A local builder, Edgecombe, was appointed surveyor of the new building, and he advertised for various items of building trade work in July 1792. Interested persons were invited to submit to him their proposals and bids for masonry work, such as sills and cornices, and carpentry and joinery, such as doors, windows, stairs and flooring. Edgecombe appears to have been essentially a brickwork contractor, as his advertisement also appealed for journeyman bricklayers to apply at the workhouse for work, and anticipated from 12 to 18 months of employment for suitable men. The construction of the house ran over time; it was not yet complete in May 1794 when Edward Edwards was appointed manager of the poor, 'until the house is ready'. Completion was then expected to happen no later than March 1795. Above the door of the new house a stone inscribed, with the spelling of the time, 'Ellesmere, Baschurch, Middle, Hordley and Hadnal Ease house of industry erected MDCCXCII' was erected, but the date of completion of the building was late in 1794. Some time was then necessary to furnish it. Eden states that the house opened in January 1795, and the first entry of a weekly schedule of the number of inmates was made on 3 February.[30]

The house resembled the Shrewsbury house of industry at Kingsland. The Ellesmere house was also of brick, and it consisted of a main range running east-west with a cross wing at each end, although the dimensions were not the same. The Ellesmere house was about 150 ft. in length overall; the house at Shrewsbury about 180 ft. The crosswings at each end of the Ellesmere house projected boldly to front and rear, whereas those of the Shrewsbury house only projected a little. The main range in both cases was of three storeys, plus a roofspace lit

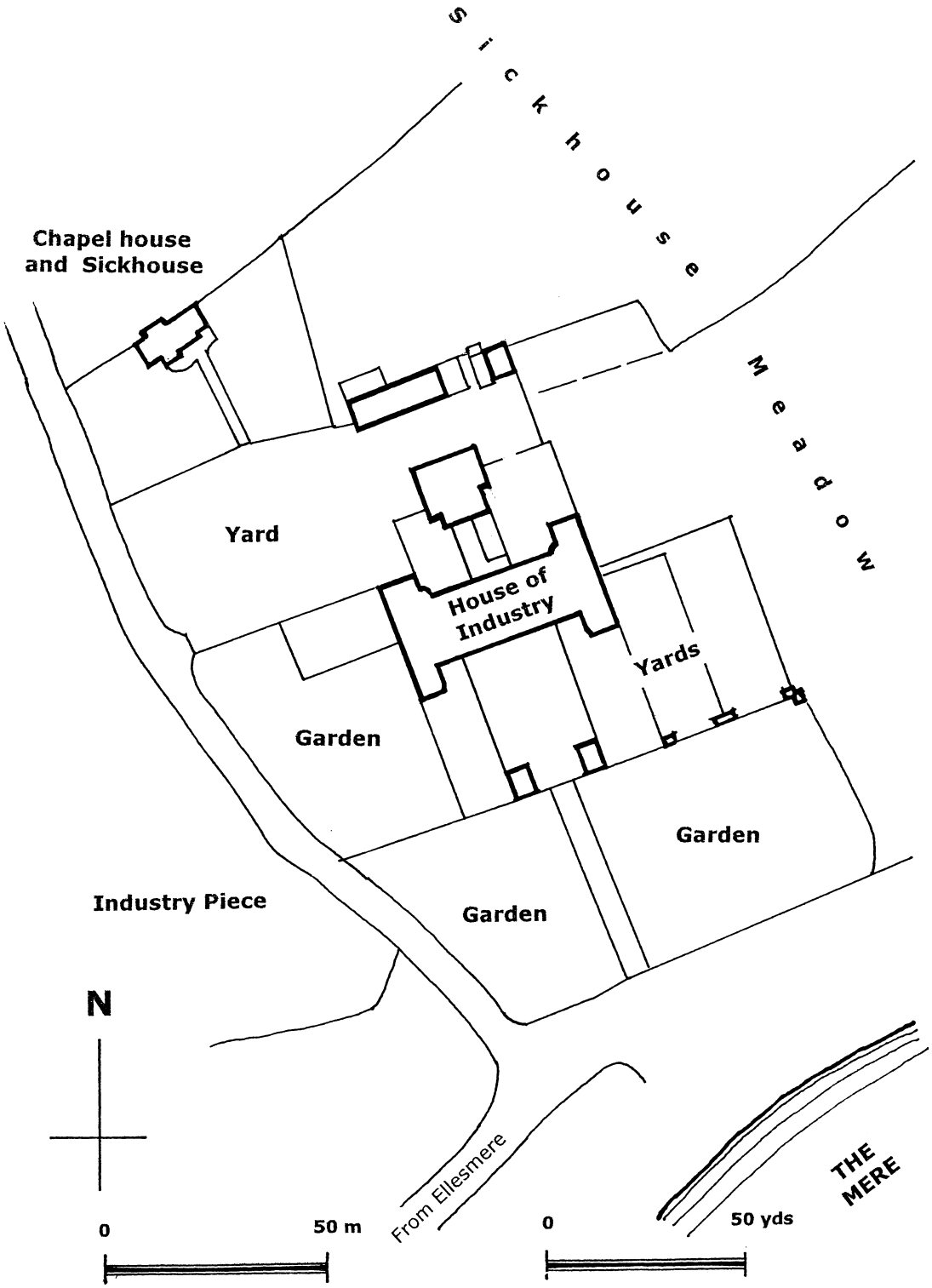

Figure 12 Ellesmere house of industry, *c*.1839. (Based on Tithe Survey and Ordnance Survey.)

by dormer windows. Both had a pedimented slightly advancing central unit of three bays with a roundel in the centre of the pediment, latterly, at Ellesmere, fitted with a clock. The central part at Ellesmere was more embellished than in the Shrewsbury house, with a pair of small windows under the same lintel as the main door, and a Venetian window and a lunette window above. Internally, 'the distribution of the rooms' was similar to that at Shrewsbury. Eden noted that the dormitories were 'extremely clean and neat' and that 'special apartments' were provided for the deserving poor 'who have borne a fair character'. All the inmates had their meals together.[31]

The expenses over a period from July 1791 to September 1795, including the period of construction, amounted to £11,100. The Act cost £431, the land £570, the buildings £5,075 and furniture etc. £1,013. Two years after the opening Eden stated that 'the incorporated parishes are in general now heartily sorry that they ever engaged in the house of industry' and estimated that the annual expense for 1795 to be borne by the ratepayers would be £3,500 which was considerably more than double the average of £1,421 for the twelve years before 1790.[32]

From the time of opening to the end of 1795 a weekly record of the numbers in the house was kept. At the start of February 1795 the first entry records 100 inmates. Numbers crept up to 199 in June, and 212 in July. Numbers then remained at about 200 until the end of January 1796. In 1797 Eden reported 198 inmates, consisting of 50 men, 34 women and 114 children. After this the numbers reported by the steward are recorded only sporadically. Until 1812 numbers appear to have been generally about 150. In January 1814 they were 207. Monthly numbers recorded in 1824 and 1825 range from 142 to 201. The impression of fairly constant numbers given by these figures might be misleading: a local census taken in 1821 records 184 males and 112 females, totalling 296, in the house. At the start of the house of industry the inmates manufactured their own clothes and made flannels for sale; within two years they were only making hop-bags. Eden refers to a farm of 45 acres attached to the house, but mentions only four cows.[33]

In 1836 William Day negotiated the dissolution of the incorporation to make way for setting up Ellesmere poor law union. In March he received a conditional consent, followed by a full consent signed by twelve of the directors, including R. A. Slaney. With the exception of a single parish the new union was to be co-extensive with the Hundred of Pimhill. The parishes initially in the union were entirely within Shropshire, from Ellesmere in the north to Great Ness in the south.[34]

The union was declared on 14 November 1836, and the first meeting of its board of guardians was held shortly afterwards. Robert Aglionby Slaney of Walford Manor, one of three magistrates who were *ex-officio* members of the board, was elected chairman.

Day, who attended the first meeting of the board of guardians, wanted as soon as possible to expand the union to include some Flintshire parishes, but this could not be done until it was agreed with Neave, the assistant poor law commissioner responsible for the Flintshire unions. The more immediate problem identified by Day was the precarious position of the new union, which inherited a huge debt from the incorporation. According to legal advice received by Day, if the bondholders of the incorporation's debt of £8,000 chose to demand immediate payment, there was a possibility of them evicting the guardians from the workhouse.[35]

The buildings of the workhouse, as recorded in the Tithe Survey of 1839, consisted of the main house, looking over a large formal forecourt with symmetrical buildings at the gates and an axial approach drive. There was a detached building to the rear, which might have been an infirmary. (The layout of the buildings of the Atcham union at Crosshouses is very similar, and a building in exactly this location was an original infirmary.) To the rear of the possible infirmary were further outbuildings. At the far end of the site to the rear were a chapel and sickhouse within the enclosure of the paupers' graveyard. These buildings occupied only about four of the 14 acres of the guardians' freehold. The ground not occupied by the workhouse buildings consisted of three large fields to the east side, named Sickhouse Meadow, and let to a tenant. Another field, on the west side of the road opposite the workhouse, was named Industry Piece, and was part of the property of the Rev. Edward Dymock. Architecturally, the building was of some sophistication and the layout sought to do it justice. The first view from the town was dominated by gardens, the house itself was approached by a formal driveway, and several uniformly designed exercise yards were set out between the house and the gardens. (See Figure 12.)

The yards might have been satisfactory, but segregation of the different classes of paupers within the house was not. In December 1837 Day paid a surprise visit to the 'big house' and found to his disapproval girls put at moral risk by being allowed to mix with the women who had bastards. There were about 15 of these mothers in the house. By January 1838 alterations to improve classification had been carried out. Following these alterations the house was judged to be very good and well arranged. Discipline was improved. The proceedings of the union and its house were deemed satisfactory by Day, especially on occasions when the chairman, Slaney, attended.[36]

When described in 1851 the west wing of the house was occupied by males and the east wing by females. Samuel Bagshaw appears to have thought the presence of a chapel, which he observed in the east wing, was unusual and he suggested that this was an innovation brought about by the guardians. The presence of a chapel and an active school are both features readily associated with Slaney's energetic leadership of the union in its formative months.[37]

In 1856 18 rooms were counted in an incomplete list in the Ellesmere workhouse. (See Table 5.)[38] The Married Women's bedroom and the Itch Ward, for sufferers from scabies, were probably in outbuildings. The outlines of the workhouse buildings shown on Ordnance Survey maps from 1874 to 1924 do not show any significant additions since 1839, apart from a small enlargement of the building to the rear of the main house.

Table 5 Rooms in Ellesmere Workhouse, 1856

Room	Length (ft.)	Width (ft.)
Old Men	32	20
Work Room	20	16
Boys' School	41	16
Old Women	20	16
Girls' School	19	16
Children under seven	20	20
Able-bodied women	20	20
Women's Sick Ward	82	20
Lying-in Ward	30	20
Girls' Bedroom	40	20
Children's Bedroom	53	20
Able-bodied Women's Bedroom	86	20
Old Women's Bedroom	30	20
Married Women's Bedroom	16	11
Men's Sick Ward	30	20
Old Men's Ward	30	20
Boys' Ward	40	20
Itch Ward	21	12

The union was abolished in 1930, and the house was demolished shortly afterwards. The site is now occupied by a private house named Green Acres.

Oswestry

The house of industry at Morda, a little south of Oswestry, was a workhouse set up by Oswestry incorporation on the Shrewsbury model in 1794. At the time of poor law reform in the 1830s the millstone of the incorporation's huge debts due to its vast workhouse rendered it impossible for the Poor Law Commission to achieve its dissolution and it was allowed to function as one of the 'unions under local Acts'.[39]

The incorporation arose from a vestry meeting called in 1790 to discuss setting up a union of parishes with a workhouse on what appeared to be the very successful model of the Shrewsbury incorporation, but under the provisions of Gilbert's Act. It was soon realised, however, that the promoters' ideas were incompatible with the main feature of Gilbert's Act, which was that the workhouse should be kept for the aged and infirm, the able-bodied being excluded. The promoters wanted to follow the Shrewsbury model closely and have a workhouse which would be primarily a place of training and employment. The Oswestry incorporation therefore thought it preferable to have a local Act to spell out its own policy. The central idea was to bring the poor, especially children and the able-bodied, into the workhouse where they would learn to work diligently and profitably under a strict, but benign, regime. The inmates, it was thought, would not only prosper, but the earnings from their work would pay off the huge capital cost of the incorporation and its house of industry.[40]

The policy was to make the house truly a house of industry, hoping that the products of the inmates' labour would cover the cost of housing them. The ideas were summed up shortly afterwards:

> 'In 1794 a large and handsome building was erected within ¾ of a mile of the town, by virtue of an Act of Parliament, for the relief and employment of the poor of that and eleven other neighbouring parishes united therewith. They are represented at a weekly court, held every Monday at the house, by 16 directors, who are chosen out of, and elected by, the guardians or householders, of which Oswestry sends five, and each of the others one. The good effects of the institution are already known from the reduction of the poor's rate and the comforts which the aged poor find of cleanliness and plenty in this asylum. The youth of both sexes, and other paupers able to work, are stimulated to industry by having allowed to them for their own use a sixth part of their earnings, some being employed as tailors, shoemakers, &c, &c, and others in the woollen or other manufactures'.[41]

The parishes of Oswestry Hundred were joined in this idealistic venture by Chirk, a Denbighshire parish, and Llansilin, a parish which lay across the border of Denbighshire and Shropshire. The Act incorporated all the

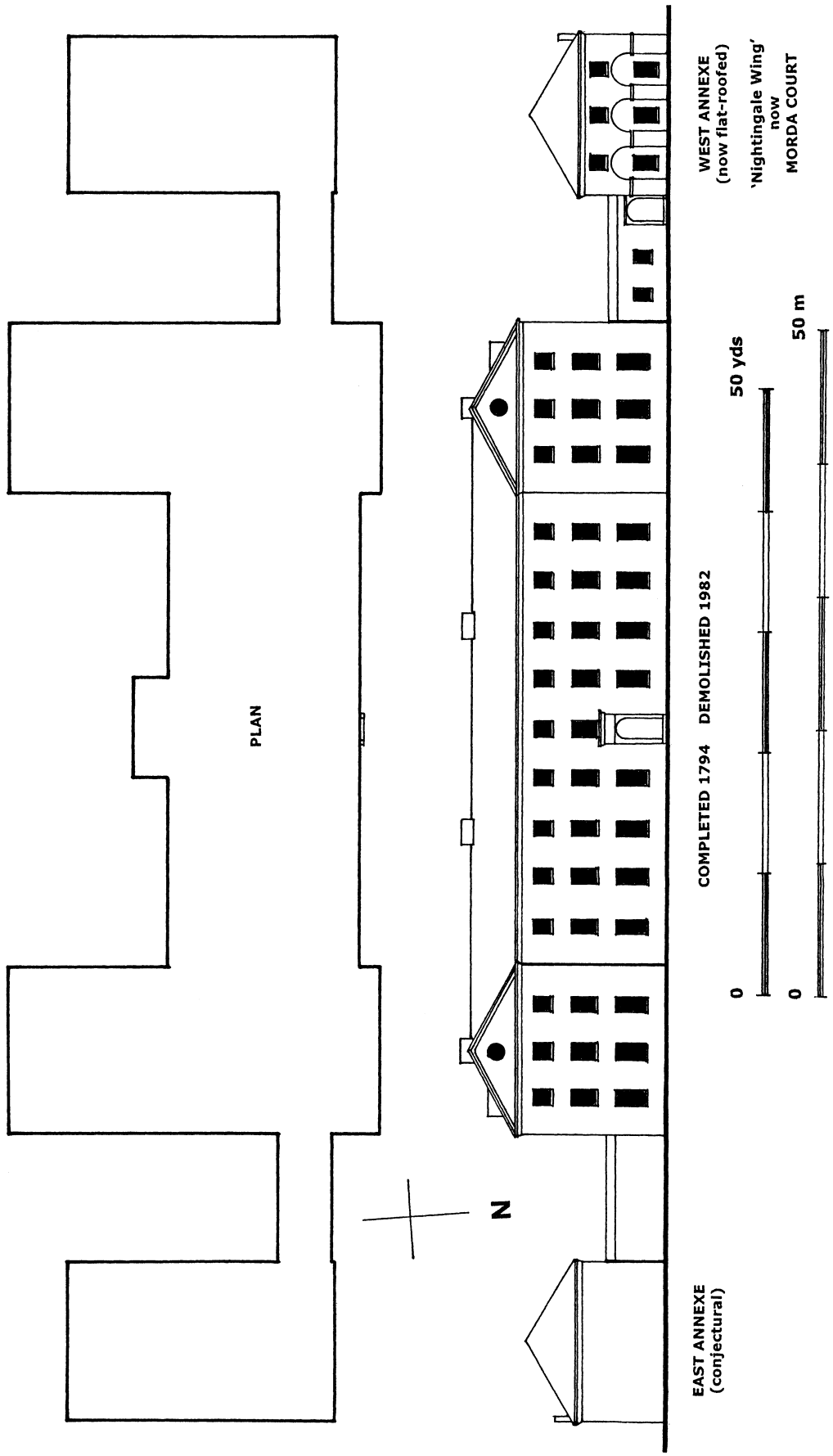

Figure 13 Conjectural plan and north elevation of Oswestry house of industry at Morda, *c*.1840. (Based on photographs, Tithe Survey plan of Morda and Ordnance Survey.)

ratepayers of these parishes as 'guardians' and designated their elected representatives as 'directors'. The Mayor of Oswestry, John Lovatt, was to be a director *ex officio*, and he became the chairman. The incorporation came into being on 31 July 1791 and held its first meeting on the following day at the Guildhall. From the shakiness of the handwriting in which some directors signed the weekly minutes it is probable that many were gentlemen of advanced age.[42]

Isaac Wood, the leading light of the Shrewsbury incorporation, was one of three commissioners appointed under the Oswestry Act to settle the quotas to be paid to the common fund by each of the parishes.[43]

The house of industry built at Morda was an imposing building, even larger than its model, the Shrewsbury house. It was a three-storey structure of red brick and stone, with slate roof, and consisted of a front range and two large cross wings projecting considerably to the rear.[44] The main front or north elevation was a three-storey sash-windowed range of 15 bays, including the slightly advancing pedimented three-bay gable walls of the cross wings at each end. The pediments had deep stone cornices and brick tympanums. At the centre of each pediment was a round window. The windows had slightly cambered brick arches and stone sills. The central rows in each of the end units were blind windows. The central doorway had Tuscan pilasters and an entablature reaching up to the sill of the first-floor window. On the south side the cross wings projected boldly and also terminated in three-bay pedimented gables, and there was also a smaller central two-bay pedimented projection. The precedent for the design was the Shrewsbury house of industry, but the building was ornamented with pediments in a different manner. The house at Shrewsbury was probably designed with similar fronts towards the front and rear, whereas the Oswestry house was dissimilar at front and rear. Both were probably intended to face their respective towns, though when the Oswestry house with its central pediment in its south elevation was examined by Pevsner he assumed south to be the front.[45] (See Figure 13.)

The house was said to have been designed for up to 600.[46] When first studied by William Day he considered that it could hold a thousand inmates. The ratepayers of Oswestry and the other incorporated parishes cannot have been pleased to read of their house of industry described in 1813 as 'a ridiculously splendid brick-building, intended, not for a purpose which its exterior seems to prompt, but for the abode of the indigent and wretched'. This was social and economic criticism disguised as architectural comment. The writer, Nicholson, proceeded to condemn the 'strange perversion of common sense, made by ostentation and folly, when elegance and show become the concealment of poverty and distress. Convenience, humility, and obscurity, should rather distinguish the dwelling of the unfortunate, whether their circumstances be derived from their own crimes or from the crimes of others'.[47] An imposing building, whose grateful inmates were being rescued from poverty, despair or apathy and trained into a new self-respect, was entirely in the Utopian spirit of the incorporation. The original promoters would have been horrified to hear their workhouse described as the abode of the indigent and wretched.[48]

The incorporation came into existence without any assets, and having no official source of finance funded itself by creating mortgages of the poor rate. The first of these mortgages raised money to pay their solicitor's bill of £356 for obtaining the Act of incorporation. During their first three years the directors raised over £10,000 by means of mortgages.[49]

The incorporation was governed by a board of directors. In the early months much of their time was spent in negotiations to get the necessary land. The final choice was an estate attached to The Drill public house, plus a parcel of adjacent land belonging to the Rev. J. R. Lloyd. The estate was bought in November 1791 for £720. Directors' meetings were held at a nearby inn until the new house of industry was completed.

They chose John Hiram Haycock of Shrewsbury as their architect. Haycock had previously designed the Shrewsbury Guildhall and Shirehall (1785) and alterations to Millington's Hospital, Frankwell (1786). He designed and built the Atcham house of industry (1792) and was currently working on Shrewsbury Gaol. It is striking that Haycock must have drawn up plans for the Oswestry house of industry before there was any firm information about where the house would be built, before receiving any formal instruction to act as architect, and perhaps even before his client, the incorporation, had legally come into existence. Even by the date of their second weekly board meeting, his plans for the house of industry appear to have been in readiness.[50]

The initial design was for a building in stone. The architect explained what cost might be saved by omitting 'stone cornices on each front and the porticoes'. He must have intended to use some very extravagant masonry, as he reduced the overall estimate by this change from £7,920 to £6,375. The stonework contractor was at first to be George Smith of Ashford in Derbyshire: on 10 October 1791 it was noted that Smith had 'engaged a man to join his son in building the intended house of industry'. On 24 October it was ordered that a contract be made with Smith for stonework, and Haycock was appointed as surveyor. He was instructed to proceed with working drawings. His fee was to be 5%. He was to visit the site on Monday every week to superintend the work and was to attend the directors' board meeting immediately following. A resident surveyor was also to be appointed to be 'constantly at the works'. Thomas Jones is later referred to as 'surveyor's clerk' or 'clerk of the works'.

It was reported by Smith that the cost of stonework would be 5*s*. 10*d*. per square yard. George Scoltock of Shrewsbury offered to do brickwork for 5*s*. 9*d*. a yard, and so the directors decided to change the design to brick on stone foundations. In December it was agreed to accept quotations from Griffiths and Holbrook for brickwork, Gittins and Taylor for carpentry, Carline and Tilley for stonework, and Edward Evans for slating. This contrasts with the custom of most workhouses commissioned under the new poor law, built by general contractors under single contracts. By the end of 1791 the site was staked out ready for construction to commence.[51]

The house took exactly two years to complete, from the start of 1792 to the start of 1794. It took longer and cost more than anticipated. In May 1792 the clerk of works warned that the work was progressing too slowly because of the brickwork contractor's failure to keep sufficient men at work. In April 1793 Haycock referred to an intended completion in twelve weeks being no longer feasible, as the carpenters were similarly neglecting to employ sufficient workmen. The carpenters were dismissed, and the clerk of works was instructed to employ workmen himself to complete the carpentry work. The last building cost estimate by Haycock on record was £6,565 17*s*. 6*d*., plus £1,200, the latter figure being probably a budget for furniture and fittings.[52] The loans taken by the incorporation and the later debt suggest that the entire establishment was set up for under £10,000, although a later writer gave the total cost as £12,000; for comparison, the house of industry at Forden (another enormous house, built for the Montgomery and Welshpool incorporation) was said to have cost 'upward of £12,000'.[53]

Something can be learned of the layout of the house from early references. The Act of incorporation indicates that there would be a boardroom for the directors, a chapel, and a 'place of correction'. There are references in the directors' minutes to a prison or dungeon. The main range of the building was probably two rooms deep, as in the Atcham house, also designed by Haycock. The return elevations of the main block at east and west were of six bays width. Part of the grounds was to be enclosed with a brick or stone wall and consecrated as a burial place. This paupers' burial ground was at the east of the house, where a chapel was later erected in *c*.1883.

The minutes show that the original chapel was at one end (probably the east end) of the main range, not in one of the rear wings. There would have been the usual departments of a workhouse, but the segregation of the inmates into classes was defective: they were placed in separate wards at night, but not separated at other times.[54] The east end of the house was also used as an infirmary, perhaps after a decision in November 1795 not to house the infirm poor at an outlying house. The house contained considerable facilities for putting the inmates to work. H. J. Pearson, the steward of the Shrewsbury house of industry, advised the board on the cost of fittings for numerous departments, estimating the cost of furniture and fittings to be similar to those at Shrewsbury at £857. The first four months of 1794 were spent in fitting out the building. The directors held their first board meeting at the house of industry on 28 April 1794.[55]

Following the completion of the main part of the house, small payments to building tradesmen occur frequently in the directors' minutes, but it cannot be said how much was for repairs and how much for alteration or development. The record of mortgages year by year shows a tailing-off of funds derived from this source. Work to which some of this payment may correspond included a building to contain four cells for the solitary confinement of persons of dissolute character, and a reception ward erected by John Holbrooke in 1801 to contain inmates until they were found free of infectious disease and might be admitted to the ordinary wards.[56]

Reform of the administration of the house of industry started in 1819 when T. N. Parker became the Mayor of Oswestry, and hence an *ex-officio* director of the incorporation. Parker was a leading light in the Oswestry Society for Bettering the Conditions and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, a local philanthropic society which gave prizes for such innovations as improved labourers' cottages. The Society's policy to discourage inmates was more akin to that which would be followed under the new poor law. Parker claimed in 1819 that the average number of inmates in the previous year had been 673.[57] This was in a period of economic distress. Shortly after this, Parker introduced a change in philosophy and numerous improvements in management. An attempt by Parker and his friends in 1819 to raise public support for a dissolution of the incorporation was unsuccessful.[58] By the time of the 1831 Census the number of inmates had been reduced to 272.[59]

Another feature of management reform was the innovation, in 1821, of an asylum for lunatic paupers, established at the house of industry, at the cost of extra building. There is no mention in the minutes of any architect or contractor. In October the magistrates were invited to view 'the lunatic hospital now in progress of building'.[60] The magistrates had to approve and certify it. A licence was granted in September 1821 to Thomas Phillips, Keeper of the house of industry, to keep up to ten lunatics in the madhouse.[61]

These changes may be associated with the addition of two similar annexes, one to the east and the other to the west, almost detached. They were probably similar to each other, but only the west of these survives and can be described: it was connected to the original building by a single-storey link. It is a rectangular red-brick building of two storeys, with three windows to the front and rear and five to the sides. It originally had a hip roof. The

front and rear elevations are embellished by string courses and giant arches surrounding the ground storey windows. The new wings are indicated in a map of 1833.[62]

The asylum apartments were criticised in 1834 by the poor law inquiry commissioner, A. J. Lewis. He noted that they were located 'at one end of the establishment, one for females and another for males, and each apartment has a separate courtyard for the use of its inmates. There were several of both sexes.' He went on to say:

> 'I much question the propriety of such an arrangement. Persons in this unhappy situation require the attendance of those who have been long accustomed to wait on such patients; they require the attention of medical men particularly conversant with their malady; and I know not how they can have the advantage of such attendance except in a regular lunatic establishment'.[63]

Other building work noted in the house in the early 1820s included renovations to the wash-house, laundry, prison, etc. There were also external improvements. A wall 'to adjoin each wing on the south side of the house', 4ft. 6ins. high, probably enclosed exercise yards. In 1816 the directors had, under the old policy, acquired Llwynymapsis Farm, but it was given up in 1830.[64]

The House of Industry at the Time of the New Poor Law

In 1836 the assistant poor law commissioner, Day, was very unfavourably impressed both with the excessive size of the Oswestry building and with the lax régime. He noted with rare sarcasm an 'enormous house upon the same plan as that at Shrewsbury and differing only in being much larger. A walled garden, well studded with wall fruit and espaliers, and a grand piano in the matron's room, prepared me to find that the discipline in this house was not more perfect than among its neighbours.' Day also found 'one ward regularly appropriated to married paupers who were permitted to sleep together in the number of seven or eight couples in one room.' This breached an important rule of the new poor law, that the residence of able-bodied people in a workhouse should be only temporary and under a deterrent regime.

Day roundly condemned the original promoters for burdening the present ratepayers of the Oswestry parishes with the cost of this extravagant building. The incorporation had a debt of £10,700, nearly twice that of Shrewsbury, and its house, by then an old building, was in great need of expensive repairs, including reslating the entire roof. He could not support proposals currently under consideration for yet more buildings to be added.[65] He called for a dissolution of the incorporation, but he found the board 'ill disposed' and prepared to dissolve only on terms to which he could not agree. He wanted to create an Oswestry union, territorially different from the existing incorporation, but he could not agree to any arrangement whereby additional parishes would be saddled with a proportion of the huge existing debts. Day proposed that a new union should be formed, and that its parishes should take on the repair costs, but that it should rent the house from the incorporation at a rent limited to accord with the much reduced number of paupers to be housed under new poor law principles, an arrangement which would leave a vestigial incorporation in existence. Lacking agreement, Day refused to rule upon the contributory 'averages' to be paid by the existing constituent parishes. Having successfully fought off the threat of dissolution, the directors came to regard themselves as occupying an independent position with regard to the new poor law, with ability to resist the commissioners' wishes, and continued successfully to resist pressure to dissolve their incorporation. They proceeded with minor improvements to the house.[66]

In September 1840 there were still 166 inmates, far more than would be expected in a Shropshire union of that extent. The 1841 Census gives the first reliable breakdown of the inmates by age and sex, and indicates that there were then in the house 151 pauper inmates, including 59 children below 15 years of age and a number of young adult females, amongst whom were probably some of the mothers, still a notably high number. Young people above 15 years of age were probably all out of the house in apprenticeships. The adult males were extremely few, and the remainder of the inmate population appears to be made up of the elderly. There were 205 inmates in 1851. Cathrall refers to an average of 174 inmates in 1855, by which time the Poor Law Board had imposed a maximum of 300.[67]

By 1840, when the incorporation had been functioning as the equivalent of a union under the new poor law for six years, Day still noted the defective discipline of the house, and that there was no proper classification of the inmates. He also complained of the lack of proper education of the many children in the house, who were being taught only by two of the paupers.[68]

In 1874 £2,800 was authorised to be spent on altering the workhouse infirmary and erecting infectious wards. Additions made in the late 19th century and early 20th century include a chapel erected posthumously to the

Plate 3 Oswestry. The surviving west front annexe of the former house of industry at Morda. It was joined to the main building by a single storey link at the left of the near corner. This annexe was known later as the Nightingale Wing and is now called Morda Court.

design of Samuel Pountney Smith in 1884 and accommodation for nurses in 1904, to the design of George Fulcher. An isolation hospital was added in 1891 which was subsequently known as Greenfields Hospital and later became Morda Social Club.[69]

In its last years as a workhouse (and later as a welfare home under the National Health Service) the establishment was always known locally as Morda House. When it was redundant in 1982 the house caught fire, and the main part, the east annexe, and the link to the west annexe were destroyed. The west annexe, which is all that now survives, is known as Morda Court, and the rest of the site has been redeveloped for housing.[70] (See Plate 3.)

Whitchurch

The 'Directors of the Poor of that part of the Parish of Whitchurch which lies within the County of Salop' were in charge of a house of industry set up in 1792 under a local incorporation Act. After an enthusiastic start imitating the Shrewsbury system they relapsed and there was soon little difference in the manner in which they managed it compared with the former town poorhouse with its 'farmer of the poor'. Their Act followed the precedent of the Shrewsbury Act almost verbatim, incorporating them as guardians and entitling them to elect 12 of their number as a court of directors.[71] They built their incorporation workhouse at a site to the north of the town in 1793–4, and opened it in 1795. At the time of the new poor law from 1836 Whitchurch incorporation refused several times to consent to being dissolved, and functioned until 1854 when it was finally superseded by the Whitchurch poor law union, using the same workhouse. The union served a much larger territory than the preceding incorporation, and added considerably to the buildings. In the 20th century the workhouse became Deermoss hospital. A small part of the original buildings survives.[72]

A Whitchurch parish poorhouse had existed from 1784 or earlier. The annual contracts for managing the poor in the parish poorhouse ranged from £1,000 in 1784 to about £800 in later years.[73] In 1790 changes were needed at the poorhouse to enable paupers 'with any distemper' to be isolated. William Turner was asked to negotiate for the purchase of some houses adjoining the poorhouse to enable it to be enlarged. Turner was asked to produce a plan and estimate for the improvements. The idea developed until it was perceived that 'it is desirable to have a building or buildings at some little distance from the town in a healthy situation'. Turner, a member of an important Whitchurch family of builders and architects, was subsequently the directors' surveyor. He was the son or brother of Samuel Turner, a solicitor and another of the directors.[74]

Plans for improving the old poorhouse were overtaken by a proposal to build a completely new workhouse and the related proposal to form an incorporation. It was decided to incorporate the Whitchurch parish authorities on the Shrewsbury model. In May 1791 there was an order of the Quarter Sessions requiring them to procure a house for a hospital for 'the poor who are ill [and to] provide food, clothing, beds and care'. Neighbouring parishes were approached to see whether they would like to take part in the incorporation, but they all declined. The vestry of Whitchurch therefore decided to proceed on its own, as 'the parish of Whitchurch is sufficiently opulent to defray the expenses of building a new poorhouse'.[75]

The decision to incorporate offered great attractions:

> 'The providing of a convenient house for their general reception and obtaining proper powers for their government, regulation and employment would tend not only to the more efficient relief, assistance and accommodation of such as by age, infirmities and diseases are rendered incapable of supporting themselves by their labour, but also to the employment of the industrious and such as are able to work – to the correction and punishment of the idle, refractory and profligate – to the education of the infant poor in habits of obedience, industry and religion – and generally to the advantage of themselves and the parish, whereby the poor, instead of being wholly supported by the inhabitants of this parish would contribute to the support, assistance and relief mutually of each other, and be of some advantage to this parish, to which they have hitherto only been a heavy and grievous burden'.[76]

William Gregory, a solicitor and their future clerk, was instructed to obtain an Act of incorporation. His fees and costs, £432, were to be met out of the poor rate. The Act was drawn up on the model of the Shrewsbury Act and under it the ratepayers, who were incorporated as guardians, were to elect a 'court of directors'. The court of directors first met in September 1792. Mr. Hand (John Hand of Dodington was one of the directors) agreed to sell them a site for £1,221. The site was 10½ acres to the east of Claypit Street and consisted of Brickkiln Field and Brickkiln Meadow, plus some barns and a croft. Most of the site was unencumbered freehold, but the part with tenants was charity land and had to be purchased with the help of a trustee.[77] (See Figure 14.)

As surveyor for the house of industry William Turner drew up a detailed list of accommodation to be provided, and other architects were invited to submit plans. The selection was treated as a competition, the winner to receive a premium of five guineas, the runner up four guineas and the third three guineas. An advertisement calling for plans appeared in May 1793 in the newspapers, stating that the particulars concerning 'situation and conveniences' were deposited with William Gregory, the clerk of the incorporation, for inspection.[78]

The particulars are so detailed that it is evident that William Turner had already prepared his own plans. The building should face south-east and stand in the middle of the Upper Field in a precisely specified location. The rooms on the principal floor were to be 11 ft. high, the bedchambers 10 ft. high and attic rooms 9 ft. high in the clear. There was to be a vaulted basement. The ground floor accommodation was to consist of a board room for the court of directors, kitchen, parlour, store room, pantry, larder, scullery, wash house, bakehouse, laundry, two punishment cells, a dining room to accommodate 100, a work room for men and boys, another for women and girls, and a schoolroom. The schoolroom was to be large enough to contain the entire number of paupers for morning and evening prayers. The size of the dining room probably indicates that 100 was regarded as the maximum capacity of the house.

The bedchamber floor was to contain 20 separate lodging rooms to hold one bed each, plus four wards for men, women, boys and girls. The wards were to hold ten beds each. There were also to be two store rooms, and also bedchambers for the governor, matron and a servant. The separate lodging rooms suggest that the planning was for an establishment which would have something of the character of an almshouse, if they were for the elderly impotent poor. There is no mention of the beds in the wards being in tiers or for multiple occupation. Without this information the number of beds cannot confirm the capacity of the house, but if it was only 100 the beds were probably for single use.

Extensive outbuildings were planned, including an infirmary for sick patients (60 ft. from the house) with two five-bed wards, a bedchamber for the attendants, a bath supplied with warm and cold water, an oven, and a mortuary. The wards were to be 12 ft. high and the other rooms 9 ft. in the clear. Other outbuildings were stores for coal, wood and faggots, a midden, three latrines with drains and a pigsty with three divisions. The yard at the rear was to be 1,000 to 1,500 square yards in extent and walled with a brick wall 8 ft. high. A well of 5 ft. diameter, deep enough to hold 6 ft. depth of water, was ordered.[79]

Three architects submitted plans. The winning design was by William Turner himself. The building, like the houses of industry of Shrewsbury, Atcham, Ellesmere and Oswestry, consisted of a main range with crosswings at each end. The house was about 90 ft. in length, somewhat smaller than the other houses of industry. It was later said to be capable of accommodating 140 inmates. The outline on the Tithe Map in 1840 shows the main

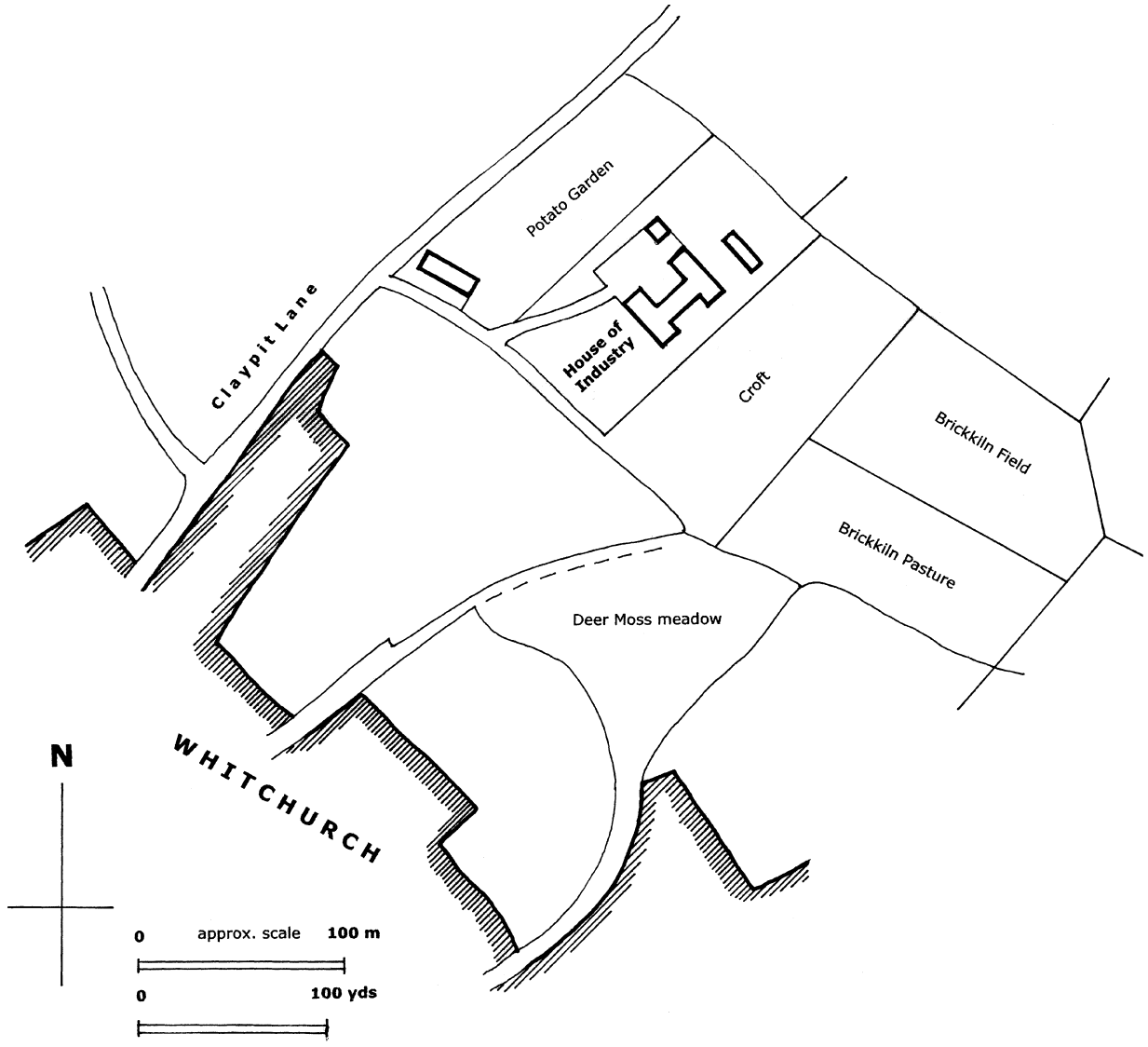

Figure 14 Whitchurch house of industry at Deermoss. The Potato Garden, building site and Croft are probably the 'upper field' of the original purchase. (Based on Tithe Survey plan of Whitchurch, *c*.1840.)

block with its two crosswings and a small detached building to the north, and another to the north-east, which must be the infirmary. The infirmary was perhaps inadequate, as there is reference in 1797 to the placing of infectious patients at the north end of the west wing and recovering patients at the south end of the same wing.[80]

Tradesmen's offers for building the house were considered in August 1793. According to Turner the list of accepted offers put the construction cost at £1,825. Work on the foundations started with an order to Widow Phillips (*sic*) for bricklaying on 7 September. Final work on the carcase of the building included the order for the stone with the carved inscription (which is still preserved) in August 1794. Oak boards for flooring were being ordered in November and additional building was ordered in early 1795. The date for the moving of paupers from the old poorhouse to the new house of industry was fixed as 13 July.[81]

In February 1795 the old poorhouse plus several cottages were offered for sale. The old poorhouse appears not to have found a bidder, but its sale for £240 to Henry Woolrich, the existing farmer of the poor, was recorded in early March.[82]

The incorporation borrowed to fund the work and had debts of £4,483 when the house of industry was opened in 1795. In 1804 charity lands held under the will of Ralph Brereton from 1630 were sold to raise capital to help to pay off the cost of the house of industry, raising £1,230. Lesser sales of charity property added to the sum.[83]

The Whitchurch Act contains the same provision as that in the Shrewsbury Act and its other imitators, allowing persons working within the house of industry to be paid a part of the value of what they produced as a gratuity, the part later being set at a sixth. The paupers do not appear to have been employed on as many types

of work as those in Shrewsbury and elsewhere, but spinning was included and farm animals were kept. The building of a windmill was considered in 1796. The rules of the house were not draconian, but persons breaching them might be punished with imprisonment, the stocks, loss of gratuities or restricted diet.[84]

As at Shrewsbury, the management of the house quickly lost its original enthusiasm and became slack. When the first governor and matron resigned in March 1798, the directors, instead of replacing them, decided to revert to the old system of taking a contractor to 'farm' the poor. At about the same time the attendance of directors at the weekly meetings was becoming very intermittent, and fines for non-attendance were considered. The engagement of a farmer of the poor was a way to reduce the managerial burden upon the directors. John Ackers, who had been a farmer of the poor in the time of the old poorhouse, was engaged for this purpose for one year. He was engaged to employ the paupers to make cloth and clothes. The directors set down detailed regulations specifying how the poor in the house were to be clothed. Ackers' contract was renewed in 1799 and 1800. When his contract was renewed in 1800 it was agreed to pay him £1,100 for the year, out of which he would meet all the costs of managing the poor, apart from some legal bills. This was a little more than the sum for which contractors at the old poorhouse had agreed to take the poor in recent years. It is unclear when the farming of the poor ceased, but by the time of the next surviving directors' orders in 1817 the management appears to have reverted to the original pattern of a governor carrying out the detailed orders of the directors.[85]

The House of Industry at the Time of the New Poor Law

At the time of the new poor law the Whitchurch directors accepted the control of the Poor Law Commission in matters of detail, but they were very protective of their independent position and they resisted dissolution. Whitchurch did not become a Registration District, but was included in that of Wem. When a new governor and matron were required for the workhouse in 1839 the advertisement proudly pointed out, irrelevantly, that 'the parish of Whitchurch is not included in any union'.[86] In March 1836, shortly after taking up his position as assistant poor law commissioner, William Day called a meeting to propose dissolution. The directors declined to dissolve, 'not being able to perceive, after giving to the subject their best attention, that any great benefit would result to the parish from the formation of such union'.[87]

It was found that classification of the inmates was better in the case of Whitchurch than in other Shropshire houses of industry. In 1843 Day was able to report: 'the master told me the classification was complete. The airing yard has certainly been divided for the males and females, but some of the women's offices were on the men's side of the house, and the only security for the separation of the classes appeared to be, in the words of the master, "that the men had no business to go there"'. The door of the men's sick-ward faced the door of the women's sick ward, 'without any preventive against communication'. Elsewhere Day wrote: 'They have the best arranged workhouse, so far as plan goes…and they publish annual accounts…the house is capable of easy accommodation for 200 adults and [in 1834–5] contained only 52. The directors are chiefly the tradespeople of the town, the remainder the farmers and millers of the neighbourhood'. The children in the house were not separated during the daytime, but had separate sleeping rooms. The large yard at the rear was divided and there was a small yard attached to the back schoolroom.[88]

Lunatic paupers were sent to James Jacobs' disreputable asylum attached to the Shrewsbury house of industry at Kingsland, but, as soon as a better asylum was opened at Bicton Heath in 1845, the Whitchurch lunatics appear to have been transferred to it. The directors considered building their own asylum in 1841.[89]

On Census day (6 June) 1841 there were 76 paupers in the house of industry, consisting of 30 children below the age of 15, 20 elderly aged 60 or more, and 26 others. The governor and matron at this time were Richard and Mary Moore.

There was a school at the house for the children, which was at first held in a detached building. In 1847 a new schoolmistress was engaged, and alterations were made for her, including the division of the women's dayroom to provide the new schoolroom. The old schoolroom became a hospital. In 1852 it was decided not to send the children, who then numbered fewer than 20, to the industrial training schools of Atcham or Oswestry as proposed by the poor law inspector Doyle, but to the national school in Whitchurch.[90]

There were several later attempts to persuade the directors to dissolve the incorporation. When Day handed over responsibility to Neave, the latter attempted to achieve a dissolution. At the quarterly meeting in January 1837 it was again considered, and the directors called a vestry meeting and had handbills printed to advertise it. A vestry meeting on 12 January responded by disapproving of 'any union of this parish with any other parish or township under the New Poor Law Act', and 'strongly urged the guardians of the poor of this parish not to surrender the Act of Parliament by which they were incorporated'.[91] Another attempt was made by the Poor Law Commissioners in 1846, in the period following their dismissal of Day. A vestry meeting was called for 13 May and the proposal again defeated.

The final successful call for dissolution in came 1852, after the Poor Law Commission had been superseded by the Poor Law Board. The inspector, Doyle, called a special meeting of the directors on 16 July. The directors no longer resisted, but they instructed their clerk to write to the neighbouring unions of Nantwich, Ellesmere, Wem and Wrexham, to obtain information about expenditure. They then called a meeting of the vestry. Doyle attended their next meeting, and called for another directors' meeting on 17 September to 'consider different arrangements to be made in the formation of the proposed Whitchurch union.' All twelve directors attended this meeting, and they merely insisted that the union should be set up with as large a number of guardians as possible. Dissolution came finally in 1854 when the directors affixed their seal to the deed of transfer of their workhouse, land and premises to the guardians of Whitchurch union, under whom it continued in use. The property of the incorporation was valued at £3,724, with furniture and fixtures at £380. The new union included the Shropshire parish of Ightfield, plus some Cheshire and Flintshire townships.[92]

The land occupied by the house of industry at the time of dissolution consisted of six fields. Nearest to the road was a potato garden. The main buildings were on the second field, originally occupying the south-east half of it. An early enlargement consisted of symmetrical two-bay wings added to the sides of the cross-wings of the main building. During the period between *c*.1840 and *c*.1879 buildings were added to cover the north-west part of the field, with a symmetrical infirmary on the axis of the original buildings (as at the Atcham workhouse at Crosshouses) and an adjacent set of buildings around a yard. The latter developments probably date from the period after the formation of the union, when there was fresh management. A freestanding chapel in Arts and Crafts style was added to the south-west of the main building in *c*.1888, at a cost of £639. This chapel is of unusual interest as a departure from the conventional Gothic of 19th-century chapels; Morrison comments on it as 'one of the first' of English workhouse chapels to be built in this new style.[93] Fireproof verandahs were added to the south face to the design of a local architect, W. Webb, in 1904. The buildings became Deermoss Hospital following the end of the poor law in 1930. Although the buildings were still mainly intact in *c*.1965, of the two symmetrical wings of the original building only the one to the south-west now survives. (See Plate 4.)

An infirmary on the north side of the grounds has also been demolished.[94]

Plate 4 Whitchurch house of industry as altered to Deermoss Hospital in the mid-20th century. View of original from south. (Permission of Shropshire Archives: PH/W/18/7.)

Notes

1 C. Crofton, *The Making of a Workhouse – The History of Crosshouses Hospital,* National Trust, 2002; Castlering Archaeology *Report* no. 135, 'Crosshouses Hospital' (August 2002). The main sources for Atcham workhouse are SA: PL1, union records, NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence, and NMR [National Monuments Record]: file 101298.
2 Act 32 Geo III c.3 1792.
3 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 6 July 1792.
4 SA: PL1/2/1/1, Copy of Indentures, 27 Aug. 1792.
5 SA: PL1/2/1/1, Articles of Agreement with Haycock, 27 Aug. 1792; Orders, 3 June 1793, 20 Oct. 1794.
6 SA: PL1/2/1/1, Specification in Articles of Agreement with Haycock, 27 Aug. 1792.
7 SA: PL1/2/1/1, Orders 29 Dec. 1794, 2 Feb. 1801.
8 V. J. Walsh, 'Administration of the Poor Law in Shropshire', Univ. of Pennsylvania Ph. D., 1970, 67.
9 SA: PL1/2/1/1, Orders 1792–1801, *passim*.
10 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 24 Dec. 1836; SA: PL1/2/1/2, Orders 1831–1836, 2 Aug. 1831.
11 SA: PL1/2/1/2, Orders 1831–1836: Everest to Poor Law Commissioners, 28 May 1841.
12 V. J. Walsh, 'The Administration of the Poor Law in Shropshire 1820–1855', Univ. of Pennsylvania Ph. D., 1970, 66ff. examines these factors.
13 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 6 Mar. 1836.
14 NLW: MS 3142F, Reports on unions, 9 Jan. 1838. Day later came to regard Sir Baldwin Leighton's regime with increasing approval. Leighton remained chairman until his death in 1871, when succeeded by his son, Sir Baldwyn Leighton. NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Directors, 11 Nov. 1836; Walsh, *op cit*., 163 says that the idea of a union surrounding Shrewsbury and ready to absorb it at a later date came from Edwin Chadwick.
15 SA: PL1/11/9/5, Report on Progress of union (incorporating 'Report of Sir B. L[eighton]' 1838; SA: PL1/2/2/1, Minutes 1836–1840: 3 July 1837, 26 Aug. 1839; PL1/2/2/2, Minutes 1840–1845: 14 Mar. 1842.
16 SA: PL1/2/2/1, Minutes 1836–1840: 5 June 1837, 31 July 1837, 14 Aug. 1837; Sir Baldwin Leighton, *Collected Letters and Speeches* (ed. Frances C. Childe), 1875, 23; SA: 6003/9, R. A. Slaney's Journal, 20 Dec. 1845.
17 SA: Tithe Survey of Berrington, *c*.1844.
18 SA: PL1/2/2/3, Minutes 1845–1851: 14 Feb. 1848, 10 July 1848, 18 Apr. 1850.
19 SA: 6003/9: Journal of R A Slaney, 20 Dec. 1845.
20 SA: PL1/2/2/3, Minutes 1845–1851: 13 Aug. 1849, 6 Aug. 1849, 3 June 1850, 24 June 1850, 22 July 1850; Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 500.
21 SA: PL1/11/7/1, Schedule of deeds and documents. See also 1872 plans in Crofton, *op. cit*., following p. 13.
22 SA: PL1/6/1/2, Plans, specifications etc. (G. W. Deakin, architect, Shrewsbury, 1924 and H Lea, engineers, Birmingham); *VCH Salop*, **VIII**, 17; Crofton, *op.cit*., 16–17; NMR: file 101298.
23 The main sources for Ellesmere workhouse are SA: PL8, union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; and NMR: file 101724.
24 SA: Fiches P105/649, 650, 663.
25 SA: Fiches P105/650, 651, 658, 663.
26 SA: Fiches P105/657, 664, 666, 669.
27 SA: Fiche P105/669, 'An Act for the Relief and Employment of the Poor of and within Ellesmere (etc.)', 31 Geo III c. 78 (1791).
28 Sir F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, 1797, **2**, 619ff.
29 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 18 Aug. 1838; Tithe Survey of Ellesmere, 1839, Apportionment 153.
30 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 6 July 1792. [N.B. George Edgecombe, joiner and architect of Scotland Street, Ellesmere, recorded in Pigot's *Directory*, 1829, 678]; SA: Fiche P105/671; Eden, *loc. cit*.; SA: PL8/1, Schedule of Numbers in the House.
31 D. Pratt, *Ellesmere, a Pictorial History*, 1983, 28; Eden, *loc. cit*.
32 Eden, *loc. cit*.
33 SA: PL8/1, Schedule of Numbers in the House; Eden *loc. cit*.; SA: Fiche P105/906.
34 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 20 Mar. 1836; SA: 6003/6, R. A. Slaney's Journal, 1829–36, 24 Mar. 1836: 'I have attended as a Director at the Ellesmere house of industry and assisted in dissolving the union in order to admit other parishes under the provisions of the Poor Law Act, whereby classification may be introduced'.
35 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 22 Sept. 1838.
36 NLW: MS 3149F, Day to Lefevre, 30 Dec. 1837; MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 9 Jan. 1838.
37 Bagshaw, *History Directory and Gazetteer of Shropshire*, 1851, 223.
38 W. J. Walsh, 'The Administration of the Poor Law in Shropshire 1820–1855', Univ. of Pennsylvania Ph. D., 1970, 227, using Ministry of Health MH/12/9938, Doyle to Poor Law Board, 19 Jan. 1856.
39 The main sources for Oswestry workhouse are SA: PL12, union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; NMR: file 101304.
40 Isaac Watkin, *Oswestry*, 1920, 55. For this and earlier workhouses in Oswestry, see P. H. Goodman *et al*., 'Eighteenth Century Poor Law Administration in the Parish of Oswestry', in *Trans. Shrops. Archaeol. Soc*., **LVI**, 328ff.
41 *Universal British Directory*, *c*.1797: 'Oswestry'.
42 SA: PL12/1/1 Directors' Minutes, Act of incorporation, 31 Geo III c.24.
43 W. Day, 'Report on the unions under Local Acts at Shrewsbury, Oswestry, etc.' in *9th Annual Report of Poor Law Commissioners*, 1843, 278ff. See also S. & B. Webb, English Poor Law History Pt. i: *The Old Poor Law*, 1927, 121 ff.

44 The house survived until destroyed by fire in 1982: see *Border Counties Advertiser*, 3 Mar. 1982. The site was awaiting development when the fire occurred. There were seven flats in the west linked annexe, reported as saved. All was demolished except the west annexe.
45 Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 1958, 225.
46 Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 171.
47 G. Nicholson, *The Cambrian Traveller's Guide* (2nd ed. 1813), col. 821.
48 A local writer, Cathrall, in 1855, was kinder in his judgement of the old house of industry, preferring the positive view that: 'It has ever excited the attention of strangers, on account of its imposing stateliness of architecture, the exterior presenting, at the first view, the appearance of a fine old English baronial residence': W. Cathrall, *History of Oswestry*, 1855, 120.
49 SA: PL 12/6/1, Register of Mortgages. Mortgages were taken at 4½% p.a. during the building period.
50 H. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840*, 1995, 481.
51 SA: PL 12/2/1, Directors' Minutes, 26 Dec. 1791.
52 SA: PL 12/2/1, Directors' Minutes: 12 Mar. 1792.
53 S. Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, **1**, 1833, 'Forden'.
54 W. Day, 'Report on the...unions under Local Acts at Shrewsbury, Oswestry, etc.' in *9th Annual Report of Poor Law Commissioners*, 1843, 298.
55 SA: PL 12/2/1, Directors' Minutes, 12 Mar. 1792, 7 Oct. 1793 – 1 Apr. 1794; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 26 June 1795: Drill House sale advertisement.
56 SA: PL 12/2/3, Directors' Minutes, 9 Nov. 1801.
57 Oswestry Society for Bettering the Conditions and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, *7th Report*, 1819, 137.
58 *Shropshire Chronicle*, 19 Nov. 1819.
59 In 1834 57 paupers in the house were counted by the parish overseers of Oswestry, consisting of 17 men, 16 women, 13 boys and 11 girls. The overseers of Whittington parish counted 23. These figures refer to paupers sent by these single parishes only, not to the full complement of the house. See 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' (PP. 1834, xxvii), replies to queries.
60 SA: PL12/2/4, Directors' Minutes, 1 Oct. 1821.
61 SA: QS/1/10, Sessions Order Books (Oct. 1827, fol. 117): 'Madhouse at Oswestry'.
62 SA: 2868, Map Bundle 3: Map of Sweeney and Weston Townships 1833; SA: PL12/5/4, Laundry Reconstruction drawing, 1925. Following the destruction of the main part of the House, this annexe, called the Nightingale Wing, became a Listed Building. It now has a flat roof concealed by a parapet. There are similarly positioned annexes in the Forden house of industry in Montgomeryshire.
63 *Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, 1834 (PP, 1834, xxvii) Appendix A: A. J. Lewis, 'Salop, Hereford and Monmouth', 662A.
64 SA: PL12/2/3, Directors' Minutes, 10 June 1811; 19 Dec. 1816; PL12/2/4, Directors' Minutes, 4 Feb. 1822, 11 Aug. 1823, 13 Sept. 1830.
65 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Directors, 2 Apr. 1836.
66 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 21 Feb. 1836, 20 Mar. 1836; SA: PL12/2/5, Directors' Minutes, 27 Oct. 1834, 29 June 1835, 14 May 1838.
67 NLW: MS 3142F, Report 9 Sept. 1840; 1851 Census; W. Cathrall, *History of Oswestry*, 1855, 121.
68 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 9 Sept. 1840.
69 NMR: file 101304.
70 For the workhouse in the final years of the Poor Law, see also S. D. Bailey, 'The Story of Morda House', serialised in *Border Counties Advertiser*, 1976 (15, 29 Sep., 13, 27 Oct., 10, 24 Nov., 8, 22 Dec.).
71 32 Geo III c.68 (1792): 'An Act for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor of and within such Part of the Parish of Whitchurch as maintains its own Poor and lies within the County of Salop'.
72 The main sources for Whitchurch workhouse are SA: PL16, union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence, and NMR: file 101309.
73 SA: P303/C/2/4, Vestry Poor Book, 14 Apr. 1785, 12 May 1785, 6 May 1786, 28 Apr. 1787, 26 Apr. 1788, 9 May 1789, 28 June 1789, 28 June 1790.
74 SA: P303/C/2/4, Vestry Poor Book, 12 Sept. 1790, 27 Nov. 1790, 2 Jan. 1791, 6 Jan. 1791, 15 Jan. 1791, 19 Jan. 1791. H. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, 977 [s.v. John Turner]; L. T. C. Rolt, *Thomas Telford*, 1958, 40–46. William Turner was at this period an assistant or rival to Thomas Telford and had carried out surveys for the Ellesmere Canal; he was also the architect for Cholmondeley Castle, Cheshire. When Samuel Turner retired as a director in 1796 William joined the board. Samuel died in 1798. William was succeeded professionally by his son or nephew John (d. 1827), who became County Surveyor of Flintshire and had an important career as a church architect.
75 SA: P303/C/2/4, Vestry Poor Book, 26 Apr. 1791, 27 Apr. 1791, 3 Dec. 1791; P303/F/1/1/2, Parish Book.
76 SA: P303/C/2/4, Vestry Poor Book, 15 Dec. 1791.
77 SA: PL 16/1, Directors' Orders, 8 Dec. 1792, 29 Dec. 1792.
78 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 10 May 1793.
79 SA: PL16/1, Directors' Orders, 4 May 1793.
80 SA: PL16/1, Directors' Orders, 13 July 1793, 12 Nov. 1796; SA: Tithe Survey of Whitchurch, *c*.1840, parcel 397 &c.
81 SA: PL16/1, Directors' Orders, 27 July 1793, 17 Aug. 1793, 7 Sept. 1793, 16 Aug. 1794, 18 Oct. 1794, 11 July 1795; P303/C/2/4, Vestry Poor Book, 12 July 1795.
82 SA: PL16/1, Directors' Orders, 31 Jan. 1795, 28 Feb. 1795, 7 Mar. 1795.
83 SA: PL16/1, Directors' Orders, 11 July 1795; *Charities in the County of Salop from Reports of Commissioners*, 1839, 345.
84 SA: PL16/1, Directors' Orders, 20 Feb. 1796, 22 Apr. 1797.

85 SA: PL16/1, Directors' Orders, 30 May 1795, 8 Apr. 1797, 17 Mar. 1798, 2 Mar. 1799, 22 Mar. 1800.
86 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 15 Mar. 1839.
87 SA: PL16/4, Directors' Orders, 30 Mar. 1836.
88 NLW: MS 3142F, f. 549, f. 601.
89 SA: PL16/4, Directors' Orders, ? Oct. 1841, 17 Oct. 1846; see chapter 2, p. 30.
90 SA: PL16/6, Directors' Orders, 22 1Oct. 1847.
91 SA: PL16/4, Directors' Orders, 2 Jan. 1837.
92 SA: PL16/6, Directors' Orders, 10 July 1852, 16 July 1852, 4 Sept. 1852, 17 Sept. 1852, 17 Nov. 1854; P303/C/1/4, General Vestry Minutes, 10 Mar. 1853.
93 Tithe Survey map, 1840; 1st edn. Ordnance Survey 6? to 1 mile, surveyed 1879; Morrison, *The Workhouse*, 1999, 129–30.
94 NMR: file 101309.

CHAPTER 4

WORKHOUSES OF THE EARLY 19TH-CENTURY REFORMED POOR LAW IN INDUSTRIAL EAST SHROPSHIRE

It has long been recognised that the new poor law was primarily designed to address the social and economic problems of the non-industrial south of England, and was considered inappropriate and deeply resented by contemporaries in the industrialised north.[1] There were many large early workhouses in the southern counties. When the Ludlow guardians carried out research into modern workhouses they chose to send their inquirers on a trip to Devon, rather than around new workhouses elsewhere in the Midlands. Shropshire has little in common with the southern agricultural counties, but might be expected to show to some extent in microcosm a contrast between the rural majority of the county and the industrialised east, though the workhouse system of the whole county was reformed in the same year, 1836. It will be convenient to examine the unions covering the most important industrial parishes (Madeley, Wellington, and to a less extent Newport and Shifnal) before proceeding to examine the predominantly rural unions of the remainder of the county. Madeley union was especially identified with the industrialised parts and included much of the coalfield and ironmaking district. A contrast is seen in the population of the county. Shropshire had a very unevenly distributed population in the early 19th century. A density map for England and Wales, published with the 1851 census report, illustrates the intense concentration of population in East Shropshire, from Wellington to Much Wenlock. Lesser concentrations existed in Shrewsbury, Ludlow, and in a crescent around the north of the county from Oswestry through Ellesmere and Whitchurch to Newport. The remainder of the county was of very low density.

Madeley, Newport and Wellington unions were all conspicuously slow in exploiting the opportunity which the new poor law gave their guardians to indulge in rebuilding. Newport did not rebuild for about 20 years, and Madeley and Wellington did not start to rebuild until as late as the 1870s. The Shifnal guardians were in a different position, having an enlarged workhouse dating from 1817, at the time of the Holyhead Road improvements, when the parish was probably motivated to make its workhouse appear as much of a credit to the town as possible.[2]

When houses of industry were built in central and north-west Shropshire in the 1780s and 1790s it was noticeable that Shrewsbury, the economically dominant part of the county, was the pioneer of reform; whereas under the new poor law from the 1830s the leading industrial unions of East Shropshire were not in the forefront.

Employment in the industrial areas followed a quite different pattern compared with the agricultural areas. In border areas between rural and industrial parts of the county there was tension over the charging of poor rates. When, prior to 1836, every parish supported its own poor, the strongly industrial parishes of Wellington, Dawley, Madeley and Broseley had been burdened only with an average annual expenditure on the poor of under 5*s*. per head of population, but in eight adjacent rural parishes, not benefiting from their labour but suffering the consequences of legal settlement of many colliers, the expenditure had been 14*s*. 4*d*. per head of population. As a southerner more used to agricultural districts, the assistant poor law commissioner admitted that he was surprised at the fluctuations of employment experienced in an industrial district. The fluctuation of numbers to be accommodated in Wellington workhouse in the time of the new poor law was also a matter of difficulty to the guardians, as it had been to the overseers of Wellington under the old poor law. In the first week of the existence of Wellington union he gave detailed instructions to the clerk to carry out research to establish the pattern of unemployment and short-time working locally in the previous 25 or 30 years, raising the possibility that in a union like Wellington there might be a case for allowing some out-relief to the able-bodied, although as a general poor law policy the prohibition of out-relief to the able-bodied was favoured.[3]

Madeley

The First Workhouse

Before the Madeley workhouse at the Brockholes was set up in 1797, there was a small workhouse at Madeley Wood. There was charity property there which appears to have been reserved for poor persons to occupy. When John Randall compiled his *History of Madeley* in 1880 he was unaware of any workhouse and wrongly stated that prior to 1797 only outdoor relief had been practiced.[4] Though strictly incorrect, his local knowledge surely justified his impression, and the earlier workhouse is likely to have been a very slight affair. Randall took the comforting view that 'at all times there have been kind and open-hearted men of means who out of their worldly store have taken care to make some provision for their less fortunate brethren.'[5] He noted there had been distress in Madeley in 1774, 1782 and 1796, and the ironmasters had made efforts to relieve the 'aged, honest, sober and industrious'.[6]

As early as 1705 the Madeley paupers were being 'badged', i.e. made to wear a mark of their status, and in 1715 there is a reference to hemp being provided for them to work on.[7] These measures to care for the poor do not necessarily mean there was a workhouse in the early 18th century.

A small workhouse probably started in the 1760s. It seems probable that one or more of the charity cottages in Madeley or Madeley Wood functioned as parish poorhouses. By 1766 a farmer of the poor was paid to take care of them. In June 1772 William Micklewright's contract required him to take the poor that 'shall hereafter become troublesome or chargeable'.[8]

For £100 per annum Micklewright undertook the care of the poor, including putting young people out as apprentices at the age of seven and providing relief generally, excluding medical and legal expenses. His contract does not mention a workhouse but the size of his payment suggests that he managed one.

Micklewright was named as a churchwarden in 1781.[9] In the same year Thomas Hains and his wife were put in charge of the paupers; Hains was described as an overseer, and he and his wife lived under workhouse conditions, as he paid for his and his wife's rations.[10] Management was provided under annual contracts, and by 1781 there was difficulty in finding governors to undertake it. Two cottages used as a workhouse were then described as 'late Gittins in Madeley'.[11] The workhouse at this early date can hardly have been much more than a hovel, rented at only 5*s*. a year. When six years rent for it was paid in 1789 the money was 'disposed of to various poor persons'.[12] The workhouse contained furniture belonging to the parish, described in 1787 as 'such beds or other furniture belonging to W. Baugh [an overseer]'.[13]

The 1797 Workhouse[14]

In 1789 the parish applied to Mr. Smith of Whitchurch to buy a property identified as the existing workhouse.[15] The vestry meeting in 1794 considered a new site at the Brockholes. It was minuted that

> 'it appears to this meeting expedient and proper that some building in this parish larger and more commodious than the present poor's house should be procured for their accommodation and employ. That certain dwelling houses and a malthouse situated at the Brockholes in the occupation of Darby, Ford, Charles Hornblower, John Davis and others are considered by this meeting convenient and proper for the above purposes'.[16]

There were also six small properties sold in 1797 to raise £235 15*s*. towards the cost of the new workhouse.[17] Randall identifies some of these with Brooke's and Beddows' charities.[18] The new workhouse cost considerably more than the total produced by the sale of the various charity properties. The Charity Commissioners' figure is £1,086 14*s*. 7½*d*. spent on the new workhouse, which would sound implausibly high, especially if the old malthouse was retained as the core of the new building, which it perhaps was not.[19]

The opening of the workhouse in 1797 was accompanied by a newspaper advertisement seeking a manager who 'should have some knowledge of the manufacturing of coarse linens and woollens', his wife to be the matron. The workhouse conformed to the late 18th century preference for putting the poor to useful work, and so it was widely referred to as the 'house of industry', e.g. when it sold cloth to Hornblower of Horsehay in 1801 and 1802. In 1834 it contained twenty adults and twenty children. The large rear block shown on the 1847 Tithe map (extending about 20 yds. north of the surviving workhouse) might be the original malthouse.[20]

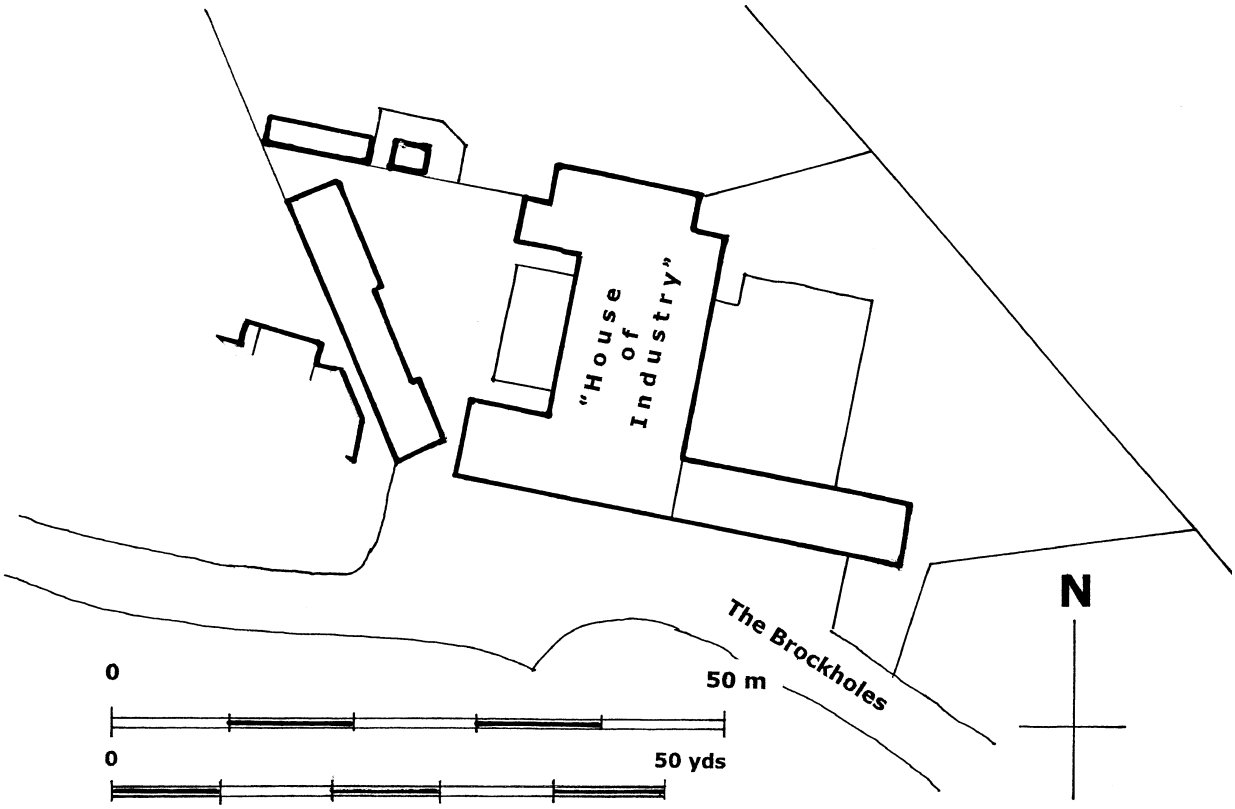

Figure 15 The former 'house of industry' at the Brockholes (Belmont Road) which served as the workhouse of Madeley union from 1836 to 1874. (Based mainly on the Tithe Survey plan of Madeley, 1847.)

What remains at the Brockholes (now known as Belmont Road) is a part of the front buildings shown on the 1847 plan, a brick structure of very utilitarian appearance, with large sash windows and a tiled roof. (See Plate 5.) It has a symmetrical front of two storeys with a central entrance and an additional bay at the right. To the rear of this main part is a short double-gabled extension, all that remains of an earlier much larger rear wing. It has high storeys, the characteristic feature of late 18th century Shropshire workhouses, probably due in this case to the accommodation of looms.

Madeley adopted a select vestry in or before 1824, the vicar, the Rev. John Cooper, being the chairman, followed by his successor, the Rev. George Edmonds. It was a large select vestry of 21 persons, employing three overseers (for Madeley, Madeley Wood and Coalbrookdale).[21] In 1827 the names of the elected vestrymen are recorded.[22] Their workhouse remained in parish use to the end of the old poor law and then in 1836 became the principal workhouse of the poor law union. The regime under the select vestry closely resembled that under the guardians after 1836; as well as running a workhouse with a salaried governor and matron, the parish employed a medical officer, Edwards, to look after pauper patients, and his son remained medical officer at the time of the union until superseded by Webb. Edwards senior and junior were both vestrymen.

The Old Workhouse under the New Poor Law

Madeley poor law union covered one of the main industrial areas of Shropshire. It was set up in 1836 by William Day, the assistant poor law commissioner, and included Madeley, Dawley and Broseley as its principal industrial parishes, with eight peripheral parishes and one extra-parochial place, Posenhall. It achieved a fairness of poor-rate burden between its industrial parishes (employing much of the labour) and the surrounding rural ones (where many labourers were legally settled) which had not existed before.

Madeley had only six out of a total of 29 elected guardians.[23] The composition of the new board included several industrialists, although many of the guardians were, as in other unions, farmers.[24] The guardians regarded themselves as capable of making their own decisions, and were not used to taking instructions from a superior authority. This made them an awkward board for the central poor law commissioners and their successors to deal with. The guardians also had a low opinion of the poor whom they had to manage, but they

Plate 5 Madeley. The surviving part of the former Madeley house of industry in Belmont Road, Ironbridge.

were paternally interested in getting the best for them. In Madeley the leadership was taken by a member of the local industrial élite. Another uncharacteristic, but significant, feature of the Madeley board was the low number of clergymen.[25] The union was conceived as existing mainly for the benefit of out-of-work colliers. Day noted that it was the custom of the colliers to make their families an allowance out of their wages, and then to consume what was left in drink.[26] In June 1836 the guardians ordered all out-paupers requiring support to come into the house.[27]

The property available to the newly created union in 1836 included three functioning parish workhouses: the so-called house of industry at Belmont Road in Madeley parish, which was taken as the principal workhouse of the union, and smaller workhouses at Broseley and Dawley. The main workhouse was always that at Madeley, under a governor and matron, jointly paid £60 a year plus their maintenance. References to oakum picked in the Madeley workhouse in 1840 and to a kibbling mill for 'employing the able-bodied male paupers' in 1842 testify to the use of a deterrent regime for this class of inmates.[28]

The guardians ran into difficulty over the matter of religious observance in the workhouses. At first there was no chaplain. When the Rev. J. H. Gwyther succeeded Edmonds in Madeley parish in 1841 he acted as chaplain to Madeley workhouse without payment. In 1843 the guardians again accepted Gwyther's offer to hold divine service once a week in the workhouse without a fee, 'during the continuance of the present pressure'. In July 1846 the poor law commissioners ordered that Gwyther should be paid a salary. The guardians then debated the salary, but they could not agree to £40, and they passed a motion to pay him £30 per annum.[29]

Day attended the first meeting of the guardians, and under his guidance they turned their attention immediately to the classification of the workhouse inmates. Most were to go to the Madeley workhouse, but the aged and infirm were to go to Broseley. The guardians regarded Broseley as their workhouse for the paupers of 60 years of age or above. Madeley had a capacity of about 100 inmates, and Broseley about 40.[30]

Workhouse Provision in the Parishes of the Union

Of the parishes of the new poor law union, several had had workhouses in the closing years of the old poor law. There were workhouses in Little Wenlock, Dawley, Madeley, Buildwas, Benthall, Broseley and Much Wenlock; there were none in Stirchley, Barrow, Willey and Linley and of course none in Posenhall.

In Little Wenlock, as early as 1750, a major landowner, William Hayward, paid four years rent for a house for the use of the poor of the parish. At about this time the poor of Little Wenlock began to be sent to the establishment of Thomas Hazlehurst in Wellington, a farmer of the poor. There was a workhouse in the parish again by 1814, when the burial of John Ellis, an inmate, was recorded. This parish workhouse was probably a cottage at Little Worth.[31] The last record of an inmate was in 1828, rent for it was recorded in 1828 and 1830[32], and whitewashing, repair of a door and a purchase of soap for it in 1831. At the commencement of the new poor law the poor of Little Wenlock were being managed by a 'farmer of the poor'[33], but the workhouse was quickly shut down. The guardians withdrew the inmates, moving four to Broseley and two to Madeley. In 1838 the house was occupied by a tenant named George Walker.[34]

Dawley parish was renting a workhouse in *c*.1784. In 1813 the vestry appears to have decided to acquire a workhouse, possibly by purchasing one already in use.[35] Their workhouse was referred to as a 'house of industry' when the parish changed to a select vestry in 1820.

In terms of the number of guardians appointed, Dawley was the largest parish in the poor law union. In 1836 its workhouse, with a few paupers, was briefly leased by the guardians. Rent paid for it by the guardians amounted to £5 12*s*. 8*d*. a year. Closure was decided upon by the guardians in 1836[36], and in September 1837 the guardians removed the inmates and relegated the workhouse to a station for giving out-relief locally, there having been no intention of keeping it on as a workhouse. The building was let to Nightingale in 1838, but one pauper, widow Jarvis, was permitted to remain there, and Nightingale was charged no rent while she survived.[37] This was probably the workhouse in Dawley Green Lane (Bank Road) on the west side of the road opposite a Methodist chapel.[38]

At Buildwas there are two timber framed cottages on the south side of the Buildwas to Leighton road, the northern of which[39] was at one time a workhouse. In 1836 the overseers of Buildwas were required to bring their out-paupers to Madeley workhouse for examination; there was no mention at this time of any existing workhouse.

At Much Wenlock there was a workhouse by 1762, when Jeremiah Hartshorne was engaged under a contract to farm the poor for a year for £108.[40] This was probably a small workhouse as the first record of a burial from it in the parish registers does not occur until 1770.[41] The last mention of the 'old' parish workhouse in the parish registers occurs in May 1780, with the burial from there of Sarah Southern[42], though there were many pauper burials at later dates. Much Wenlock appears to have had a workhouse again briefly in 1821.[43]

Benthall had a workhouse probably long before 1817 when Robert Griffiths, the Broseley timber merchant, was paid 5*s*. for floorboards there.[44] In 1816/17 its expenses came to £165 19*s*. 3*d*., and in 1818/19 to £195 1*s*. 11½*d*. There are references at this time to Stephen and Mary Hartshorne and 'children at poorhouse'. Rent of £20 14*s*. 6*d*. for the 'poor house' was paid to Sergeant Roden in 1819.[45] A salary of £10 10*s*. was paid to Stephen Jones in 1821/22, probably as governor of the workhouse. An unspecific payment of salary of £15 15*s*. was also made in 1822/23, and £21 in 1830/31, conjecturally also to the workhouse governor.[46] At some date between 1819 and 1826 the ownership of the workhouse or poorhouse passed from Roden to Harries. The Harries family of Benthall Hall were the main landlords of the parish from the mid-18th century to 1844, when their estate was sold to Lord Forester of Willey. In 1825/6 £10 10*s*. rent for 'poor houses' was paid to Thomas Harri[e]s and £2 17*s*. was spent on repairs there.[47] In 1833/34 Harries was paid £6 15*s*. 5*d*. rent for a 'poorhouse and cottages'[48], and in 1835 the rent paid for the 'poorhouse' was £6 6*s*.[49] When the Benthall poorhouse or houses came under the poor law union of Madeley in 1836 the 'workhouse effects' were valued at £8 3*s* 9*d*.[50]

The Broseley workhouse at Harris's Green was the only outlying workhouse kept on substantially and made a tool of the guardians' social policy. It was a large building parallel to the street with small yards at front and rear, mentioned in a parish valuation of 1802.[51] Its insurance cost £300, and only £17 rent was paid for it by the guardians, compared with £60 a year for the Madeley workhouse. It stood at the south side of the street at SJ 6720 0187, and was kept by the guardians as a separate establishment for the aged, to be run by a relieving officer and his wife, who were also, it was intended, to be paid £60 a year plus their maintenance. After it had been briefly under Enoch Nevitt, the guardians appointed John Tunnicliffe and his wife at £70 a year plus maintenance. In a time of retrenchment in the early 1840s the guardians sought to close the Broseley workhouse, keeping it, like Dawley, as merely a relieving station.[52]

Some children in the Madeley workhouse were educated by an elderly pauper, but in 1838 the decision was taken to educate all the children within the workhouse, and Sergeant and Mrs. Wildblood were paid an additional £10 for teaching, in which the Wildbloods' two eldest children were to assist. Later a teacher,

Abraham Hartshorne, was employed at a salary of £18 per annum, subsequently increased to £25. A schoolroom was provided in the Madeley workhouse, and from 1842 there was a separate playground. Reading books, Testament lesson books, and maps of England and the Holy Land were provided. At one time the guardians decided to send some to the 'Ironbridge Infant School' (established in December 1844) so they were given some escape from the baleful atmosphere of the workhouse.[53]

In November 1838 the guardians decided to concentrate all the adult inmates in one workhouse, and they removed all the Broseley inmates to Madeley, apart from one, Mary Garbett, who, at the age of 92, was deemed unfit to be moved. The relieving officer at Broseley was paid 4*s*. a week, plus 4*s*. 'for an attendant on her'.[54] It was contrary to Day's views for the union to close Broseley workhouse and be limited to one only for the accommodation of all classes of pauper, but the Broseley house was retained for possible future workhouse use, and the crisis of 1842 showed it could quickly be back with a full complement of inmates. The satisfaction of the board with a single workhouse did not accord with William Day's preference for the 'combined system'. He preferred using several specialised workhouses, 'rather than the separate wards of a single building', as the punitive regime appropriate for the wilfully idle ought not to coexist within the walls of a single workhouse with the benign asylum needed by the children, the aged and the infirm.

The 1841 Census was taken at a time when only the Madeley workhouse was in use. There were on that occasion no more than 56 inmates. The numbers of able-bodied might fluctuate, but the other classes were probably in much the same numbers as at the start of the union. The Census was taken before the industrial crisis of 1842. It recorded seven males and seven females of age 60 or above and seven males aged 15 to 59, including four idiots, so no more than two were considered able-bodied, i.e. capable of labouring for a living. A much larger figure of 13 females, three of whom were idiots, were in the same 15 to 59 age group. These would doubtless include unsupported mothers of children in the workhouse. The children below 15 were nine boys and 13 girls.[55]

The guardians at first thought that they could conform to the national policy of confining all poor relief to the in-door type, apart from emergency cases. They required the overseers of Stirchley and Buildwas and the 'farmer of the poor' at Little Wenlock to attend the board in July 1836, bringing all their paupers for examination. Madeley was one of many unions subject to a 'prohibitory order', forbidding outdoor relief, as requested by the guardians in 1838. But when a Chartist-led strike occurred in the mining areas in 1842, in protest against corruption, which was suspected of reducing wages, the guardians anticipated the unemployment which would result from the strike: 'our workhouse at Madeley being now full and expecting that many applicants for admittance will be made in a few days, [we] ordered that our clerk inform the Poor Law Commissioners thereof and request them to issue an order to grant outdoor relief to able-bodied paupers out of employment'.[56]

The Broseley subsidiary house for the older inmates was in use again by 1842, and it continued in use for many years, although serving mainly as a relieving station. Annual insurance premiums of £1 1*s*. 9*d*. were paid for it down to December 1862. By this date there were probably no paupers in the Broseley house; in May 1863 the offer of George Potts of Broseley to buy it for £260 was accepted, and there is no mention of moving any paupers out of it. To replace the house the guardians hired the basement of the Broseley town hall for £10 per annum as a relieving station and flour store.[57]

While the Broseley workhouse was in decline visitors were appointed from amongst the guardians each month to inspect the workhouse, meaning only the Madeley house. Improvements carried out at Madeley were very piecemeal. Down to 1847 there was a constant stream of repairs and maintenance, nearly all carried out by Thomas Smith, the son of one of the guardians. Intended work is rarely detailed in the minutes, but typical of the constant flow of minor work was the order in November 1836 for windows looking into the girls' yard to be blocked up, cellar windows to be moved from the back of the workhouse to the front, and yards to be formed in furnace cinder surfaced with ashes. In March 1837 twenty beds were ordered and there were plans for a 'hospital'. Work in 1840 included new cooking apparatus, a wash-house and a refractory cell. It was not until July 1847 that the minutes record that Smith declined a job, on the grounds of having 'a large quantity of work under hand at present'.

The relations of the board with their architect and builder, Thomas Smith, appear rather too close. Their decision to retain the old workhouse and adapt it as needs developed, however, led them to require a readily available local odd-job architect-builder rather than a prestigious name. There is no sign of friction between Day and the guardians over this point, although in a possibly parallel case, regarding the employment of Edwards, the medical officer for Madeley, who like his father before him had served year after year unchallenged since the time of the old poor law, Day insisted, to the doctor's extreme chagrin, on proper competitive tendering and the employment of a cheaper officer.[58] The architect-builder, Thomas Smith, was the business partner of one of the original guardians, Samuel Smith; for most of the jobs ordered by the board his quotation was accepted, usually as the only one received. His father Samuel owned the brickworks close to

the workhouse site, and probably supplied all the bricks, and the family leased a field adjacent to the workhouse.[59] The firm of Samuel Smith and Co. appears in an 1828 directory as brick and tile makers, and it appears that Samuel Smith was also an auctioneer and had designed some farmhouses in 1809. So the firm appears to have risen from modest building origins, coupled with an interest in materials and property. By 1836 directories also describe Samuel Smith and Son as architects. Samuel Smith and Co. had the Woodland Brick and Tile Works a few hundred yards from the workhouse site.[60]

The union workhouse in the early years of the new poor law clearly did not appear to the leaders of community life in Madeley as a matter of much importance or prestige. Wellington union might have been similar, but these two were in contrast to most neighbouring unions surrounding the industrial area.

The New Workhouse at Lincoln Hill

The guardians were notably slow in resolving to replace their antiquated workhouse at Madeley with a new one; they delayed until the old house was condemned by the Poor Law Board in 1866. The poor law inspector, Andrew Doyle, concluded in 1858 that the Madeley workhouse was incapable of any improvement, and should be replaced by a more suitable building, a policy which the guardians long resisted.

From about 1850 improvements to the former Madeley house of industry decreased in number. Yet it would have been evident to the guardians that most of the surrounding unions had far more imposing and satisfactory workhouses than Madeley. The new workhouse at the Innage in the neighbouring union of Bridgnorth was a palace by comparison. They were satisfied with the old workhouse built in 1797, even when it was becoming an antiquated building held together by straps. The poor law inspectors argued the case for discontinuing it and acquiring a better one but the guardians adamantly refused to make that decision. The board of guardians divided into two parties on the question of replacement, those favouring replacement being led by the Rev. R. H. Cobbold, vicar of Broseley, and the party opposing replacement by the Rev. G. Edmonds, rector of Little Wenlock. A vote taken in 1864 resulted in 10 votes to replace, and 14 to retain, the existing workhouse.[61]

In 1863 the architect of the Poor Law Board inspected the house and criticised it as old and dilapidated, and recommended a new house at a cost of about £5,000.[62] In the same year the Poor Law Board rejected the guardians' proposals for improvements. The guardians voted against rebuilding. In 1866 the guardians submitted almost identical proposals for a second time, but found them angrily rejected.[63] In 1867 the Poor Law Board placed limits on the number of paupers to be housed in the workhouse, in accordance with minimum air volumes per person, limiting the night-time capacity of the house to 91 persons.[64]

The possibility of building a replacement workhouse was at last addressed by the guardians in 1866. The Poor Law Board ordered them to employ an architect. The guardians were evidently sensitive about accusations that the house was inadequate, as, when they heard a rumour that gentlemen from the *Lancet* periodical were proposing to inspect it for a report on workhouses, they resolved to refuse them admission.[65] The Poor Law Board ordered closure of the house by March 1869, but postponed this date several times to allow the guardians time to build. The guardians ordered the governor to get as many paupers 'as can conveniently be accommodated' into the house.[66]

The building committee ran a competition in 1870 and received designs from four architects for a new house. They chose to employ Messrs. Haddon of Great Malvern, although they did not select their design. They resolved under pressure 'to accept a ground plan offered by a member of the Committee and to appoint Messrs. Haddon as the architects to complete and carry the same into effect'. In her analysis of the evolving planning of English workhouses in the 19th century Morrison notes that the new Madeley workhouse, which was then built on Lincoln Hill, was a pioneer of the 'pavilion plan' or 'separate block' type. It was apparently the first to adopt this new layout, but received no publicity. Generally small workhouses throughout the country continued to be built into the 1880s conforming to the old 'corridor' type of plan. The new Madeley workhouse was three years ahead of the much better known Lambeth workhouse in pioneering the new type of plan.[67]

The closure deadline imposed on the guardians was postponed several times. Nothing had started at Lincoln Hill by June 1870, when the board of guardians considered possible sources of clay for brickmaking.[68] The entrance building of the Lincoln Hill workhouse has several very difficult datestones, which the English Heritage surveyors read as 1871, 1872 and 1873. The principal datestone, over the central archway, appears to read 1871. In 1874 the new workhouse was complete. It was, according to the orders of the Poor Law Board, to be for 250 to 300 inmates and to cost between £7,000 and £10,000. The guardians decided on 200 inmates and a cost not to exceed £6,000. It was described in detail by Randall in 1880.[69] He states that £13,800 was spent on it, including interest on the loan, but not counting a further £600 needed for tramp wards.

The new buildings were in pink-brown brickwork ornamented with polychrome effects in red, yellow and blue, and with red tile roofs. The roofs were decorated with small spires at the ridge junctions, despite the

guardians' desire to minimise the cost. The entrance to the main interior block had a porch with ornamental bargeboards. The building committee itself has been credited with the pioneering layout, rather than the architect. Conservative features of the design included the front range, which is of two storeys in the centre and of a single storey on each side, which contained the guardians' offices and admissions departments, and the symmetrical layout of the plan to the rear. Five principal yards were provided to ensure proper segregation of the inmates. The central block containing kitchens and dining room was connected by covered ways to the male and female blocks. Randall in his *History of Madeley* described the uses of the various rooms:

> 'Inside the quadrangle we get central offices of various kinds, cooking and dining rooms, pantry, clothing room, governor and matron's offices. On the right are the laundry, the washhouse, work rooms, able bodied women's rooms, children's room, old infirm women's room, and three small apartments for married couples. There is also a dormitory on the ground floor for old and infirm women; and over the whole of the

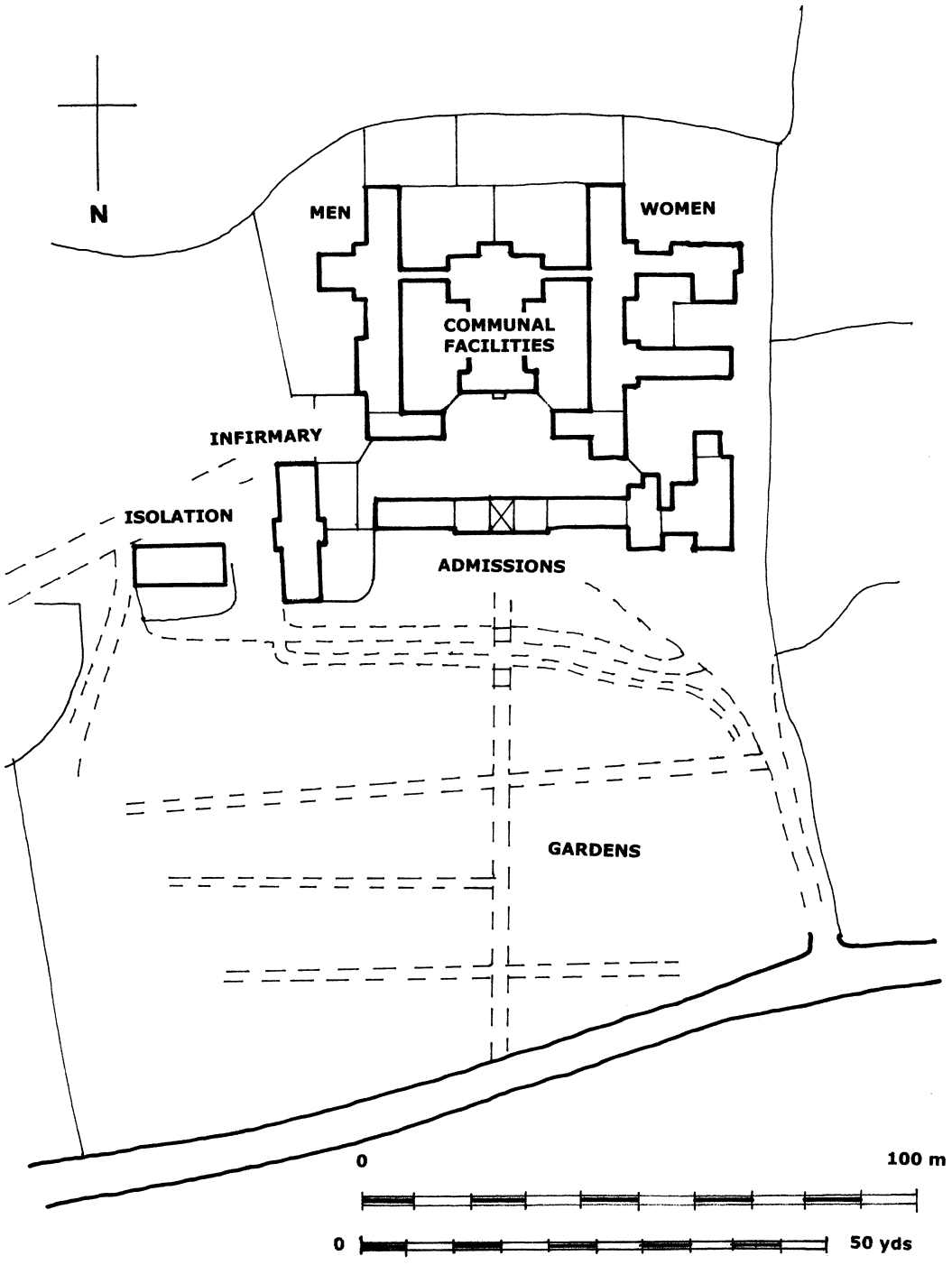

Figure 16 The late-19th century Madeley workhouse at Lincoln Hill.

offices and rooms mentioned are bedrooms. On the left are similar arrangements to those we have mentioned for the men, but with workshops for carpenters and tailors. On the east is the infirmary, a detached building, with male and female departments, nurses, &c.; and below this a fever hospital. The whole building is capable of giving accommodation to 225 inmates; but at the time we write 88 are the total number, notwithstanding the very depressed state of trade; and 90, we learn, is about the average'.

Slight changes of brick colour show that there were alterations, but the original buildings cannot readily be distinguished from early alterations carried out by the same architect.

Six acres of land to the north of the workhouse were taken for horticulture 'by the judicious labour of the inmates'. A path across this garden ground on the axis of the layout may have been thought of as a possible formal approach road, but, as the lie of the land is inconveniently hollow, access was probably always, as now, from the north-west corner of the site.

The new workhouse remained in use to the end of the poor law in 1930. The buildings continued to be used thereafter as the Beeches Hospital. At about the time of its conversion to a hospital a nurses' home was added to the south of the site. The simple covered ways linking the main block to the male and female blocks were replaced in the mid 20th century by bulkier two-storey links. Following the closure of the hospital the buildings were used for the residential care of the elderly with the name Lincoln Grange, but their future was unclear until listed in 2007.

Newport

The guardians initially elected to serve Newport union were inert and not attuned to the most up to date ideas. It took them 20 years from the start of their union in 1836 to begin to build a new workhouse. It might be said that their slowness was partly because they had difficulties in deciding how best to deal with their juveniles, and like several other Shropshire unions they resisted the call to house children in the same building as other inmates. The Newport guardians' minutes reveal them as unsophisticated people, who did not see that they should act very differently to their parish predecessors. Their common sense satisfied them with the simple and familiar old system of poorhouses and out-relief, and warned them that the construction of a great new single workhouse would be an expensive novelty. John Coles was the first chairman and Sir Thomas Boughey Bart. of Aqualate was the first vice-chairman.[70] Five local workhouses were available to them. Their main workhouse was at Newport, although they recognised from the start that it was grossly unsatisfactory. They also had the use of a workhouse at Gnosall which they decided to keep as a separate workhouse for children. For a time they also used a house in Lilleshall as a children's workhouse. Three guardians were appointed as a subcommittee to investigate how to make best use of these workhouses. Their fourth workhouse, at Chetwynd, was used only briefly in 1836, while the Newport and Gnosall workhouses were being repaired. When extra Staffordshire parishes were added to the union they acquired a workhouse at High Offley, but they never used it, and they allowed the parish to sell it in 1840.[71]

The Newport guardians were not averse to granting out-relief and they found that they could manage with the quite limited accommodation of two or three old workhouses. The Quarterly Return for the union ending June 1837, by which time the guardians had all three of their workhouses functioning, shows that of 776 persons receiving relief in that quarter there were only 22 men, 24 women and 38 children receiving relief in the form of 'in maintenance'. The inmates of the union's workhouses did not exceed 11% of those receiving the benefits of the poor rate.[72]

From the start of the union their principal workhouse was that at Newport, standing at SJ 747194 to the south side of Workhouse Lane (now renamed Vineyard Road). There is reference to a workhouse in Workhouse Lane in 1787, probably this building.[73] At an earlier date (from 1748) Newport parish in-paupers had been sent to Thomas Hazlehurst's establishment in Wellington.[74] Newport's improvement in the 18th century was dominated by the Act incorporating the Marsh Trustees for the enclosure of the town grazing land in 1764, one of whose aims was to 'establish and encourage some manufactures…and apprentice the children of the poor parishioners'. While the parish officials were still in charge of the workhouse in 1836 they built four women's almshouses on the adjacent site[75], perhaps regarding Workhouse Lane as a charity quarter. When acquired by the guardians, the Newport workhouse was deemed to be in a worse state than that at Gnosall, and one of their first tasks was to put it into repair, which they completed by July 1837. They acquired a site, described as Pooler's house, in June 1837 to build offices as a boardroom and Registrar's office, completed by 1838.[76]

The old Newport workhouse is a large brick structure of the plainest description. It is notable for its very high rooms: it is two storeys high, but its eaves level is more than 6 ft. higher than that of the adjacent cottages and almshouses. The extraordinary height is a feature of late 18th century workhouses, at Madeley, Bridgnorth and

Plate 6 Newport. The former Newport parish workhouse (pre-1787) in Workhouse Lane (now Vineyard Road).

elsewhere, and may be a result of using the workhouse as a 'house of industry' containing looms. Newport was the workhouse reserved after 1836 for able bodied paupers; they were deemed capable of attending church, which spared the guardians the expense of providing a chaplain.[77] In the 1841 Census the workhouse was recorded as occupied by Thomas and Mary Pritchard (the governor and matron), their four children, and 29 paupers, comprising 23 persons aged from 15 to 69, a girl aged 10 and five infants. The workhouse is now converted into three cottages. No substantial improvements were made until 1847, when the Poor Law Commissioners recommended its enlargement. The guardians' builder, Cobb, drew up plans, and tenders were invited in April 1848.

The briefly used workhouse in Lilleshall parish was the property of the Duke of Sutherland. It was in the village of Donnington at SJ 709140 on the east side of School Road, but it does not survive. The *Victoria County History* indicates that there had been a parish workhouse in Lilleshall village by 1804, and that it was moved to this location at Donnington (where it was still known as Lilleshall workhouse) in 1810. It reached a peak of 49 inmates in 1817, whereupon it was enlarged. In 1824 Lydia Lees was accused of threatening (for an unstated reason) to burn it down. The guardians of Newport union appointed a governor to this workhouse to follow on from the salaried keeper who had been employed by the parish until 1837. The chairman of the guardians communicated with the Duke concerning the rent of the workhouse and the repairs they required. The Estate imposed restrictions on the use the union might make of the workhouse, and when, in February 1837, the guardians of Shifnal requested permission from their Newport colleagues to send Shifnal workhouse children to the Lilleshall school the Newport guardians were obliged to decline, even though at this time the Duke was nominally the chairman of the Shifnal guardians, and could have permitted it if he had chosen to. In May 1837 the Newport guardians decided to give up the workhouse following the next Quarter Day. The assistant poor law commissioner, William Day, was unhappy with this decision, which ran counter to his known preference for using multiple workhouses; he also pointed out the illegality of such a decision being made without the approval of a Special General Meeting of the guardians, and the need to obtain the approval of the Poor Law Commissioners. After reconsideration the guardians came to the same conclusion. In November 1837 they finally decided to discontinue the Lilleshall workhouse as 'there is sufficient accommodation in the other houses for the reception of the children'. The Lilleshall children were to be removed to Gnosall on 22 December 1837.[78]

The workhouse at Gnosall, at SJ 830208, about 100 yards south of the church, thus became the union's only subsidiary workhouse. It continued in use until 1855, and remained the property of the parish. At the start of the union the guardians had the Gnosall workhouse valued, presumably to make a case for reducing its rent. In September 1837 the union was paying £16 5*s*. rent quarterly for all its workhouses. Cobb worked on improvements in 1836 and 1837. Further alterations were ordered by Day in January 1838. They were unlucky in their choice of staff, and a new governor and matron were sought in 1838. In June 1839 it was first proposed to amalgamate the two workhouses of Newport and Gnosall into a single building, and so Gnosall was likely to become redundant. Some of the guardians, however, wanted to continue with their two workhouses. The question was allowed to drop. The union continued to make use of its patched-up old buildings for the accommodation of in-relief paupers at Newport and Gnosall until 1855.[79]

Gnosall was still described in 1851 as the workhouse for the aged and children.[80] In March 1851 under Doyle, the assistant poor law inspector, further alterations at Gnosall were planned, but the guardians baulked at the expense. In July 1851 Doyle proposed a reorganisation, not very different from the existing arrangement, amalgamating the establishments into one at Newport, and sending the workhouse children to an industrial training school out of the union, but this suggestion was also dropped, and in December 1852 the guardians proceeded instead to plan an enlargement at Gnosall. The possible discontinuance of Gnosall was again raised in 1854, when it was proposed to send the children to the children's workhouse of Wellington union in the parish of High Ercall near Waters Upton but Doyle vetoed this and proposed Stafford instead, which was agreed. Stafford could take 40 children at 4*s*. per head per week. The governor and matron of Gnosall were prematurely given notice of the termination of their employment on 19 December 1854. The overseers and churchwardens, as owners of the Gnosall workhouse, were given notice on 2 January 1855, and again on 8 May, of the union's intention to give up possession by the next Christmas. In July 1855 the guardians resolved to move the children to Stafford 'forthwith'. This appears to have happened, but by March 1856 the guardians were again considering the cost of farming out the children, and considering whether they should again establish their own 'school'. The Gnosall workhouse was subsequently demolished and a village school built on the site.[81]

The mismanagement of Gnosall workhouse, where the governor, Betteley, had recently been dismissed for 'peculation', was the cause of a severe reprimand to the board by William Day in April 1839. Day visited and was appalled at the condition of the children:

> 'I found the house dirty, the children lousy, and the educational process very unsatisfactory. In fact I was disgusted and entered a pretty strong minute in the Visitors' Book and returned to Newport where I saw several of the guardians'.[82]

Matters were made worse by the insubordinate reaction of the guardians to Day's complaint. They appointed a committee to 'investigate' the truth of his allegations. Day, in a furious letter to the guardians, pointed out that a minute by him was to be acted upon, not investigated. Day had also complained that the children were not being taught writing and arithmetic, and had to point out that the teaching of writing was a compulsory duty under the Workhouse Regulations, and that in his view arithmetic was equally or more important. He strongly objected to the use of Mary Sage, 'a querrulous [sic]and decrepid [sic] pauper' as the teacher.[83] A petulant entry appears in the guardians' minutes to record that 'It is the opinion of this Board that Children in the Poorhouse and Workhouse ought not to be taught writing and Arithmetic'.[84]

The New Workhouse in Audley Avenue

The construction of a new union workhouse was deferred until 1855. While William Day was supervising the union as assistant poor law commissioner the board was under no pressure to conform to usual practice by giving up the several workhouses in favour of a single general workhouse, and this accorded with the board's natural inertia, but under Doyle (the assistant poor law inspector who supervised them under the new regime following the abolition of the Poor Law Commission) a change of policy was more to be expected. Doyle attended the guardians' board meeting on 9 July 1851 and explained the views of the Poor Law Board. The guardians appointed a committee 'to consider the expedience of consolidating all the establishment at Newport'. Thomas Boultbee, who was for many years vice chairman of the guardians, was on this committee. When the committee's report came up for vote on 7 October the Guardians' minutes record that he unsuccessfully moved rejection, on the grounds that in the present time of agricultural depression it was inappropriate to be spending to enlarge the workhouse or to send children out of the union.

In May 1854 some of the guardians proposed adapting the Victoria Hotel in Newport as a replacement workhouse, but the proposal was lost. Under some pressure from the Poor Law Board they then decided to build

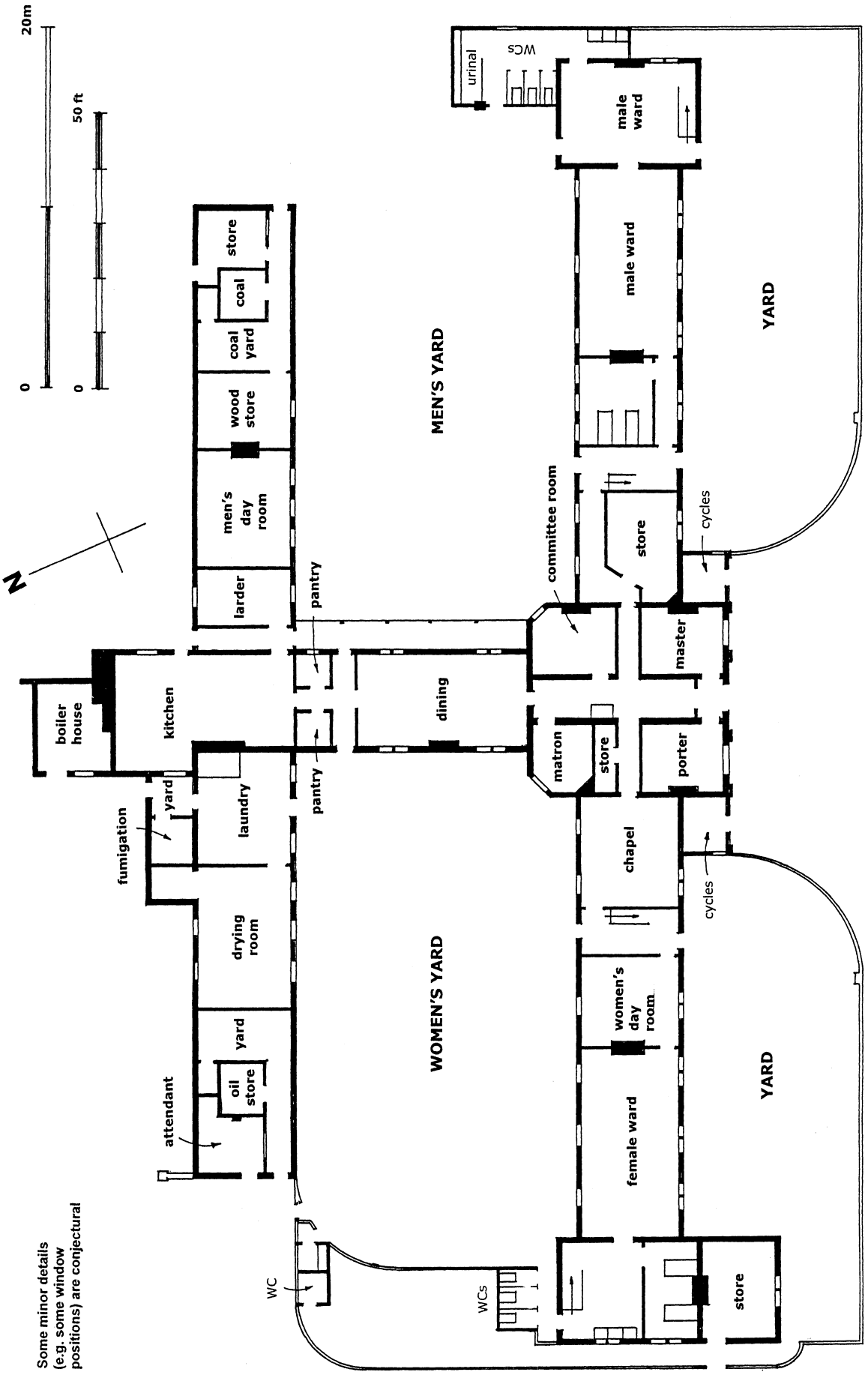

Figure 17 Plan of Audley House (formerly Newport Union Workhouse) shortly after the repeal of the Poor Law. (Based on a plan of *c*.1932.)

a new workhouse at Newport to replace both the existing one and that at Gnosall. In November plans were ready to go to the Poor Law Board for approval, and the union was ready to invite tenders. The architect and builder was John Cobb, and in February 1855 a committee of guardians was set up to supervise the project and authorise payments to Cobb. A three-acre field to the north side of Long Marsh Lane (now named Audley Avenue) was obtained from the Marsh Trustees. The guardians found difficulty in raising capital for the building, and appear to have felt aggrieved that the Poor Law Board approved their plans without questioning whether or not the guardians could afford them.[85]

For their building work the guardians seem always to have used one local firm, J. and J. Cobb, and the younger Cobb was the builder of the new workhouse at SJ 752187 on the north side of Audley Avenue. [86]

The building project appears to have cost about £3,610 altogether, this being the figure raised by the guardians from a group of private lenders in 1855. The construction evidently lasted from mid-1855 to 6 May 1856. The Marsh Trustees were paid £615 for the site. John Cobb was paid £1,000 in July 1855 and £600 in October, £800 in February 1856, and finally £488 'balance' in May 1856. Edward Haycock, the county architect, certified completion, and he was paid a fee of £28 10*s*. for this. The inmates were moved in at the end of May 1856.[87]

After the completion of the workhouse in Audley Avenue the guardians continued to look after their pauper children separately. They had an agreement in 1858 with the South East Shropshire District School at Quatt to take 24 orphaned or deserted children under the age of 16; in 1867 the number of children was increased to 40.[88]

The new workhouse was a symmetrical two-storey red-brick and slate-roofed building with four airing yards. It had a symmetrical front range about 230 ft. long, parallel to the street, incorporating a pedimented central block (with four pilasters and a central doorway emphasised by stucco dressings) and two end pavilions with hipped roofs to the front. At the rear is a tall single-storey central wing acting as the spine of the layout, with a lower single-storey second range parallel to the street to the rear. These parts are all that now survive of the workhouse buildings (with much altered appearance), and they happen to be the original parts. The location of the governor's and matron's rooms, which occupied the central block of the front range, is evident because at the rear this part has splayed corners and windows for supervision of the rear pair of yards. There were also high walled yards at the front where there are now only low-walled gardens. (See Figures 17 and 18.)

The left part of the front range contained the female wards and day room, and the right half the male wards, in both cases including the short cross-wings at the ends. The left part also contained the chapel, but this might not be an original use. A pauper entering the workhouse would arrive by the main door at the centre, where the

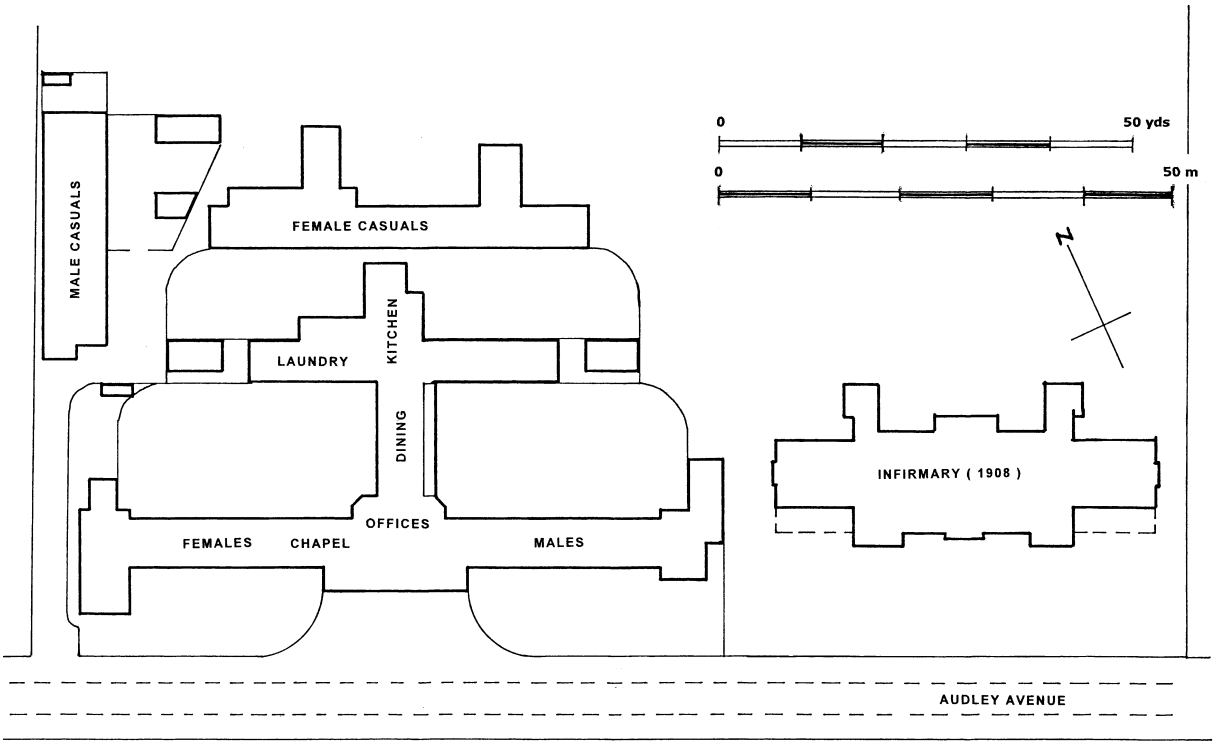

Figure 18 Block plan of Newport Union Workhouse site in the early-20th century. (Based on detailed plan of Audley House at front of site (*c*.1932) and an undated early-20th-century plan of the casual wards at the rear.)

Plate 7 Newport. The former Newport union workhouse of 1855–6 in Audley Avenue (now known as Audley House).

porter's room was located. The single storey spine range contained the dining room and kitchen. The single storey rear range parallel to the street contained laundry facilities at the left and stores of food, wood and coal at the right. The right part also contained the men's day room.

There were further detached single storey buildings at rear and to the left (casual wards) added in 1873.[89] A drawing of that date is signed by John F. Lofts. Lofts also signed a drawing with a dormitory plan of the 'infant school'. In 1906 the guardians were authorised to spend £250 on land and £3,765 on building their infirmary to the east of the workhouse, and it was erected to the design of Fleeming and Son, architects, the builders being G. I. Muirhead and Company of Newport. Twenty-nine beds were provided in four wards, these being for males, females, maternity cases and for isolation. No cooking was done in the infirmary, as food was to be brought from the adjacent workhouse. Additional wards were added in 1908.

The workhouse still survives, now converted into dwelling units, as does the earlier workhouse in Vineyard Road.[90] (See Plates 6 and 7.)

Shifnal

Management of the poor under the old poor law in the parish of Shifnal was under the control of an active parish vestry, and there was some continuity into the period of the new poor law when Shifnal became the principal parish of a union.[91]

In 1731 Shifnal vestry drew up a list of persons willing to contribute towards the costs of hiring a building to house the 'several aged and decrepit poore people which have to receive alms' pending the construction of a permanent workhouse. In 1734 the parish registers record the burial of 'Joseph Davies, a poor boy out of the workhouse'.[92] By 1788 Shifnal workhouse is recorded at the front of the present site beside Park Lane at SJ 748 072. Maps in the Jerningham terrier of that year indicate a building on the street frontage with ground to its rear. In 1804 the overseers of Shifnal were recorded in a Jerningham estate rental as paying £5 annually for the workhouse, although later the rent appears to have been waived.[93]

Shifnal is of more than usual interest for the policy adopted with regard to the poor. The late 18th century vestry minutes show that the overseers generally assisted the able-bodied poor by ensuring that they had work at regulated wages rather than by granting relief within the workhouse. The minutes contain many references to parish labourers allotted to the various farmers, and many young persons becoming parish apprentices. The vestry decided on a scale, as a proportion of full market wages, to be paid to parish labourers when allotted to employers.

The workhouse remained nonetheless vital as a means to enforce the co-operation of the able-bodied poor and became the focus of a severe policy in the early 19th century. The magistrates directed that persons wanting

relief but refusing parish work were to be denied any relief outside the workhouse: 'Those persons so refusing and their families to be ordered into the workhouse there to be maintained and kept to work'. It was also ordered that the parish officers were to provide a 'more proper place for the reception of the poor, the magistrates deeming the present Poor House very unfit and unwholesome for its situation and want of accommodation'.[94]

On 1 November 1816 the vestry resolved to apply to Sir George Jerningham to sell them the existing workhouse and an acre of land, evidently having decided to rebuild or enlarge at the existing workhouse site. The overseers were instructed to obtain three estimates for the cost of 'a new building to connect with the old, of 34 ft. long by 16 ft. wide with lodging room over it'. A plan and specification by Francis Halley, a churchwarden, had evidently been prepared for this building. Two quotations were received, that by Burtheson for £168 being accepted.[95] This was superseded when in April a permanent workhouse scheme was devised by James Smith of Coppice Green. The vestry resolved that 'Mr. James Smith's plans for alterations to the present poorhouse be adopted and carried out so far as present voluntary subscriptions permit; Mr Smith to produce an estimate of the expense'.[96] The cost of the whole scheme, the demolition, the new building and Smith's payment, was to come to not more than £976, of which not more than £400 was to come from the poor rate. A list of subscriptions totalling £905 is given, headed by Sir George's donation of the existing workhouse and its site, valued at £250.[97] No details are given in the vestry minutes of the work to build the new workhouse, or what builder carried it out if not Smith himself.

Shifnal was on the Holyhead Road, and by 1817 it was common knowledge that very substantial improvements to the road were being planned by Thomas Telford. The vestry members needed to make their new workhouse appear a credit to the town. Travellers in the Holyhead direction would see the new workhouse as the first important building in Shifnal. As the workhouse project was largely funded by the subscriptions of the landholders of the parish, who also governed the parish through the vestry, the expense of the modest embellishment of the workhouse by providing the giant arches over the lower doors and windows is unlikely to have been a contentious matter. The new workhouse is a red brick building in Regency style, but with a regular, repetitive design which in no way indicates its purpose. It is of two storeys, in nine bays plus a forward wing of two bays at the right end. There was no space for a corresponding wing at the left, and it is worth remark that

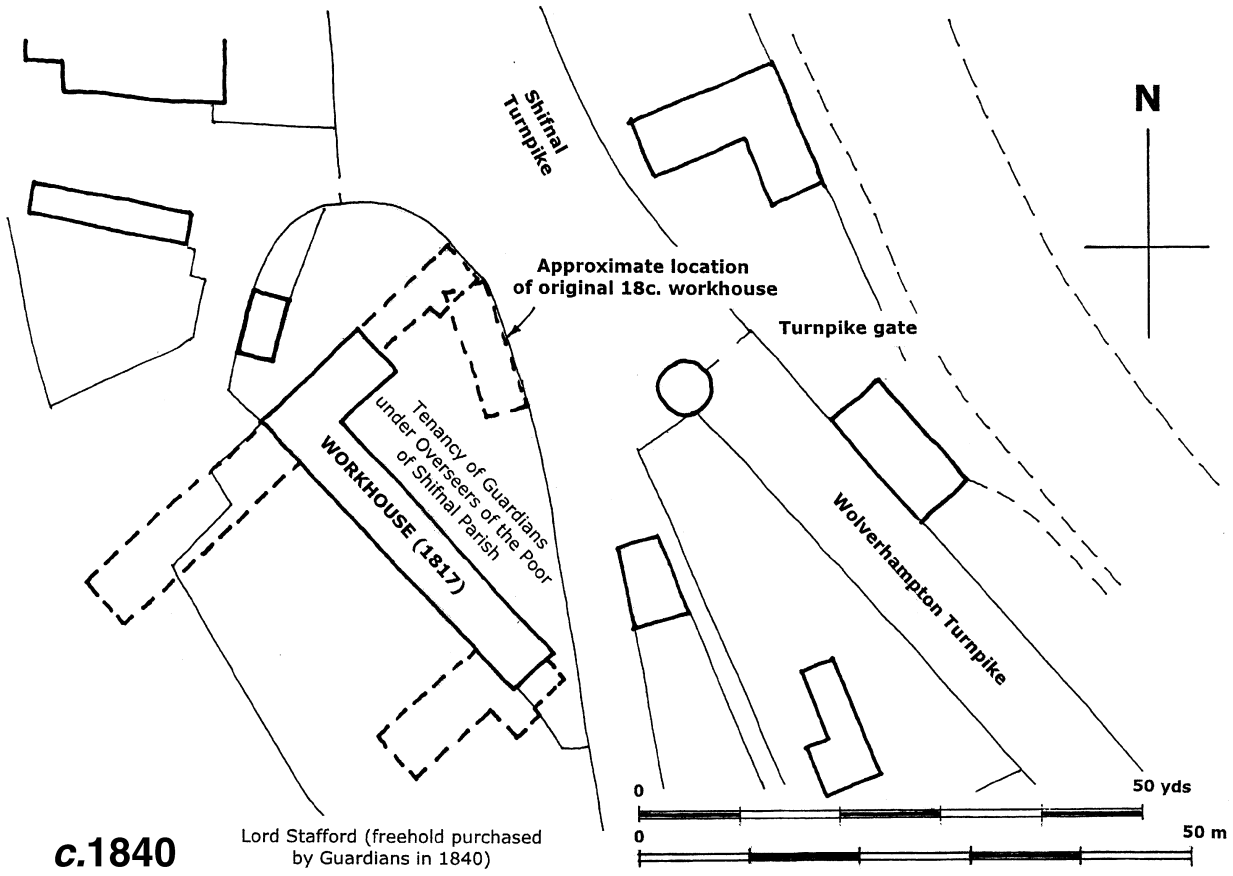

Figure 19 Shifnal Union Workhouse. (Based mainly on the Tithe Survey Plan of Shifnal, 1840.)

the site shape was not altered to permit a symmetrical building to be erected, although the surrounding land was also Jerningham property. In addition to the giant arches the front has a first-floor sill band and a dentil-brick eaves cornice. The arches may be a device to disguise the height of the ground storey, and it was not perhaps thought necessary to go to such expense at the rear, which is simply utilitarian. The roof is hipped, of very low pitch, in slate, and has a deep overhang at the eaves. The sill band of the upper windows originally returned at the left end. There may also have been an intention to imitate the architectural style of the nearby stable block on the east side of Park Street.

In 1820 the open vestry of Shifnal parish was replaced by a select vestry, using powers given in Sturges Bourne's Act. The parish was organised into four divisions, each electing five representatives to sit in rotation with the vicar, churchwardens and overseers. This select vestry took over the running of the workhouse. The select vestry was discontinued later, the parish having reverted to an open vestry by 1834.[98]

The poor law union was formed by combining Shifnal with ten other Shropshire and four Staffordshire parishes. Shifnal (which included Priorslee) was the only industrialised parish in the union and the only one with a large pauper problem. The change of management gave an opportunity to the magistrates to play a more direct leading role. The board of guardians included three active *ex-officio* members, two of whom, Major G. A. Moultrie (of Aston Hall) and the Rev. C. R. Cameron, were the magistrates who had signed the deed creating the select vestry in 1820. The board first met on 6 April 1836 and elected another magistrate member, Thomas Whitmore of Apley Park, as its acting chairman. Inactive *ex-officio* magistrate members included the Duke of Sutherland, who was the nominal chairman, and Lord Bradford. The union made the Shifnal workhouse its main workhouse, and it remained the property of the overseers, although it was managed by the guardians. Some other local parish property, unused by the union, was disposed of in Blymhill and Ryton parishes in the early 1840s.[99]

The guardians also acquired a small parish workhouse at Sheriffhales, but this was deemed exempted from the statutory rule that all existing workhouses automatically became available to a new board of guardians, as it was the 'private property' of the Duke of Sutherland. It consisted of 'two detached buildings, each of which, with a trifling alteration, would hold above thirty children, and would probably be sufficient for the purposes of a school', but although the assistant poor law commissioner, William Day, tried to persuade the Duke to allow the union to use them, he was not successful. The buildings, at approximately SJ 7602 1227, do not survive.[100]

At their first meeting the guardians set up a committee, with Major Moultrie as chairman, to 'inspect the workhouses at Shifnal and Sheriffhales with a view to the classification required by the Commissioners and report as to the hiring any other buildings'. They shortly decided to close down the workhouse at Sheriffhales, and considered taking an unoccupied building on the east side of the High Street in Shifnal instead, 'being of the opinion that the latter premises were capable of affording more extensive accommodation, with immediate possession'. The clerk was directed to make a ground plan of the building which they intended to acquire, and apply to the agents, Messrs. Pritchard, Solicitors, for terms. They saw the way ahead as being to purchase both the High Street premises and the existing Shifnal workhouse. The governor of the workhouse was instructed to report to the committee on the extent to which the workhouse could be adapted to achieve classification of the inmates.[101]

The plan to buy additional premises in the High Street came to nothing, but the guardians proceeded with alterations to achieve better classification within the existing workhouse. The Shifnal workhouse now had to serve the needs of 15 parishes. Within a month of the start of their existence they had proposals on paper for classification, ordered walls to be built to divide the existing day room of the workhouse and the workhouse yard into two to accommodate the sexes separately, both within the workhouse and outside it, and accepted a tender to build them. This still left them with a workhouse not quite up to the required standard. It was later criticised as not admitting 'more than the general classification of males and females and one additional children's ward'. The latter was probably the small rear extension to the south side at the rear, extending from the women's side.[102]

To brief themselves for a possible purchase of the workhouse from the overseers the board obtained a valuation, complete with furniture and fittings, from W. Thomas Halley. They kept up the momentum by calling a meeting of all the guardians on 26 July to consider purchase.[103] The valuation gave them a basis to offer the overseers rent of £48 per annum. A proposal to buy the workhouse for £814 9*s*. 8*d*. was, however, turned down by the board of guardians. The board resolved to purchase all the furniture and fittings in the workhouse for £94 12*s*. 11*d*. and accepted the report of the committee on hiring additional buildings.

The approaches to the overseers to purchase the workhouse, and to Lord Stafford, formerly Sir George Jerningham, for adjacent land, were resumed in 1838. The overseers were unwilling to sell the workhouse to the board of guardians. The Tithe plan of 1840 records the site of the workhouse, including ground only at the front, as owned and occupied by the overseers of the poor, and the ground to the rear as part of the estate of Lord Stafford.[104] In August 1838 the guardians made their request for land to Blount, Lord Stafford's agent. The

agent was unhelpful, and Mr. Eyke, negotiating on behalf of the guardians, reduced the extent of the request, but still the agent declined.[105] The guardians eventually succeeded in obtaining land at the rear, but they could not acquire freehold of the existing buildings.[106] The draft deed conveying the rear ground from Lord Stafford and Henry Jerningham of Cossey (Costessy Park, Norfolk) to the guardians for £250 was approved by the Poor Law Commissioners on 10 November 1840.[107]

The guardians were content to build on the land at the rear, where they had the security of freehold. Three tenders for additional buildings were received, the winning one being that of Francis Halley for £488 12*s*. 7*d*., the work to be completed by June 1839. Halley is doubtless the same Francis Halley who, as churchwarden in the period after *c*.1815, had drawn up the initial proposals for improvement before he was ousted by Smith. This Francis Halley of 1838 was described as an architect.[108] His trade premises were in Church Street in Shifnal. Halley was paid sums in June and October 1839 and February 1840 which account for most of his tender. The decision of the guardians to consider insurance suggests completion of the additions by about July 1840.

Prior to enlargement the quarterly numbers of pauper inmates in the workhouse appear to have been about 40 to 80. In November 1836 64 were recorded, rising to 80 in June 1837. In 1838 the numbers were a little lower, rising to 75 in November.

With the enlargement of the workhouse at the rear the guardians planned to accommodate 200 paupers, although the official capacity was set at 150.[109] The intended capacity is indicated by the number of beds for which the various wards were designed:

Table 6 Ward accommodation at Shifnal Workhouse in 1839.

Men's ward, 24 beds for 48 inmates single tier, plus some upper tier beds
Male sick room 10 beds for 10 inmates
Women's ward 18 beds for 36 inmates single tier, plus some upper tier beds
Female sick room 10 beds for 10 inmates
Boys' ward 8 beds for 16 inmates
Girls' ward 8 beds for 16 inmates
Sick room 4 beds for 4 inmates
Add 60 further inmates in upper tier beds in men's and women's wards.
Total potential 200 inmates.[110]

In 1841 only 42 names of pauper inmates were recorded in the census and only 57 in 1851, but the census figures do not reveal the crisis of the intervening period. The quarterly numbers continued below 100 until June 1842, when 112 were recorded, and September, when numbers reached a peak of 195. 1842 was a year of severe crisis when the numbers were likely to have exceeded the capacity of the workhouse. In November 1843 another peak was reached when the quarterly numbers reached 214.[111] Much of the problem was 'pressure on the iron trade'.[112]

There was not much change to the workhouse buildings in later years. Halley made further alterations in April 1842 to meet new workhouse rules, and in July drew up plans for a new porter's lodge, probationary ward and refractory rooms, which he then revised to omit the chamber above. This may be the origin of the front extensions and the single storey rear wing. In September the guardians considered further wards, but then decided that the workhouse, as recently enlarged to the satisfaction of the Poor Law Commissioners, was sufficient, and no additions were needed. In 1844 it was remarked that the workhouse possessed no casual ward and that there was no building suitable for conversion for this purpose.

A proposal to send the workhouse children to a school was raised at a very early date. The guardians, with Thomas Whitmore as acting chairman, must have been aware of the energetic moves of the neighbouring union, Bridgnorth, to establish a school, led by Whitmore's cousin and political rival, William Wolryche Whitmore. In July 1836 the Shifnal guardians received the report of their committee 'respecting the arrangements for a school'. At the start of 1837 they resolved to apply to the guardians of Newport union to admit their children to the school at Lilleshall, but in February the clerk of the Newport union wrote to them explaining that because of the peculiar tenure under which the Newport guardians possessed the Lilleshall school they were debarred from admitting any children other than those belonging to Newport union. The Lilleshall school was Sutherland Estate property, and, despite this refusal, the Duke of Sutherland was re-elected as the figurehead chairman of the Shifnal guardians in April. In October it was resolved to send the children to be taught by Ann Beamish, 'a widow living near to the workhouse', whose name does not appear in directories of the time. In 1843 a teacher, George Richards, was employed for the meagre annual salary of £10.[113] With regard to older children, the guardians adopted a policy, unlike that of their overseer predecessors, of refusing to send them to be apprenticed to miners.[114]

Plate 8 Shifnal. The former Shifnal parish workhouse, 1817, enlarged to serve as Shifnal union workhouse after 1836.

By the late 19th century the building still consisted of the original L-shaped structure of 1817, with small additions in front and two rear wings, that to north being of two storeys, the other to south being single storey. There was also a single-bay extension against the south end. Outbuildings included a freestanding vagrants' ward, built to the design of J. Farmer, architect, of Kemberton, in 1896. A detached building to the south is thought to have been an infirmary, for which a notice in *The Builder* invited tenders in 1900. The workhouse acquired the local name of 'The Spike'.[115]

In the years after the end of the poor law in 1930 the building became a hospital, but since 1985 it has been a refurbished Listed Building, renamed Park Court, and divided into 13 sheltered dwellings. (See Plate 8.) Prior to conversion the building was surveyed and the main range was found to consist of four rooms with two large wards or dormitories and one small ward or dormitory above. A modern cottage hospital was built to the rear in 1939 and it took over some of the former workhouse buildings, but that has now been demolished. A small fragment of the workhouse boundary wall, incorporating a low section to allow the main workhouse building to be seen to advantage from the public road, survives at the front, with a blocked doorway.[116]

Wellington

A workhouse on the south side of Walker Street was set up by the parish overseers when they took the initiative to manage their own poor at the end of the 18th century or the beginning of the 19th century. Some time prior to this the parish had farmed out those paupers who could not be relieved at their homes to Thomas Hazlehurst, an illiterate tailor, who appears to have had a free hand in housing and feeding them, and probably took the profits of their work. His was a big establishment, as not only Wellington but also Berrington, Wrockwardine, and some other parishes sent their paupers to him. In 1782 'farming out' to private contractors became illegal to any parish adopting Gilbert's Act, as Wellington appears to have done. At the end of the 18th century Wellington parish had its own workhouse in Street Lane (the part of Watling Street between Haygate Road and Wrekin Road); this was superseded by 1805 by the workhouse in Walker Street, which survived to become the main workhouse of the union in 1836, was rebuilt in 1840, and in its rebuilt form became part of the present-day town library.[117]

The Wellington parish visitors' book for 1797 to 1803 makes regular reference to the 'number in the house', starting in November 1797. In April 1801 there were 186 paupers in the book, but in October 1802 only 39. The fluctuation in numbers from year to year was very marked in the case of women and children, but less so in the case of the men. It is unclear who was included in the counts, as at times of worst distress the workhouse was used in addition as a feeding station for some paupers who were not inmates.[118] The Walker Street workhouse was either set up or improved in 1805, as in that year the Rev. John Eyton (as Trustee for the parish of Wellington) insured:

> 'the workhouse and buildings belonging and adjoining thereto situate in Walker Street in Wellington aforesaid used for and by the poor of the said parish together with a dwelling house and nail shop adjoining in the occupation of Thomas Phillips also a new erected building adjoining endways to the said nail shop used as sleeping rooms for the poor of the parish aforesaid the whole brick and tiled and not exceeding £200'.[119]

A figure of about 40 paupers appears to have been typical for the parish workhouse in non-crisis times in the early years of the 19th century. The approximate composition of the poor present on Census day 1821 is known. In this Census the 'Poorhouse' in Walker Street and its inmates are clearly indicated. Mary Jones, aged 56, is identified as 'school' and may be excluded from the number of paupers. There was a family named Pritchards, who were probably that of the governor. The total must approximate to the number of the paupers. There were 24 aged 15 or over, predominantly female, but including one man aged 90, and 15 aged under 15.[120] In 1834, shortly before the commencement of the union, the workhouse was reported in the Poor Law Inquiry to house about 40 inmates, none of whom was able-bodied.

Wellington and Madeley were the two poor law unions covering the main industrial heartland of Shropshire, with characteristics different from the remainder of the county. The Wellington union covered the northern half of the East Shropshire coalfield, plus some of its agricultural fringe, and consisted of eleven parishes. The board of guardians commenced their work on 4 June 1836; by March 1839 the result was judged to be 'generally a pretty fair union'.[121]

The state of the workhouse spoilt the picture. A year and a half into the new union the assistant poor law commissioner found that 'in every other respect this union is working most satisfactorily', but he had to bring the poor law regulations to the guardians' attention and insist on 'the necessity of improving their workhouse'. Many unions in this period built fine new workhouses, usually a little outside the main town of the union. The assistant commissioner was willing for guardians to make use of existing buildings as workhouses where possible, and not to spend unnecessarily on new construction, but the Wellington guardians too readily contented themselves with the dilapidated old workhouse on the south side of Walker Street, which they rented from the parish, and which they were soon obliged to rebuild.[122]

In addition to the workhouse in Walker Street the guardians of the new union acquired the use of parish workhouses at Wrockwardine and Ercall Magna (High Ercall). After finishing sending its poor to Thomas Hazlehurst in 1760–61 the Wrockwardine vestry had also decided to acquire its own parish workhouse; one was being rented in 1782.[123] In *c*.1801 the Wrockwardine inmates were moved to a newly built workhouse on land belonging to the Tiddicross Charity at SJ 612119. Here, by 1803, they were being farmed by John Hollis. This workhouse was described in 1814, when under a salaried keeper, as consisting of a kitchen, paupers' kitchen, five bedrooms containing 13 beds, a 'dead' room with three spinning wheels and one long wheel, a pantry, brewhouse and cellar. The house survives and is now a private dwelling.

In the early 19th century Ercall Magna vestry also had decided that it needed to have a parish workhouse. The churchwardens and overseers acquired a site between Waters Upton and Rowton in 1814 at SJ 629197. Using £160 of charity money and £20 from the poor rate they bought it, demolished two dwellings there, and at a further cost of '£600 or upward' built their workhouse. In 1834 it had twelve inmates. [124]

At their first meeting the guardians decided to appoint a committee to study 'the capability of classification in the existing workhouses of the union'.[125] It appears that within a day they determined to adopt Wellington as their main workhouse with the Ercall Magna workhouse as a separate one for children.[126] A new governor and matron were appointed for the Wellington workhouse.[127] The Wrockwardine workhouse at Tiddicross was only briefly retained by the union, although here too a new governor and matron were appointed.[128] It was again temporarily used by the union in 1838 to 1841.[129]

There were two frontage buildings of unequal size in Walker Street with an overall length of about 110 ft. One part of this front building, probably B on the plan, was rebuilt to provide office space, ready for the appointment of a registrar of births and deaths in 1837; this was done by Thomas Baddeley under the supervision of Thomas Smith, architect, of Madeley (though the design was by Baddeley).[130] There was a short rear wing at the west end C and D, and a longer rear wing at the east end E. (See Figure 20.)

The Walker Street workhouse was occupied by the classes of inmate other than children, as illustrated by the 1841 Census. The breakdown of numbers indicates a predominance of the elderly, considerably more than the handful noted in 1821, plus some adult females and a few juveniles.

Within a year of the start of the union, a further move to centralise all the workhouse functions at Walker Street was being urged by some guardians. William Day, who might have been expected to favour retention of the Ercall Magna children's workhouse, reported that he expected a battle about the workhouse:

'One party wishes to consolidate the present two establishments in one – the other wishing to preserve the present schools separate – I shall let them fight it out amongst themselves, not being satisfied with either arrangement, the number of children not being sufficient to constitute an effective school….This is the most defective part of the system, and must remain so till [the Poor Law Commission] can establish central schools for several unions totally distinct from pauperism'.[131]

The composition of the Ercall Magna workhouse as a children's workhouse is also illustrated in the 1841 Census. There were the governor and matron and one boy of the same surname, plus 40 other persons, all identified as paupers, only two of whom were elderly (men of 80–84); all but five were aged under 15. In 1838 it was reported in the 'description of rudimentary education of workhouse children in Salop' that at Wellington 'the children are placed in a separate workhouse, and obtain such instructions as the governor…and his wife, who is matron, can afford them. The governor was a sergeant in the army.'[132]

Although in the early years the capacity of the Walker Street workhouse was probably adequate, in September 1838 the guardians applied to the Public Loans Commission for £1,400 to be spent on it, including considerable enlargement.[133] In August the clerk advertised for builders to contract for 'additions and alterations', tenders for which were to be received by 5 September.[134] Additional land for building at the rear of the site was purchased in 1839 from John Anslow (a guardian).[135] The additions appear to have consisted of a new three-storey rear wing attached to the centre of the main range. The stub of this wing survives.

In 1840 Thomas Baddeley was asked to draw up plans for the improvement of the old front buildings of the workhouse. The minutes record that:

'The committee having viewed the old building of Wellington poorhouse adjacent to the Walker Street and considering the same in a very dilapidated state are of the view that it would be better to pull the whole down to the ground and rebuild it uniform with the register office'.[136]

The part to be rebuilt is probably the longer of the two frontage buildings. Following their committee's advice, the board resolved that:

'Mr. Baddeley's plan and estimate to pull down the front part of the Wellington poorhouse and erect the same uniformly with the register office and make other alterations laid down in such plans and which plan and estimate were recommended to this Board by the workhouse committee be accepted and adopted'.[137]

Payments totalling over £500 suggest that this was substantial work. The workhouse, following alteration and further enlargement, is indicated in the Tithe Apportionment of 1842, as 'the Workhouse, Offices, Yard with

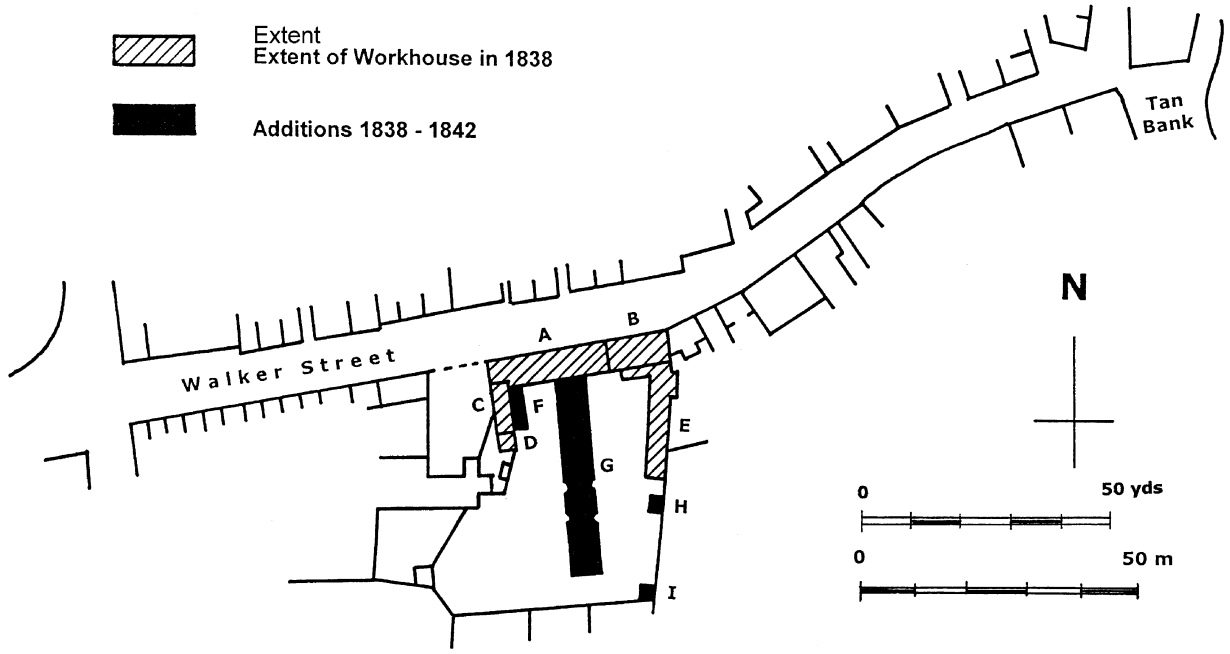

Figure 20 Outline plan of the Wellington Union Workhouse. (Based mainly on Wood's map, *c*.1838.)

House and Garden, occupied by Jno. Juckes', who was the governor appointed in 1836.[138] There was a front building with three rear wings: the west wing with a small addition F, the large middle wing G which was new, and the east wing E which appears unchanged.

An interesting feature of the middle rear wing is that at a little south of its centre there was an irregularity of outline, which comparison with later maps shows might have been a square with canted corners. If so, a start was perhaps being made on developing a 'standard' four-yard plan on the lines recommended by the Poor Law Commission, the canted corners being for windows for the governor at the centre to oversee each yard. The plan, however, developed no further.

A delegation of Wellington guardians was sent to the workhouse at Walsall in 1842 to view manual corn and dressing mills.[139] Some similar hard-labour facilities of a treadmill nature may have been installed. The workhouse was later described (1851) as capable of holding 150 inmates.[140] There was further enlargement after 1851; Andrew Doyle, assistant poor law inspector, agreed to the extension of the workhouse onto an adjacent plot recently purchased.[141]

Even after the early additions, the inadequacy of the Wellington workhouse became evident at times of distress. When large numbers of colliers were out of work in the 1843 crisis Day commented that the workhouse was crowded to a dangerous excess, 'especially having regard to the fact that it is situated in the middle of the town and completely devoid of the better ventilation which a better or more rural site would have afforded'. There were then 210 inmates, compared with the limit of 159 imposed on it by the order of the Poor Law Commissioners. 'The rooms are all crowded with beds, the men for the most part sleeping three in a bed; and in other wards there are in some cases over four occupants; the vagrant wards are converted to the purposes of the house'. Day found the atmosphere of the workhouse most unwholesome, particularly because of the smell of straw and oakum. As an emergency measure he allowed outdoor relief to be given to 48 families who might thus return to their own homes, breaking the rule of the Poor Law Commission that all members of families should be held in the workhouse if the breadwinner was to be relieved there.[142]

In the crisis of 1843 Day remarked that the workhouse at Tiddicross was no longer available for paupers, as it had been 'converted into cottages of late.'[143] Wellington was thus limited to a single main workhouse, plus the outlying children's workhouse near Waters Upton. The latter establishment for children was about six miles north of the town. It was indicated in the Tithe Survey, 1839, as 'the Poor House', still owned by the local overseers of the poor.[144] The guardians had appointed a new governor and matron there.[145] The workhouse was described in 1851 as 'a large brick structure…used for the reception of the children belonging to the Wellington poor law Union, [which] will accommodate about 100; the average number is about 50'.[146] It was on the west side of the main road to Cold Hatton, just south of the turning to Rowton, on a part of the road (Sytch Lane) which is now bypassed. A modern house stands on the site.

The guardians were advised in November 1841 by Day's successor, William Gilbert, that the children at Ercall Magna did not have sufficient segregation; he complained of a mixture of boys and girls of up to age 14 in the yards, and of a small, badly ventilated classroom. Also there were no sick wards. The guardians were apprehensive about what action Gilbert might take against them, and they undertook to correct the faults as soon as they bought the buildings from the vestry of Ercall Magna.[147] During the crisis of 1843 William Day (having resumed responsibility for Wellington) mentioned that here, as in the main workhouse, he sought to discharge some inmates back to their own homes under a grant of outdoor relief.[148] Many must therefore have been members of pauper families rather than orphans.

The New Workhouse in Street Lane

The union workhouse in Walker Street and the school or children's workhouse at Ercall Magna both remained in use until the completion of their replacement in Street Lane (Watling Street, now Holyhead Road) in 1876. The new workhouse (designed by Bidlake[149]) was described a few years later as having accommodation for 350 paupers. It still survives, and is a building on the corridor plan, of three storeys. There was a school at the rear which was closed in 1884. The main building is in red brick with a hipped roof and has two ornamental gables over the centre. The fine building was evidently a matter of civic pride. In the late 19th century it was the intention to hold annual 'soirées' at the workhouse, on which occasions the quality of the town should meet to inspect it, enjoy an evening of refined entertainment and congratulate themselves on the superior management of their local poor.[150]

In 1901 complaint was raised that the children were still dining in the workhouse in contact with the older paupers instead of at their school.[151] In 1913 alterations were ordered for isolation of the children's accommodation, the architect being A. Jenkins, and in 1916 tenders were sought for alterations, a children's home and probationary wards, to the design of Fleeming, Hickman and Fleeming.

Plate 9 Wellington. The front buildings of the former Wellington union workhouse in Walker Street, rebuilt by Baddeley, *c*.1840. Now part of Wellington Library.

It remained the union workhouse until the end of the poor law in 1930 and survived into the late 20th century as Wrekin Hospital, although some non-sick inmates remained until as late as 1950. In the course of the 19th and 20th centuries numerous service buildings were added at the rear, but most were demolished in 1993 when the main building became a nursing home.[152]

The old site in Walker Street became part of the Union Brewery, opened in 1877 by Edwin Pitchford & Co.[153] This remained until about 1920. The guardians' and clerk's offices continued to be located in Walker Street until 1883. Thereafter the guardians met in the town improvement commissioners' offices[154], and from 1897 at Edgbaston House, also in Walker Street. In about 1902 the east part of the original frontage building was converted into a public library and given a front in Gothic style. The remaining part of the frontage building was brought back in *c*.1940 to a use not totally foreign to its original purpose, as the office of the National Assistance Board. But following the amalgamation of the Board and the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance as the Ministry of Social Security *c*.1960 a new office was set up in Glebe Street, and the vacated part of the old workhouse was taken for an enlargement of the library. The Walker Street building retains its 1837–1840 appearance, apart from its front elevation having been rendered. (See Plate 9.)

Notes

1 J. F. C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians*, 1971, 85.
2 Poor Law Commissioners, *Second Annual Report,* 1836, Appendix B no. 12, 377.
3 NLW: MS 3149F, f1088, 8 June 1836.
4 J. Randall, *op. cit.,* 242.
5 *Ibid*., 242.
6 *Ibid*., 74–75.
7 *VCH Salop*, **XI**, 57.
8 SA: P180 fiche 268: 'The proposal of William Micklewright...'.
9 SA: P180 fiche 268.
10 SA: P180 fiche 272.
11 SA: P180 fiche 269.
12 SA: P180 fiche 273.
13 SA: P180 fiche 272.
14 The main sources for this and the later Madeley workhouse are SA: PL10, union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; NMR: file 100985.
15 SA: P180 fiche 273.
16 SA: P180 fiche 278.

17 A property and garden in Madeley Wood of 12 perches produced £20, and £45 was raised by the sale of two small properties with gardens in Madeley. A property and garden of 6¼ perches at the Foxholes produced £24. An old property and garden in Madeley Wood containing 17 perches plus a piece of garden ground of 12½ perches produced £53 15*s*. A stable in Madeley Wood produced £10. Two properties and gardens in Madeley Wood amounting to a quarter of an acre plus a garden of 5 perches produced £83. Another property produced £23. There were also small ground-rents: *Report of Commissioners for Inquiring concerning Charities* 1839, 306.
18 Randall, *op cit.,* 242.
19 The total realised was stated by the commissioners to be £255 15*s,* which was perhaps more than was expected, as property in Madeley had much increased in value. The sale dated from 1797. The churchwardens and overseers paid an annual rent of £18 for the site of the new workhouse. The site amounted to 3*r*. 12*p*. Lease dated 2 Jan 1797: *Report of Commissioners for Inquiry concerning Charities* 1839, *loc. cit*.
20 SA: Tithe Map of Madeley, 1847, parcels 1951-2; 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' (PP 1834 xxvii): replies to queries; Advertisement in *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 17 Jan. 1797; Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust: *Horsehay Day Accounts 1798–1810*: 1801, 1802; J. Randall, *op. cit*., 241-3; *VCH Salop*, **XI**, 57.
21 SA: P180 fiche 339.
22 NLW: MS 3148F, f.850.
23 William Anstice of Madeley Wood; Robert Ferriday of Madeley; Richard Darby, gentleman, of Coalbrookdale; the Rev. George Edmonds, the vicar of Madeley; Samuel Smith, builder, of Madeley; and Robert Trigger, farmer, of Madeley Court, who is also puzzlingly listed at the guardian for Stirchley. All had been active on the Madeley Select Vestry in the period prior to the introduction of the new poor law.
24 William Anstice, the managing partner of the Madeley Wood Company, was elected as the first chairman. Richard Darby of Coalbrookdale was elected vice-chairman. The initial board included several other ironmasters: Alfred and Abraham Darby, representing Dawley, James Thompson of Lightmoor, also representing Dawley, and John Onions, representing Broseley. William Botfield of the Old Park Company was also listed as a member of the board representing Dawley, but declined to act. William Davies, brick manufacturer, was one of the guardians for Broseley. The auditor (at £20 per annum) was W. R. Anstice, solicitor, of Ironbridge, and the clerk (at £80 per annum) another Ironbridge solicitor, George Potts. Potts remained in legal practice, although a salary of £80 a year would normally have entitled a union to the exclusive services of its clerk. When Potts resigned in 1847 W. W. Anstice was appointed in his place, at £100 per annum. William Anstice was chairman for the first 15 years of the board's history, followed by G. Pritchard for 11 years, and then W. L. Lowndes, under whose chairmanship the new workhouse at Lincoln Hill was built: SA: PL10/2, Minutes: 1 June 1836; PL10/4: Minutes, 26 Mar. 1847, 7 Apr. 1847; J Randall, *op. cit.,* 245.
25 Dawley was represented by seven guardians, Madeley by six, Broseley by five, Much Wenlock by three and Little Wenlock by two. The other parishes were each represented by one guardian. Some guardians were also on the board of the Ironbridge Dispensary.
26 William Day, 'Report on Shropshire' in Poor Law Commissioners, *Second Annual Report*, 1836, 387; William Day, 'Report on Wellington, Dawley and Madeley' in *op. cit*., 376ff.
27 SA: PL10/2, Minutes, 23 June 1836.
28 SA: PL10/2, Minutes, 1 June 1836, 30 June 1836, 24 Aug. 1837; PL10/3, Minutes, 2 Oct. 1840, 21 Jan. 1842.
29 SA: PL10/2, Minutes, 27 July 1838; PL10/3, Minutes, 16 Apr. 1841, 26 May 1843; PL10/4, Minutes, 9 Apr. 1846 to 9 Sept. 1846.
30 6A: PL10/2, Minutes, 1 June 1836, 21 Dec. 1837.
31 SJ 6528 0700.
32 SA: P165 fiche 52.
33 SA: PL 10/2, Minutes, 14 July 1836, 10 Nov. 1836.
34 SA: Tithe Map of Little Wenlock, 1838, parcel 454; PL10/2, Minutes, 14 July 1836, 10 Nov. 1836; PL10/4, Minutes, 9 Apr. 1846.
35 SA: P89/C/1/1, Vestry Minutes, 4 Aug. 1813; P89/L/1/1, Lease for Workhouse.
36 SA: PL10/2, Minutes, 17 Nov. 1836.
37 SA: P89/C/1/1, Vestry Minutes, 17 Oct. 1838.
38 SJ 6860 0810.
39 SJ 6299 0491. The workhouse was no. 2 Leighton Road, now a Listed Building.
40 SA: WB P4/5/1, Vestry Minutes, 21 July 1762.
41 SA: P198 fiche 105.
42 SA: P198 fiche 106, 7 May 1780.
43 SA: P198 fiche 8, 8 May 1821 – 31 Oct. 1821.
44 SA: P27 fiche 31, 25 Mar. 1817.
45 SA: P27 fiche 31, 1819.
46 SA: P27 fiche 32.
47 SA: P27 fiche 32, 1825–6.
48 SA: P27 fiche 33, 1833–4.
49 SA: P27 fiche 34, 26 Mar. 1835 – 29 June 1835.
50 SA: P27 fiche 34, year ending 25 Mar. 1837.
51 SA: P44/V/1/1, Vickers' valuation of Broseley.
52 SA: Tithe Map of Broseley (1840); PL10/2, Minutes, 14 July 1836, 18 July 1836, 21 Dec. 1837; PL10/3, Minutes, 31 Mar. 1843.
53 SA: qM37–8: J. M. Noble, 'New Poor Law in Madeley Union', Wolverhampton College, History Special Study 1971–4.
54 SA: PL10/2, Minutes, 22 Mar. 1839.
55 1841 Census.
56 SA: PL10/2, Minutes, 30 June 1836, 18 May 183; PL10/3, Minutes, 10 June 1842.

57 SA: PL10/6, Minutes, 15 May 1863.
58 NLW: MS 3148F, f.850.
59 SA: Tithe Map of Madeley, 1847.
60 Pigot, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1829, 673; *Ibid.,* 1836, 350; Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 575.
61 SA: PL10/6, Minutes, 19 Feb. 1864.
62 SA: PL10/6, Minutes, 5 Feb. 1864.
63 SA: PL10/6, Minutes, 28 Nov. 1866.
64 SA: PL10/6, Minutes, 30 Aug. 1867.
65 SA: PL10/6, Minutes, 25 Oct. 1867.
66 SA: PL10/6, Minutes, 10 Sept. 1869.
67 Morrison, *The Workhouse*, 1999, 113, quoting Minutes, 11 Feb.1870; NMR: file 100985.
68 *Ironbridge Weekly Journal*, 25 June 1870.
69 J. Randall, *op. cit.,* 247.
70 Newport union was created on 5 October 1836. The main sources for Newport workhouse are SA: PL11, union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; NMR: file 100980.
71 The additional parishes were Adbaston, Norbury and High Offley. See NLW: MS 3148F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 6 Oct. 1836.
72 SA: P161/L/26/1, Quarterly return, 24 June 1837.
73 Marsh Trustees' Act, 4 Geo. III (1764); A. G. Bancroft, 'The Newport Inclosure' *Trans. Caradoc and Severn Field Club*, **XVI**, 120ff; VCH *Salop*, **XI**, 234; E Jones, 'Historical Records of Newport', *Trans. Shrops. Archaeol. Soc.*, **X**, 118; SA: 3990/9: agreement for farming the poor to Wellington Workhouse.
74 *VCH Salop*, **XI**, 234.
75 Plaque on the building.
76 SA: PL11/4, 27 June 1837; Shrewsbury *Chronicle*, 7 July 1837; SA: 1563/18, Plans of the house (early 20th century).
77 SA: PL11/4, Guardians' Minutes, 25 Sept. 1838.
78 SA: 972/238, Marquess of Stafford's Lilleshall Estate Map, 1813: the workhouse was Donnington parcel no. 444; *Eddowes' Salopian Journal*, 21 Jan. 1824, 2; *VCH Salop*, **XI**, 165; SA: PL11/4, Guardians' Minutes, 1 Nov. 1836, 7 Feb. 1837, 28 Nov 1837; NLW: MS 3148F, Day to Hearne, 21 May 1837.
79 St. R. O. [Staffordshire Record Office]: D (W) 1515/1, Tithe Apportionment, 1837: this gives the owners as the Trustees of the Gnosall Charity Lands, and the occupier as James Betteley. Thomas Betelley was named as the assistant overseer and governor under the Old Poor Law: see White, *Directory of Staffordshire*, 1834, 495–6; St. R. O: D(W)1518/1/ii, Tithe Survey of Gnosall, 1837, parcel 117; SA: P161/L/26/2, Quarterly Return, 29 Sept. 1837; PL11/4, Guardians' Minutes, 18 Dec. 1838; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 21 Dec 1838: advertisement for a man and wife, unencumbered, to be governor and matron at £60 p.a.. with board and lodging; PL11/4, Guardians' Minutes, 11 Aug. 1840, 8 Sept. 1840.
80 Bagshaw Directory of Shropshire, 1851, 404.
81 SA: PL11/6, Guardians' Minutes, 12 Sept. 1854, 2 Jan. 1855, 8 May 1855, 25 Mar. 1856.
82 NLW: MS 3148F, Day to Lefevre, 23 Apr. 1839.
83 SA: P161/L/8/81, Removal Order, William Sage and Mary his wife. (Mary Sage was a pauper in London ordered with her husband to be removed to Lilleshall in 1824, but the order was deferred as her husband was ill; after his death the order was carried out against her in 1825. From the time of her return she was an inmate of Lilleshall workhouse, but the guardians moved her to Gnosall to teach the children.)
84 SA: PL11/4, Guardians' Minutes, 23 Apr. 1839. A similar hostility to the teaching of writing was expressed by the guardians of Bedford in 1836: Harrison, *The Workhouse*, 133.
85 SA: PL11/6, Guardians' Minutes, 20 May 1854, 6 June 1854, 5 June 1855.
86 St. R. O: B/A/13iii/170. In the early years the name of their builder is given in the guardians' minutes as J. & J. Cobb, an uncle and nephew partnership: the uncle was John Cobb of Chetwynd Street, who had come to Newport in 1803, after being apprenticed to a builder. Cobb appears in the 1828 directory as carpenter and joiner. J. and J. Cobb, builders, appear in the directory of 1840. The more important figure was the nephew, John Cobb (*c*.1812-1863), who is listed in the 1851 directory as builder and architect. This John Cobb lived and had his yard at Cobb's Buildings in Chetwynd End (on the east side of the road opposite Green Lane). George Cobb, an uncle, was a carpenter; a second Samuel Cobb of Newport, cabinet maker and upholsterer, was his brother; John Francis Cobb, mentioned as a surveyor in 1870, who died 1911, was his son. John F. Cobb built the guardians' new boardroom at 129 High Street in 1883: Obituary of S. H. Cobb, *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 1 Mar. 1918. The grave of J. Cobb (d. 1911) in Chetwynd churchyard is immediately beside that of John Cobb's widow, Anne (1812-1881), so it is a reasonable inference that he was her son. He was probably the John Cobb in that family aged 6 months in the 1841 census. For the new boardroom of 1883 see SA: PL11/106/1.
87 SA: Deeds from County Secretary's Dept.: 3990/11, Loan agreement; PL11/44, General ledger 1853–9.
88 SA: 3990/12, Agreement between guardians and school authority.
89 SA: 1563/19, Plans by Salop County Council Architect's Dept., 1932; 1563/20, Block Plan of Audley House Institution, early 20th century; PL11/106/2.
90 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 22 Mar. 1907; NMR File 100980.
91 The main sources for Shifnal workhouse are SA: PL13 union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; NMR: file 37504.
92 SA: P 246/C/2/0, List of people subscribing, 1 June 1731; Shifnal Burial Register, 23 Apr. 1734.
93 SA: 3629 Jerningham Terrier 1788; St .R. O: D641/3/E/6/16/36 & 69.
94 SA: P 246/C/1/1, vestry minutes, 3 Aug. 1816.
95 SA: P 246/C/1/1, vestry minutes, 1 Nov. 1816, 19 Nov. 1816.
96 SA: P 246/C/1/1, vestry minutes, 2 Apr. 1817.
97 SA: P 246/C/1/1, vestry minutes, 6 Mar. 1817.

98 59 Geo. III c.22; Deed and printed election list in SA: P 246/C/1/1, vestry minutes; 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' (PP 1834 xxvii), Appendix A: A. J. Lewis, 'Salop, Hereford and Monmouth', 666A.
99 SA: PL13/4, Minutes, 20 Dec. 1841, 24 Oct. 1842.
100 NLW: MS 3149F, Day to Lewis, 18 May 1836.
101 SA: PL13/3, Minutes, 4 June 1836, 7 June 1836.
102 SA: PL13/3, Minutes, 28 June 1836; NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 25 Dec. 1837; reports on unions, 9 Jan. 1838.
103 SA: PL13/3, Minutes, 5 July 1836.
104 SA: Tithe Survey of Shifnal, 1840.
105 SA: PL13/3, Minutes, 6 Aug. 1838, 20 Aug. 1838, 3 Sept. 1838.
106 SA: PL13/3, Minutes, 24 Dec. 1838.
107 St. R. O: D461/3/C/4/5/8, draft conveyance.
108 Halley was an architect, builder and auctioneer, but as he was also involved with funerals, he was probably predominantly a carpenter and undertaker: Tibnam, *Directory of Shropshire*, (1828) 81; Pigot, *Directory of Shropshire,* 1835, 370–1; Robson, *Directory of Shropshire,* 1840, 89; SA: PL13/4, Minutes, 21 Dec. 1840.
109 Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 475.
110 SA: PL13/3, Minutes, 18 Feb. 1839.
111 SA: PL13/4, Minutes, *passim*.
112 SA: PL13/4, Minutes, 17 July 1843, and *passim*.
113 SA: PL13/4, Minutes, 11 Sept. 1843.
114 SA: PL13/3, Minutes, 12 July 1836, 17 Jan. 1837, 21 Feb. 1837, 4 Apr. 1837, 16 Oct. 1837, 23 June 1838.
115 *The Builder*, 15 Sept. 1900, 242; S. Watts, *Shifnal, a Pictorial History*, 1989, no. 44. This name, commonly applied to workhouses, may refer to the spike-topped yard walls of casual wards, designed to prevent inmates absconding early in the morning.
116 NMR: file 37504.
117 The main sources for Wellington workhouse are SA: PL14, union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; NMR: file 100979.
118 SA: PL14/1, Visitors' Book, Wellington, 1797–1803.
119 SA: 4791/1/2, Salop Fire Office Policies Book, 5.
120 SA: 5426/2 Census of Wellington, 1821. Exceptionally, the parish authorities of Wellington took the initiative to conduct a census in parallel with the national Census of that year, detailing names, ages and addresses in a manner not unlike the detailed censuses of 1841 and later.
121 NLW: MS 3149F, Day to Lefevre, 15 Mar. 1839; Bagshaw, *Directory*, 1851, 424.
122 NLW: MS 3149F, Day to Lefevre, 30 Dec.1837.
123 *VCH Salop*, **XI**, 317.
124 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' (PP 1834, xxvii): replies to queries; *Twenty-fourth Report of Commission on Charities in England and Wales*, 1839, 358–9.
125 SA: PL14/9, Guardians' Minutes, 7 June 1836.
126 Walsh, 'Administration of the Poor Laws in Salop 1820–1855', *op. cit.,* quoting MH 12/10059, Clerk to Poor Law Commissioners, 8 June 1836.
127 SA: PL14/9, Guardians' Minutes, 13 June 1836.
128 SA: PL14/9, Guardians Minutes, 13 June 1836, 1 July 1836.
129 Walsh, *op. cit*., 207.
130 SA: PL14/9, Guardians' Minutes, 3 Nov. 1836, 2 Mar. 1837.
131 NLW: MS 3149F, f1120.
132 Poor Law Commissioners, *Fourth Annual Report*, 1838, 168.
133 Walsh, *op. cit*., 214: 'The money was spent on the larger house in Wellington, where a variety of types of pauper lived. All this met at least the tacit approval of William Day'.
134 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 24 Aug. 1838.
135 SA: PL14/10, Guardians' Minutes, 27 June 1839.
136 *Ibid*., 23 Apr. 1840.
137 *Ibid*., 9 July 1840.
138 SA: Tithe Survey of Wellington, 1842, Parcel 346.
139 SA: PL14/10, Minutes, 5 Jan. 1843.
140 Bagshaw, *loc. cit*.
141 Walsh. *op. cit*., 216.
142 NLW: MS 3142F, 14 Apr. 1843.
143 NLW: MS 3142F, *loc. cit*.
144 SA: Tithe Survey of Rowton, 1839, parcel 533.
145 SA: PL14/9, Guardians' Minutes, 13 June 1836.
146 Bagshaw, *op. cit*., 421.
147 Walsh. *op. cit*., 215.
148 NLW: MS 3149F, *loc. cit*.
149 George Bidlake, architect, of Wolverhampton (1829–92).
150 *Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News*, 13 Jan. 1894.
151 *Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News*, 2 Mar. 1901.
152 *VCH Salop*, **XI**, 235; NMR: file 100979.
153 Review Publishing Co., *Industries of Salop*, 1891, 42.
154 *VCH Salop*, **XI**, 235; Kelly's *Directory of Shropshire*, 1885, 973.

CHAPTER 5

WORKHOUSES OF THE EARLY 19TH-CENTURY REFORMED POOR LAW IN RURAL SHROPSHIRE

Bridgnorth

Bridgnorth was the first Poor Law Union to be declared in Shropshire, on 31 May 1836. It covered 30 parishes centred on the town of the same name, and the energetic squire of Dudmaston, William Wolryche Whitmore, 1787–1858, was its first chairman. As with Newport and Madeley, the union was slow to build a new adult workhouse, but this was because the guardians under Whitmore's leadership made the pauper children their priority. Reviewing the start of the union, Day wrote that 'I have to report very satisfactorily of the way in which this union is working and of the direction of Mr. W Whitmore.'[1]

Only two of the existing rural workhouses of the union were used, and those only briefly. By January 1837 the guardians had decided to give up one at Chetton. This workhouse was run temporarily for the union by a relieving officer. There was also an old parish workhouse, under an exceptionally benign regime at Worfield, built as two cottages under Lloyd and Parker's charity and later converted to a 'workhouse'. It had probably been built or converted in 1730. It was occupied in 1834 by '15 women, two girls, 17 children, one man and an idiot.' Three years after the establishment of the union it was described as a workhouse, 'now used as such', but if it was being used by the Bridgnorth union it did not remain so for long. In Bridgnorth itself there was an old workhouse in each of the parishes of the town, St. Leonard's and St. Mary Magdalene's, which the guardians took over. At an early date these two workhouses were found sufficient for the needs of the whole union apart from the children.[2]

Building a replacement for these antiquated workhouses was not a priority for the guardians, who, under Whitmore's leadership, were more concerned over how to prevent pauper children becoming the pauper adults of the next generation. At the end of the first year, when considering Whitmore's initiative in carrying out the policy of educating workhouse children, Day remarked: 'In the working of the measure Whitmore is 10 or 12 years before the rest of his board, and he has pushed matters much faster than I should have done, or, in fact, than I approve'.[3] Whitmore favoured useful education, and we must consider the important initiative he took in the first year to educate the children in a separate workhouse school away from the bad influences of the adult workhouses, setting up the school in a large house which he made available at Quatt.

The principal workhouse in the early years was the one in the parish of St. Leonard at SO 7153 9331, near North Gate. It appears to have been built as an adjunct to the parish house of correction. This might be the establishment which John Jolley and his wife were engaged to manage in 1740 on a renewable annual contract, and where William Yates was paid 22 guineas a year to act as governor in the years 1805 to 1814. It is partly of stonework and partly of brickwork, tile roofed, and was probably a building of two periods. It has two storeys and an attic. It is about 75 ft. long by 18 to 20 ft. deep and is about 20 ft. from the ground to the eaves. It has the characteristic large storey heights noted in a number of other 18th-century workhouses. The stone part, to the south, is probably the original workhouse, and the brickwork part a later enlargement. The front of the same site (adjoining the North Gate) was occupied by the town gaol. In 1859, after the union ceased to use the building as a workhouse it was found to require repairs, including making good damage to the attic, stated to have been caused by a mill, indicating that the union had probably installed a treadmill. The building became two houses, numbered 22 and 23 Northgate. (See Plate 10 and Figure 21.)

The stone house which constitutes its south part, now known as 'The Gaol House', is shown on the 1882 map with a row of lockups attached to the rear. The whole building is now rescued from dereliction, the stonework partly rendered and painted white.[4]

There was also a parish workhouse at the east side of Bernard's Hill in St. Mary Magdalene's parish. This is on a corner site at SO 7219 9281. It is now a group of brickwork cottages with tile roofs. (See Plate 11 on p.82.)

Plate 10 Bridgnorth. The former St. Leonard's Parish Workhouse, to the west of Northgate Street, retained by the guardians of Bridgnorth after 1836 as a workhouse for able bodied inmates. This was the main workhouse of Bridgnorth Union from 1836 until replaced by Innage House. It is now two private houses.

At the front are three cottages, with the one to the right slightly recessed, and an entry between the middle and left cottages. The corner cottage, at left, is the best preserved and the tallest in the group, and consists of two storeys and an attic. As in the St. Leonard's workhouse, the storey heights are generous. The cottages to the rear are of two storeys of normal height.

Plans were drawn up by the guardians for improvements of the old workhouse buildings (perhaps only at St. Leonard's). The plans were approved, but Day raised the problem that the 'proprietorship of the property' was unclear and until it was resolved the guardians could not be permitted to proceed. The problem was evidently that the St. Leonard's workhouse was partly owned by Whitmore himself and partly by the new Borough Corporation. The question of title must have been satisfactorily clarified because in 1837 the Poor Law Commission approved the expenditure of £600 on improving workhouse property in Bridgnorth. The two owners, Whitmore and the Borough, granted a lease of the St. Leonard's workhouse to the board of guardians in 1838 for 21 years. In 1841 the Census records the workhouse in St. Leonard's parish under Joseph and Elizabeth Higgins with 31 inmates and the workhouse in St. Mary Magdalene's parish under William and Mary Wall with 29 inmates.[5]

The 1841 Census shows how the two old establishments and the school were being used by the guardians for distinct classes of pauper. A quarterly summary of accounts in 1841 shows that the St. Leonard's workhouse started with 54 inmates and ended with 50 (rather more than the 31 indicated by the Census); the St. Mary's workhouse started with 30 and ended with 31; and the school at Quatt started with 45 and ended with 48. The guardians regarded the St. Leonard's workhouse as their main workhouse where the able-bodied paupers were under a deterrent regime, with a governor who was formerly an army sergeant. The St. Mary's workhouse was their subsidiary 'poorhouse' for the elderly and infirm. £22 7*s*. 6*d*. was credited to the St. Leonard's workhouse for stone and oakum, the usual materials of deterrent labour. In the 1841 Census the children not at school and the mothers with infants were in the St. Leonard's workhouse. The children not at school were nearly all girls. The boys and a few girls were already being sent to the school at Quatt, where there was a concentration on boys aged five to nine and girls aged five to fourteen. The inmates of the St. Mary Magdalene's poorhouse included the older paupers, including a woman of 95 and four aged above 80.[6]

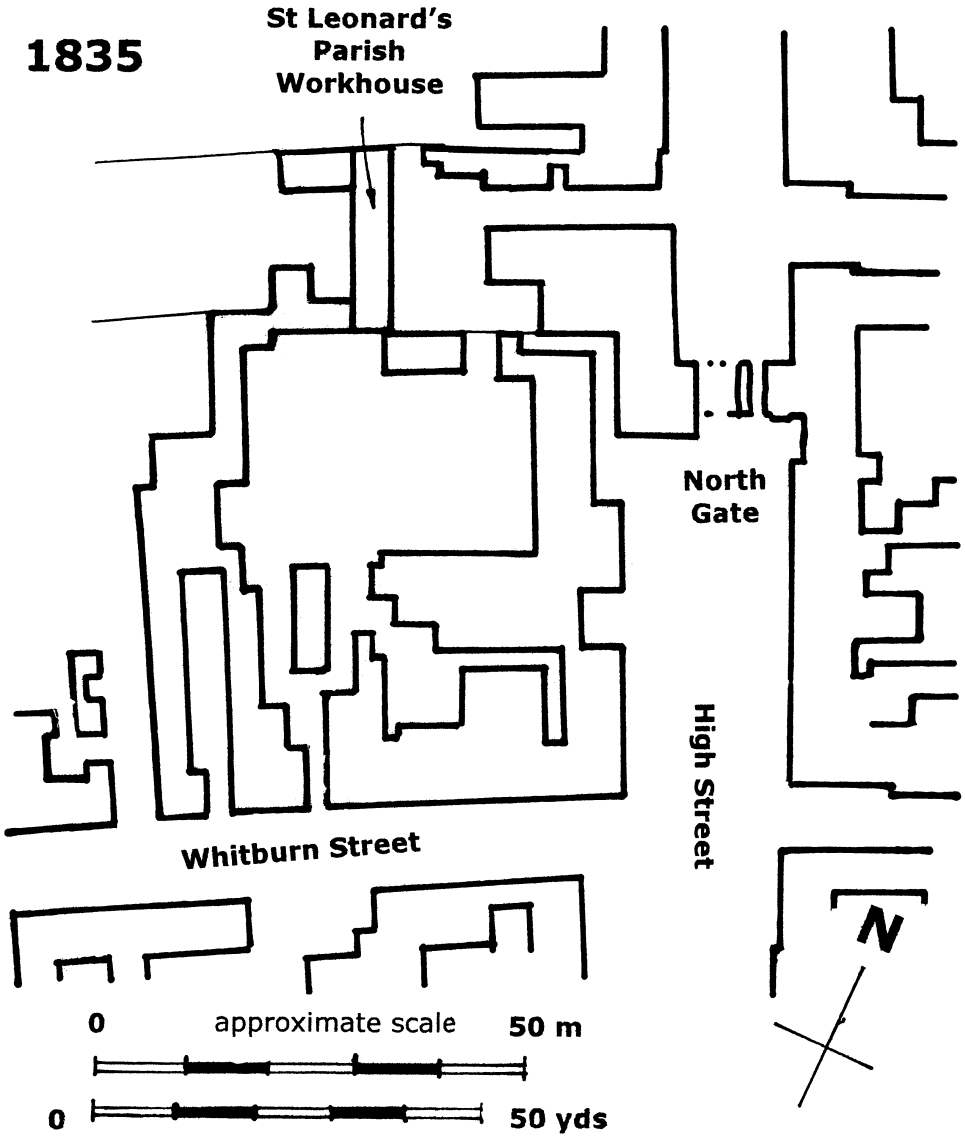

Figure 21 The location of St. Leonard's Parish Workhouse. (Based on Wood's map of Bridgnorth.)

Whitmore's good relations with his colleagues and easy leadership of the board in the first years of the union were of short duration. His nemesis was Arndell Francis Sparkes, a local solicitor whom the guardians employed as their clerk. Sparkes' wife was a half-sister to Whitmore.

The New Workhouse at the Innage

The new adult workhouse at the Innage (SO 714935) was ordered after Whitmore's departure and completed by 1850. The decision to spend money on such a fine building would probably not have been taken during Whitmore's chairmanship. The guardians received the order of the Poor Law Commissioners in July 1847 ratifying their decision to purchase 'all that piece or parcel of land called Holloway Head or Clover Piece', amounting to just over two acres (not including a strip of land to the west side which was used by a local charity as allotments).[7] The order of the Poor Law Commissioners required the new workhouse to be completed in no more than twelve months and at a cost not to exceed £4,000, which the guardians might borrow and secure on the poor rates. The site was a little out of town, as was commonly the case with new workhouses in this period. In July 1847 the guardians advertised for plans and estimates to be received by 13 August 'for a new workhouse for 200 paupers, and detached buildings for a hospital and vagrant wards, the same to be furnished to the guardians free of charge.... The architect whose plans may be selected will be employed to superintend the works at the usual commission of five per cent'. The competition may not have gone smoothly, as the guardians

Plate 11 Bridgnorth. The former St. Mary Magdalene's Parish Workhouse at the east side of Bernard's Hill. From 1836 this was the subsidiary 'poorhouse' of Bridgnorth Union used for the aged and infirm. It is now a group of private houses.

did not advertise for builders until April 1848. The guardians took loans of £4,500 in 1848 and £900 in 1850, and with other loans put themselves over £8,000 in debt. The new house cost £5,299 17*s*. 8*d*. (much more than approved by the Commissioners). It was designed to accommodate 200 inmates, and Bagshaw's Directory in 1851 refers to 50 inmates; 67 were recorded in the Census on 30 March 1851.[8]

The workhouse faces Innage Lane and is mostly of two storeys. It is a building in the early Victorian Tudor style often referred to by contemporaries as 'Elizabethan'. The front was set back behind ornamental gardens, the site being described at the time as 'open and pleasant'. The magnificence of the main building implies civic pride. The plan is an E with its three wings to the rear. The front is in blue brick with cream stone dressings to all openings. The detailing includes moulded four-centred arches and labels over the doors and mullions and transoms in the windows. A tall advancing centre bay is flanked by entrance doors. The centre has large projecting bay windows and a Dutch gable. The gardens at the front were surrounded by cast-iron railings. At the left and right terminations of the front elevation there are less prominent advancing bays. At the rear the style is utilitarian, with two-storey outer wings and a three-storey centre wing of shorter projection, all in red brick.

In the late 20th century this important building suffered an unfortunate loss of character. Some of this loss was due to crude remedial work after road widening, some to crude modernisation. The ornamental railings remain only partially, the front railings now replaced by a low brick wall, and the ornamental gardens have disappeared. From the building itself a large finial has been lost from the main central gable, which looks incomplete without it, and many chimneys have been lost. (See Plate 12.)

Before these losses and alterations, the workhouse had cast-iron lattice casements with small diamond-shaped panes. At the front the casements have been replaced with steel frames. At the rear upvc window frames have been inserted throughout, apart from one surviving cast-iron lattice window.

The name of the architect of this workhouse has not been recorded, and as a competition-winning design it may have been the work of an architect who did not succeed thereafter in getting into substantial practice. It is possible, on the other hand, that it was Robert Griffiths, who came from a family of architect-builders of Broseley and Quatford, and built up a flourishing practice in the Bridgnorth area in the 1850s including several

Plate 12 Bridgnorth. Innage House, built *c*.1850 as Bridgnorth union workhouse.

national schools and the ill-fated Bridgnorth market building. He was one of the architects competing for Drayton workhouse in 1851.[9] Later he moved to Stafford and became the Staffordshire county surveyor; he was still in practice in 1886. The other important local architect, John Smalman, had retired by the 1840s.[10]

The first governor and matron at the Innage, Seth and Mary Bennett Barker, had been employed by the guardians since at least 1849, long before the new workhouse was completed, and they continued to be employed by the guardians until at least 1871.[11]

The new workhouse was at first occupied at considerably below its capacity. The 1851 Census, showing only 67 inmates present, indicated that there was a mix of young and old in the workhouse, including young women and a large number of children below the age of five. The absence of children over the age of five is clearly due to the continuing policy of removing them to the Industrial School at Quatt. The absence of elderly women may be due to there being sufficient charitable provision of almshouses in the vicinity of the church. Neither of the earlier workhouses in the town (St. Leonard's and St. Mary Magdalene's) was recorded in the Census of 1851 as being in use.

The new workhouse had extensive ground to the rear.[12] At the north side there was an infirmary. At the rear, within an enclosing fence, an infectious diseases hospital was built, following authorisations to spend £862 and £126 in 1875 and 1877. At the south side of the rear grounds late 19th century maps show an enclosed area with casual wards to which tramps' cells were added before 1882. The casual wards were enlarged by 1901. These brickwork buildings were in a plain style. The workhouse increasingly took on the character of a hospital. In 1902 the guardians were in dispute with the Local Government Board and the Board's architect over the siting of a laundry. This was the final extent of the buildings when the poor law was brought to an end in 1930. For much of the late 20th century the establishment was in use as old people's accommodation. The additional ranges have been demolished but the main building survives, now known as Andrew Evans House.[13]

Quatt: The South East Shropshire Industrial School

The main achievement of the guardians in the early years was due to Whitmore's initiative and leadership. This was the decision to establish a union school at Quatt, which originated in a resolution in their first year to educate the children of paupers in conditions akin to a National School, away from the harmful influence of the adult workhouses. Whitmore made the former Dower House of the Dudmaston estate (SO 7560 8823) available. (See Plate 13.)

Plate 13 Bridgnorth. The former dower house at Quatt, used from *c*.1836 as Bridgnorth children's workhouse and later as the South East Shropshire Industrial School.

A school was set up and running by 1838 at the latest. In 1841 there were 21 boys with ages ranging from four to ten and 21 girls with ages from three to eighteen, together with the master and matron, their family of four and four other adults. At first the school was simply a children's workhouse, but in 1845 four acres of land were added so that the boys could receive practical training in farm work, this being called the 'industrial system'. It recalls the system formerly used at the Shrewsbury House of Industry, where boys were also trained to do farm work in the 1790s (as described in Chapter 2). The land available to the school was later increased to ten acres. As they were at work, the children were allowed additional food compared with the normal workhouse diet.[14]

The guardians at first had difficulty in finding a teacher for the school. After a time the guardians appointed Henry Garland, a man in his early 30s. He was required to teach the children on National School principles. Whitmore's brother in law, the Rev. Edmund Carr, was the rector of Quatt. Carr discovered to his consternation that Garland was a dissenter, and wrote to the Central Board of the Poor Law Commission and tried to get Garland dismissed. His letter was passed to Day for a report. Day took the view that provided Garland was not failing to carry out normal workhouse duties, which included attending church with the paupers and conducting religious services in the school whenever required, there were no grounds for dismissal, even though Day considered that if Garland were conscientious as a dissenter he would have to decline these duties and disqualify himself. But Garland did perform the duties, so there was no problem. Day also observed that Carr, as a magistrate and *ex-officio* guardian, had had ample opportunity to object to Garland's employment at the proper time if he had been attentive to the matter. On 11 March 1837 Carr attended the board meeting of the union and presented a written protest which the clerk read out. He wanted his protest entered in the minutes of the meeting, to which Whitmore objected; on a vote it was decided not to minute the protest. Probably on Day's prompting, Whitmore later found a practical solution to the problem by offering a committee of all the ordained members of the board to supervise Garland's work, which appears to have satisfied Carr. Day noted in confidence to the Commissioner, Lefevre, that this was not the first time that he had had to interfere in Bridgnorth union administration to smooth out friction between Whitmore and his fellow guardians:

> 'It is a matter of great delicacy to do this where the party in point of fact is only carrying out the principle of the [Poor Law Amendment Act], and that though from his influence the guardians have yielded to him and the views he has taken, yet they have done it with distaste and dissatisfaction, and now their smothered feeling has found a vent on this annoying subject….Whitmore is the only one of my guardians who has been mobbed, and I fear he did not get much pity'.[15]

Following an unrelated breach with the board of guardians in 1838, Whitmore retained his involvement with the school and remained owner of the school buildings and land. The school continued to be administered by Bridgnorth union although it also had its own board of management, on which some guardians sat, and of which Whitmore appears to have been the chairman, although he was no longer an active member of the board of guardians of the union. The school served any union in the vicinity (including Staffordshire) whose guardians might choose to send children. A pamphlet written by Garland in 1848 makes it clear that by that date the policy of the board of management was to admit not only children who would otherwise have been placed in the workhouses of the participating unions but also the children of parents in receipt of outdoor relief.[16] The school was formally reconstituted in 1849 as the South Eastern Shropshire District School. In 1850 Whitmore leased the school and ten acres to its board of management for 99 years, at a rent of £47 5*s*. 6*d*. per annum.[17]

The school was described by Doyle in September 1848, when there were 51 children: 'There are now thirty-two boys and nineteen girls; of these seventeen boys are above 10 and fifteen from 5 to 10, of the girls four only are above 10, and fifteen under 11 years of age, many of them under 7 years. Of the seventeen boys above 10, one is a cripple and unable to use the spade'. The children produced what was necessary for their own consumption and the remainder went to market. Doyle went on to describe the daily routine:

> 'Their time is usually thus employed:– they rise at half past five in the summer, and at a quarter before seven in the winter; they work till eight; school from nine till twelve, dine at one, and at 2 pm they go to their work, the boys to their field, garden, and the girls to their sewing, knitting, &c &c; they leave work at five and sup at six, after which they play an hour or more, if the weather permit, and as they sing in the church, they practice the Psalms and chants for the following Sunday, and the day is closed with prayers'.[18]

Interest in participating in or imitating the venture was shown by many other boards of guardians. Of this initiative Morrison writes: 'By the 1850s the so-called Quatt system was demonstrably successful; it inspired the inception of numerous other industrial schools which purchased land and taught agricultural practice'.[19] In 1848 Clive, the chairman of the Ludlow guardians, had called a meeting of neighbouring union chairmen to discuss the possibility of participating in the district school at Bridgnorth or setting one up at Kidderminster. The guardians of Cleobury Mortimer also considered the matter, but were not then motivated to remove the children from the corrupting influence of the older paupers, and they decided against taking part as they felt that the school within their own workhouse was sufficient. But in 1849 the guardians of Madeley, Cleobury Mortimer and Seisdon (Wolverhampton) were interested, and children of all three unions were sent there later. The guardians of Newport sent children to Quatt after first considering an alternative school at Shrewsbury.[20]

In 1849 it was anticipated that a further 150 children might be brought to Quatt. Plans were drawn up for additional accommodation at the east end of the old house. The additional buildings were to 'include two School Rooms, a Dining Room and Sleeping Rooms, a Wash-house, Laundry, Coalhouse and other necessary Offices. Also a Stable, Carthouse, Toolhouse, and similar erections for the use of the Industrial Farm' at a cost not to exceed £1,300.[21] By 1850 the school was capable of accommodating 170 children.

Florence Hill described Quatt District School enthusiastically in 1868. At this time, in addition to its twelve acres, the school had a horse, four cows and a number of pigs. By this time Cleobury Mortimer had decided to send children, and some children were also taken from non-participating unions. She remarks that the numbers at the school were currently 160 to 170, but it could take 220. The children were maintained at a cost of about 5*s*. per child per week. The teaching staff consisted of the schoolmaster who was also the superintendent, together with three male and one female 'industrial trainers'. No servants were employed, and it was a principle at that time not to use the labour of adult paupers in the establishment. The children were divided into two classes, older and younger, and the boys and girls had separate playgrounds.[22]

In 1875 Randall identified the ethos which caused the school to thrive through the whole of the Victorian period:

> 'Habits of industry are…gained with the inculcation of honest principles and the cultivation of knowledge. The experiment is an important one, and one the success of which should not be too narrowly measured by returns of cost, but by the immense advantages resulting to the children and the influence their education may have in breaking the spell of hereditary pauperism should also be taken into account'.[23]

In a revised edition of Hill's book in 1889 Fanny Fowke repeated much of Hill's enthusiastic description, but took the view that district schools were no longer the best way to deal with pauper children, favouring instead such innovations as cottage homes. The school then catered for 163 children, each maintained at a cost of about 4*s*. a week. The rector of Quatt, the Rev. F. H. Wolryche-Whitmore, nephew of the founder, maintained the

family involvement in the school, giving prizes and running a savings bank for the children. More staff and some domestic servants were now employed.

The school was still in operation in 1901, when the Census recorded 142 persons there, but already the guardians of Seisdon were anxious to withdraw their children; the Madeley children were withdrawn in 1903. The Local Government Board ordered closure in 1903 and the school finally closed its doors in September 1904.[24]

Church Stretton

When Parliament reformed the poor law to base it on territorially large unions instead of parishes it was expected that this would bring better educated and better informed people into the management of poor relief. Such people would be better than the tradesmen and farmers who had hitherto been elected or coerced to manage it under the parish-based old poor law.[25] When the electors of Church Stretton poor law union chose their first board of guardians in early 1836 the assistant poor law commissioner, William Day, had misgivings about the new board because it lacked any 'influential person to act as chairman or to render the slightest assistance'. Day therefore feared that the benefits of the reforms would not be fully felt in Church Stretton union.[26]

The guardians had three former parish poorhouses or workhouses available to them, one in the High Street of Church Stretton which they rented from Church Stretton parish, one at Wistanstow, and another at Soudley (in Eaton parish). The workhouse in Church Stretton (the one which the guardians selected for the use of the Church Stretton union) had been set up *c*.1710 by a local charity. They appointed a governor and a matron at the low joint salary of £40 per annum. The workhouse stood at SO 452 936 (at the site where the Silvester Horne Institute now stands), about 100 yards south of the church. The governors decided to retain the outlying workhouses at Wistanstow and Soudley until they could accommodate all the in-relief poor of the union at Church Stretton.[27]

By August 1836 the board had received a speculative design for a new workhouse from the ever-alert George Wilkinson, an Oxford architect, but, although they responded by sending him a plan of the intended site (probably the site of the existing workhouse), nothing came of his proposal.[28]

Radical improvements were needed to prepare the old Church Stretton workhouse to become the sole workhouse of the union. The sleeping accommodation of the different classes of inmate was separate but their day rooms were not. In October 1836 the guardians instructed their architect, Edward Blakeway Smith (of Ludlow), to make out a working plan, intending to undertake a thorough rebuild. The plans, produced in November, were for an establishment for 120 paupers.[29]

In February 1837 the guardians were considering purchasing the workhouse from Church Stretton parish in order to avoid paying further rent (£22 10*s*. per year). They confidently resolved to give up their workhouse at Soudley at next Lady Day, and in March 1837 there was thought of giving up Wistanstow also. The policy with regard to the Church Stretton workhouse changed in April 1837 in response to a petition of the townspeople anxious to be rid of the embarrassment of the poor, and opposing the guardians' plans to rebuild the old workhouse within the town. The guardians started to look for an alternative site. A field called Little Ashbrook, a quarter of a mile out of town (SO 455 942), where a new workhouse might be built at a sufficient distance to appease the town ratepayers, became available from John Baldwin for £280.[30] The guardians at first considered that they could adopt Blakeway Smith's design at the new site 'without material alteration'. This was another matter which brought advice and warning from Day, who wrote to them in April 1837 advising them not to attempt to

> 'adhere to any present plans they may have formed with reference to the existing workhouse, but erect their [new] building upon approved scientific principles as being more economical and certainly more efficient'.[31]

The guardians accepted the advice that a fresh design was required and wrote to Blakeway Smith to request plans for a new workhouse for 100 paupers. Two months later the plans had not been received, so they decided to advertise for plans and an estimate. The intention was now to accommodate 100 to 120 paupers. They offered a £5 premium, from which it appears they were not expecting much more than a sketch and a rough estimate. Plans were received in October from Mr. Lea of Worcester and from one of the guardians, Thomas Duppa Lloyd, who had by this time renamed himself Thomas Duppa Duppa. The plan by Duppa was favoured unanimously. Duppa then evidently relied on Blakeway Smith for practical matters, including the working drawings and the specification. Blakeway Smith acted as surveyor overseeing the contract for building the

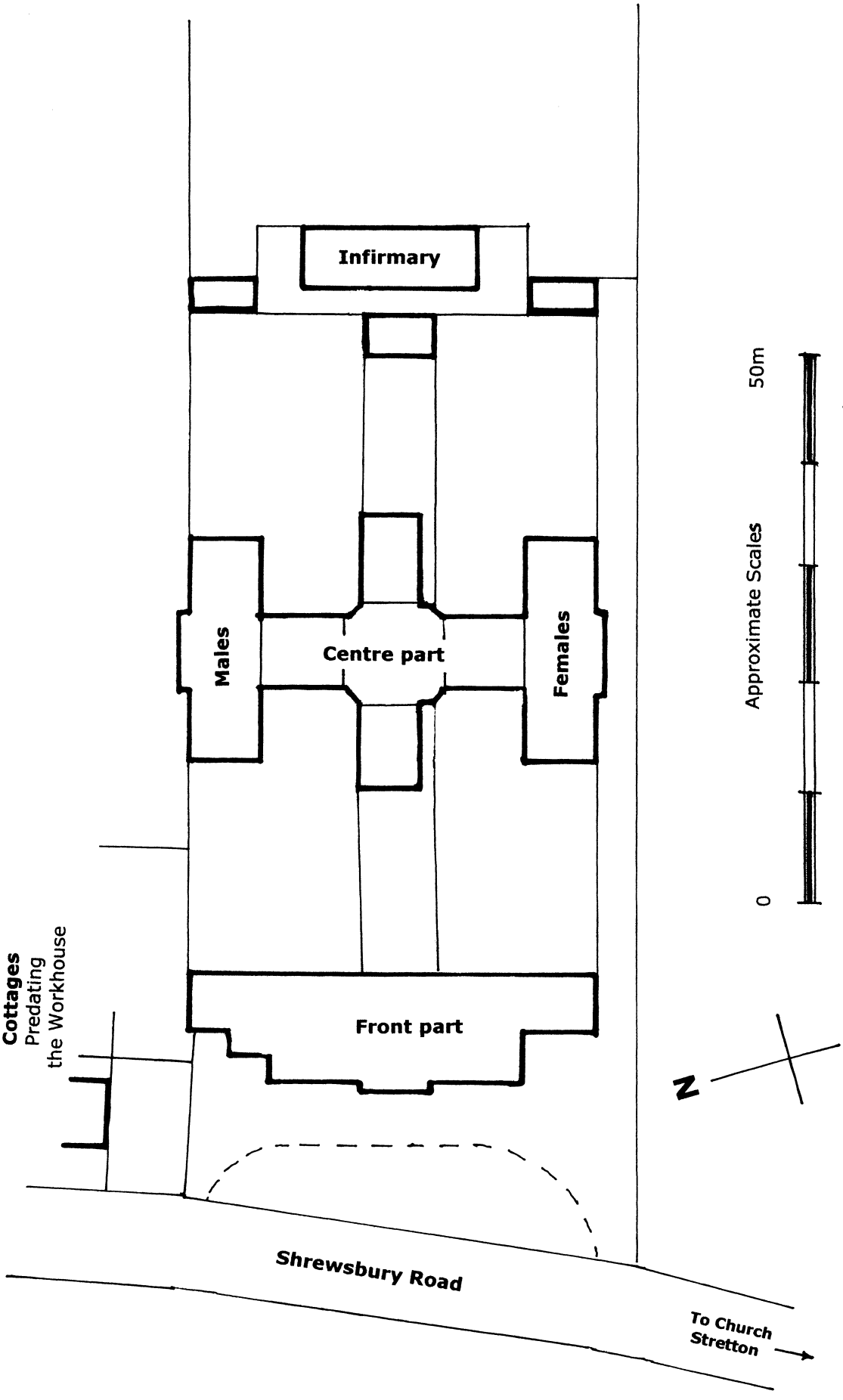

Figure 22 Church Stretton Union Workhouse. (Conjectural plan based on the Tithe Survey plan of Church Stretton, 1840, and Ordnance Survey, 1883, showing the three blocks as planned.)

workhouse and certifying payments; i.e. he was the architect in fact, albeit working to what may have been Duppa's overall plan. Duppa's involvement is problematical; he has been recognised in the *Victoria County History* as the architect, but it is possible that his part was limited to producing presentable drawings for Blakeway Smith's design, as the latter was not a good draughtsman. He does not appear to have been paid the £5 premium.[32]

The plan by Duppa was probably simply an adaptation of the square type designed by the Poor Law Commission's architect, Kempthorne, but with the three blocks (front, middle and rear) detached from each other. A sketch of the building in rather decayed condition is reproduced in Bilbey's history. The centre of the middle block was the usual square with canted corners for the windows of the governor and mistress to supervise the yards; at the apex of the roof was a tall cupola. The workhouse was planned symmetrically, with males to the left (north) and females to the right (south); the dining room and chapel was to the left and the kitchen to the right in the middle block. The front block would naturally have been for admissions and for the guardians' boardroom. The rear block was the infirmary, rebuilt on the same site in 1891 to the design of A. B. Deakin, architect, for £850.[33] (See Figure 22.)

The board funded the construction by loans from Charles Mott, one of their surgeons, who lent them £800, and from Abraham Bowyer who lent them £1,000, apparently at 5% interest.

An invitation for builders to tender for the new workhouse was advertised in February 1838. Samuel Pountney Smith tendered for £1,498 1*s*. 9*d*. and Joseph Stant of Shrewsbury for £1,875 15*s*. Pountney Smith was appointed, and nominated as sureties his father Edward Smith, innkeeper, of Munslow, and John Ingram Owen, draper, of Shrewsbury.[34]

The building committee first met on the ground in April 1838. They decided to hold regular site meetings until the job was completed, and evidently this was the date of the start of the contract. Regular payments were made to Pountney Smith, but in large sums, which suggests that he had adequate capital to conduct the works ahead of payment. At the beginning of June he was paid when the 'centre part' was deemed two-thirds completed; at the end of June he was due his first instalment for the infirmary (evidently the rear part); in July he received a second instalment for the 'centre part' and in September a second instalment for the 'front part'. At the practical completion, in early December, £66. 7*s*. 5*d*. was retained to be released later. The contract duration thus seems to have been from April to December 1838. Early in 1839 some minor alterations and additions were ordered, and at the start of March the new workhouse was probably in full use. The only hitch was the need in August for Pountney Smith to request six weeks extension of time, which was granted. The paupers having been moved out of the old parish workhouse into the new workhouse, Church Stretton parish pressed the union for the last half-year's rent due at Michaelmas, and proceeded to advertise the old building for sale at auction.[35]

Payments to Pountney Smith are recorded in the union's ledger from June to December 1838. Remarks in the minutes show that the building was carried out as three units, the front, the centre and the infirmary, and they appear on the Tithe Map and the Ordnance Survey plan as three detached buildings, linked only by walled yards. The only departure from the original design noted in the guardians' minutes was the addition of a cornice to embellish the front. The workhouse was in rubble masonry with ashlar dressings, later described as 'built of the rough stone got from the neighbouring quarries, with quoins and cornices of hewn free stone.' Completion is signalled by the guardians' advertisement in February 1839 for a new governor and matron.[36]

Having completed and staffed their new workhouse and moved the inmates in, the guardians no longer required the old workhouse in High Street which they leased from the parish. In May 1839 the churchwardens considered disposing of it and in the following month they resolved to sell it at auction. They considered that they were still due a half-year's rent to be paid at Michaelmas. In March 1840 its sale by the churchwardens of Church Stretton to John Robinson is recorded, but later in the same month the churchwardens resolved to repair it and convert it into two cottages.[37]

When considering building in 1836 the guardians thought that they could temporarily relieve themselves of the problem of managing the inmates by 'farming them out', as under the old poor law, but Day had to put a stop to the idea.[38] The education of their poor children in the workhouse was also unimpressive. In 1838 five boys and two girls were considered capable of instruction, and they were taught reading, but not writing, by a pauper of 80 years of age. One girl was taught needlework by the matron.[39]

The board had strongly favoured Duppa's plan for the workhouse, but the design was later deemed somewhat faulty. The workhouse was four years old when Charles Mott, the medical officer of the union, was in correspondence with the Poor Law Commission over unsatisfactory features. It is not clear why these problems took so long to be addressed, but for part of the period William Day was not acting as assistant poor law commissioner with responsibility for Shropshire, the duties in this interval being in the hands of Mr. Power. In March 1842 Day, resuming the supervision of the Shropshire unions, inspected the workhouse in company with Mott and noted numerous faults. The privies were offensive and there were faults of layout. Day's conclusion

was that the workhouse was ill adapted to the intended classification of inmates, 'the men and the boys, and the able-bodied women and the girls, being at present mixed together.' Some of these problems might have been due to poor management of the workhouse, others were faults which indicated a less than satisfactory design. Day wrote to the board advising major changes. Another fault was brought to Day's attention in 1843 by the complaint of the aged male inmates (who had armed themselves with a copy of the Workhouse Regulations in order to know their rights) that they were entitled to an exercise yard separate from that of the able bodied inmates. In this incident a number of the older inmates were insolent to him and he had to threaten them with the treadmill.[40]

The outline of the buildings hardly changed from the Tithe Map of 1839 to the Ordnance Survey Map of 1883. Later Ordnance Survey revisions from 1901 show additional detached buildings at the rear of the site, also unchanged down the end of the poor law in 1930. In the 1930s a County Council children's home was established on the site. By 1939, when it closed, the home was used for the accommodation of mentally defective patients. The site is now occupied by St. Lawrence's Primary School.[41]

Cleobury Mortimer

Cleobury Mortimer was, in the view of the assistant poor law commissioner, William Day, the best managed poor law union in Shropshire. Day was on close terms of friendship and social equality with the local squire, William Lacon Childe, whom he referred to as 'Mr. Childe, my most excellent chairman of the Cleobury Mortimer union'.[42] Childe gave strong leadership at the outset. After a few years, however, leadership passed to Sir Edward Blount, and the performance of the Board of Guardians and their officers became less impressive. The union acquired a large workhouse just outside the town, at SO 6701 7632. A parish workhouse at Rock in Worcestershire might have been temporarily used, but it was sold off in 1839. There was also a parish workhouse at Kinlet which the guardians did not use.[43]

The Cleobury Mortimer parish workhouse was an early 18th century building, a hipped-roofed five-bay house of two storeys plus a cellar and an attic, facing east. While it was still in parish use a full-height rear wing with cellar was added to the north side. It was built 'of firm stone materials with tiled roofs'. The front windows had timber mullions and transoms, divided by glazing bars into small panes. There were brick or stone flat arches over the doors and windows, including keystones over the main windows; five external steps led up to the centrally positioned main door; four windows at low level at front gave light to the cellars and there were five gabled dormers. There were two chimneys on the rear wall.[44] For a country parish this was an exceptionally fine workhouse, and suggests the charitable involvement of William Lacon Childe (d. 1757), then lord of the manor of Cleobury.[45] No record survived of the age of the building, but information was sought in 1837, and, as far as anyone could say, it was then a century or more old and had always been in the freehold of the parish. It is likely to postdate the Act of 1722 ('Knatchbull's Act'), which gave legal power to parishes to acquire workhouses. The Commissioners' Report on Charities says that it was built with funds, including a £100 bequest attributed on uncertain evidence to Childe's charity, and gives the date of the building as 1737.[46]

For the years 1751 and 1753–1755 the rooms in the workhouse are named in annual stock lists. There were at this time about seventeen rooms, which could be accounted for in the front range alone. These room lists differ slightly from year to year, but the 1755 list is representative: the workhouse then consisted of parlour, kitchen, pantry, hall, workroom, brewhouse, dairy, cellar, dark cellar, corn chamber, little storeroom, first garret, second garret, room over the workroom, two governor's rooms and closet. The rear wing may be of later date.[47]

With the coming of the new poor law Cleobury Mortimer union, comprising parishes in three geographical counties, was created in July 1836. With considerable pressure from Day the guardians elected William Lacon Childe of Kinlet Hall as chairman. Day was not so closely involved in the election of Thomas Lambert Hall of Neen Savage, a paper manufacturer, as vice-chairman. The other guardians who can be identified were either gentry or farmers, together with three clergymen, very much the usual occupations.[48]

The guardians decided to adopt the existing Cleobury Mortimer workhouse as their union workhouse, and their committee decided to build a second rear wing on the southwest side parallel to the existing northwest one, producing a symmetrical workhouse which would lend itself to the easy separation of the inmates into male and female departments.[49]

Thomas Hare, a local cabinet maker and carpenter, produced a plan and specification in August 1836. They were readily agreed to by Day and sent off for the formality of approval by the Poor Law Commission in London. The new wing was to be a copy of the existing one, apart from the omission of a cellar, and was to be built of stone obtained from the site. In addition to the full-height rear wing (two storeys and attic), the work included alterations to the interior of the existing building to create segregated stairs for the male and female departments, and two rear yards were formed, each with a three-seater privy. The interior partitioning proposed

allowed for a greater number of female than male inmates. There were to be a stable block big enough for the guardians' horses on board days and a coalhouse at the northern side of the rear yards.[50] The guardians instructed their clerk to issue handbills to advertise for builders to tender by 8 October. This odd way of inviting tenders indicates that they did not expect interest except from local tradesmen. It was also later to be a matter of criticism.[51]

Hare's own tender was not successful. A local carpenter, Yates, put in the best price at £363 7*s*. He offered to do the work in conjunction with two fellow tradesmen, a mason and a plumber and glazier. The guardians required all three winning tradesmen to sign the contract. Yates's contract required the building of the new wing to start immediately and be completed by the end of January 1837, a duration of 3½ months. Yates and his fellow tradesmen were paid their first £100 in November 1836, and more in March 1837, the work being behind time. It was probably nearing completion on 6 March, when it was decided to increase the insurance cover on the building from £300 to £600. The guardians were able to meet at the workhouse for the first time in April 1837. On 24 April 1837, three months behind the contract, the builders claimed that the work was finished, and a balance of £181 10*s*. was paid on 15 May. Fitting up the new wing does not appear to have been urgent; on 4 July an order was given to B. and J. Cooke of Birmingham for the supply of iron bedsteads.[52]

On 23 October 1837 the visiting committee deemed the workhouse to be ready for classification, i.e. for the segregated accommodation of paupers of different classes. The visiting committee decided that there should be segregation to allow for six classes of inmate: (1) Old women, and children aged 7–15; (2) Women with infants, and children under 7; (3) Able bodied women; (4) Old men; (5) Able bodied men and boys aged above 13; and (6) Boys aged 9 to 12.[53]

The guardians were carrying out major improvements and they were keen to secure the freehold. They considered the rent of £32 a year excessive. A vestry meeting on 1 August 1836 declined to sell. In the following spring the parish reconsidered and agreed to sell the workhouse and some adjacent land to the union for £620, offering the union a mortgage to be repaid at £5% p.a., but the clerk to the guardians was instructed to apply elsewhere for better terms. They borrowed the money from the Bewdley Bank.[54]

Up to 1838 the guardians had built the new rear wing and carried out numerous minor alterations without professional assistance. They had employed local tradesmen to do the work, and their own clerk had drawn up the contracts. But in May 1838 the guardians decided on radical improvements, which would have more than doubled the size of the workhouse and enabled it to take on infirmary functions, and they sought the designs of an architect. There was an outbreak of smallpox at this time. The guardians wanted a new hospital of at least two wards and a 'new and commodious' boardroom. Their first choice for architect was Josiah Griffiths of Quatford, who had previously served them in the capacity of valuer when they were considering purchasing the workhouse from the parish. Unable however to obtain Griffiths' services, they resolved to consult John Nettleship, an architect and surveyor of Kidderminster, or John Mills, a Worcester architect. They received a design from Nettleship, and in July 1838 his estimate that the cost would be 'about £750'. The work was put on hold as the chairman was ill at that time. The scheme was for a symmetrical enlargement, creating north and south wings and incorporating a boardroom, four wards and two additional yards.[55]

After some dithering with suggested internal alterations to the existing workhouse, for which Hare and Yates tendered, the board deferred action to the spring. They paid Nettleship's fee of £16 13*s*. 6*d*. in April 1839, and then opted instead for a minimal extension on the south side, to achieve a boardroom, clerk's office, and lobby at ground floor level, with minimal additional wards above and a hearse shed in the basement beneath; this was an adaptation of part of Nettleship's scheme, so they probably calculated that they could resume the rest of the scheme at a later date. Hare quoted £343 and Yates £230. With this minimal enlargement, achieving a boardroom downstairs and a minor extension to the female inmates' department above, the initial improvements to the workhouse came to a conclusion.[56] (See Figure 23.)

Although Nettleship's scheme was not carried out, it must have remained in the minds of the guardians as a good way to go about further improvements; in the 1840s a nearly symmetrical extension was added to the north side of the workhouse, to Hare's drawings, completing the range of buildings on the east side of the site.

There was also a two-storey rear range added at the west of the site with a cart-sized entry to the central yard of the workhouse. (See Plate 14.)

This major addition to the workhouse layout is shown on a stray plan dated 1843. Minor changes were also carried out which are too numerous to follow, but, for example, in 1846 the existing punishment cell in a cellar without natural daylight was deemed unsuitable for females in winter, and a new properly constructed cell was ordered; in early 1848 a treadmill for 12 men, manufactured by Dean of Birmingham for £41, was installed 'to occupy the able bodied men'.[57]

Alterations were designed by Jones in August 1848 'for the purpose of obtaining the classification recommended by Mr. Symons and make improvements'[58], providing casual wards and serving needs left unfulfilled by the failure to carry out Nettleship's scheme. They were estimated by Jones to cost £550, and were

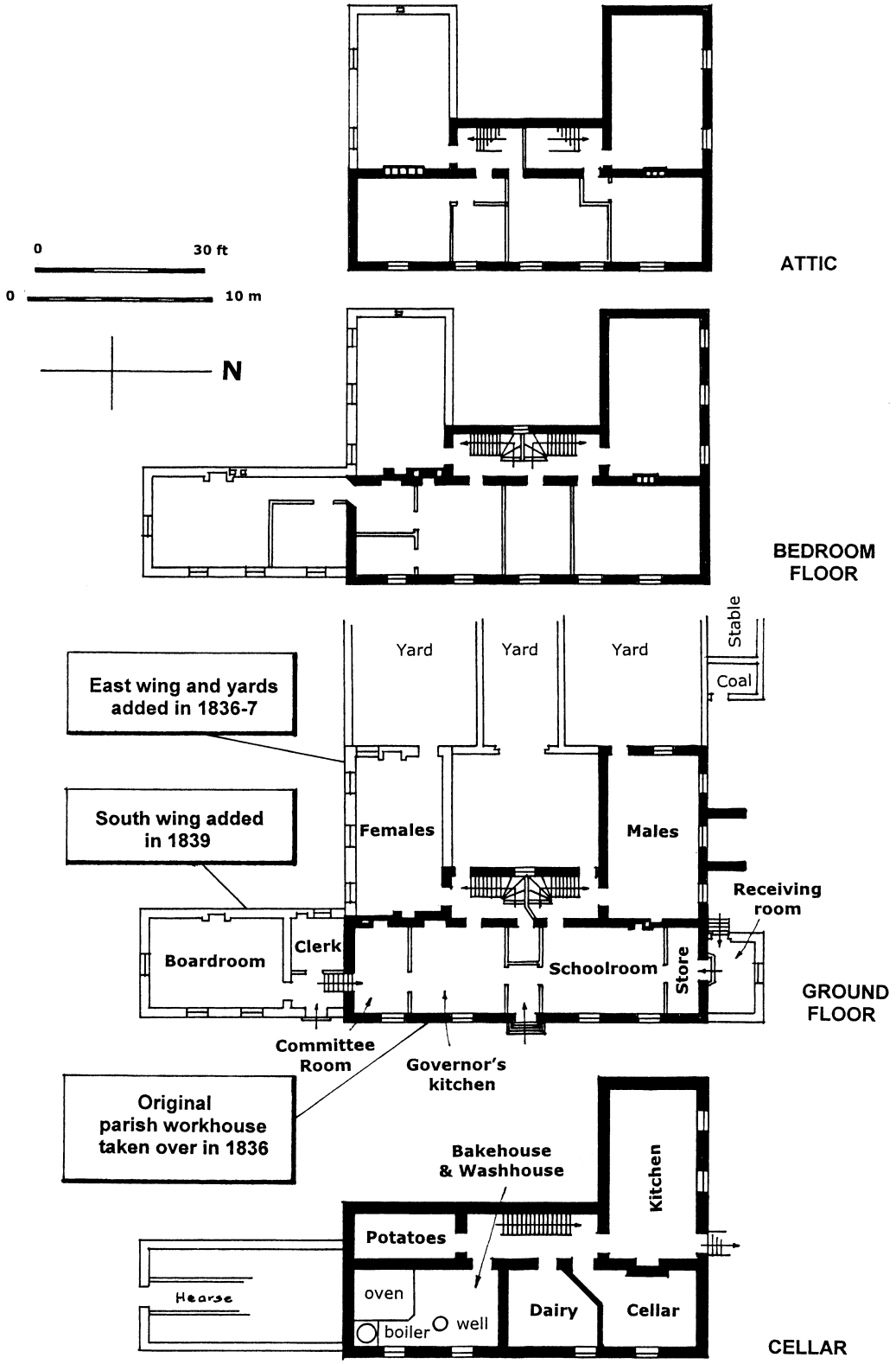

Figure 23 Plans of Cleobury Mortimer Union Workhouse after the enlargements of 1836–7 and 1839. (Based principally on Shropshire Archives: PL5/66.)

Plate 14 Cleobury Mortimer. The workhouse in the late 19th century or early 20th century. (Now demolished.) The central part is the original parish workhouse. It was considerably enlarged in the 1830s and 1840s. (Permission of Shropshire Archives: PH/C/23/2(B).)

the subject of Hare's tender of £820 in 1849. W. L. Jones was appointed surveyor to superintend the work, but he was dismissed in September for not being impartial.[59]

The workhouse survived to the end of the poor law without further substantial improvement. It has been demolished apart from some fragments of boundary walling, and the site is now a caravan park.

Clun

The Clun guardians elected in 1836, led by Philip Morris, were considered by the assistant poor law commissioner, William Day, to be the least satisfactory of all the poor law unions in Shropshire. Although Morris met Day's criterion that a magistrate should take the lead as chairman, this did not produce the leadership he sought. After five months acquaintance with them, he was able to comment:

> 'This union is generally of a very unsatisfactory character, the most of any of my unions….[The guardians are] farmers and shopkeepers of a very inferior grade...totally unable to weigh the advantages of principle against an apparently immediate expense.…I say this, because they act from ignorance and timidity rather than from ill will'.[60]

This assessment of their character is borne out by their hesitation, faced with their unsatisfactory principal workhouse in the town of Clun and the need to build a new one.[61]

Clun poor law union came into existence on 18 July 1836 and comprised seventeen parishes in the south-west corner of Shropshire and two in Montgomeryshire. The union included the town of Clun and also parishes to the north as far as Shelve and Ratlinghope. Shropshire parishes to the south of Clun were assigned to Knighton union in Radnorshire. The main places were Clun, Bishop's Castle and Lydbury North. Even before the commencement of the union the prospective guardians from Bishop's Castle complained about the choice of Lydbury North as their place of meeting, arguing that they should meet in Clun itself, the place which gave its name to the union. Lydbury North had been chosen because it was the centre of population of the union and to accord with the wishes of a number of the local magistrates. Also Lord Powis, the Lord Lieutenant, had made a room there available to them.[62]

The newly formed union had at its disposal a former parish workhouse in Clun, in a building which had been a malthouse. This old Clun workhouse was on the north bank of the river in the centre of the town. Its supposed owner, the chairman of the guardians, conveyed it to the Clun churchwardens and overseers in 1837, in a hope to evade loss in case it came to be compulsorily occupied by the union. In reply to a query about the consequences if the guardians decided to build a new workhouse, Day expressed his view that Morris did not appear to be entitled to sell it, nor could the sale have been made legally without the consent of the Poor Law Commissioners. Another old workhouse acquired by the guardians was at Bishop's Castle. There was a small workhouse at Lydbury North, which housed 15 inmates in 1834. The guardians decided to use Clun as their main workhouse and keep the Bishop's Castle workhouse for children.[63]

In the Poor Law Commissioners' Annual Report of 1837 there is note of an estimate of £3,407 which had been agreed to be spent on building a 150–inmate workhouse. There are, however, no details of this early proposal. On the contrary, Day had great difficulty in persuading the Clun guardians to give up the unsatisfactory old buildings in favour of a new one. Down to 1840 he could not even get them to agree to refurbishing the old workhouses, but finally he persuaded them to acquire a site at Bishop's Castle and have plans drawn up for a workhouse for 100 inmates. Until its completion late in 1844 the Clun guardians continued to use the old malthouse in the centre of Clun as their main workhouse.[64]

In the old Clun workhouse 35 inmates were present on Census night 1841, mostly young women, with a few infants and some elderly women. The men were fewer, and none aged over 55. The lack of elderly men may be partly due to the existence nearby of the Trinity Hospital, run as almshouses for fourteen elderly male pensioners.[65] In the old Bishop's Castle workhouse the inmates were almost all children. This workhouse was looked after by a relieving officer. His wife and three children were present on Census night, plus another woman of independent means and her two children. There were 35 others, whom the enumerating officer left undescribed, presumably all paupers, mostly female children.

The parish officers of Clun felt some grievance at their town not being chosen as the administrative centre of the union. For the first eight years of the union their existing workhouse, the converted malthouse, had served as the main union workhouse, but with the completion of the new workhouse in 1844 it became redundant. The parish of Clun appealed to the Poor Law Commissioners to be allowed to sever itself from the union. A more futile appeal could hardly be imagined. It was noted by the other parishes' guardians, opposing this, that paupers from the parish of Clun constituted 'a very considerable portion' of the new workhouse inmates, and that the rate income from Clun was essential to pay off the £3,000 which they had spent on the building. Eventually, in 1848, the redundant Clun workhouse was sold off, the parish officers having been satisfied that the proceeds of its auction would be credited to Clun parish in the union accounts.[66]

The history of the new workhouse at Bishop's Castle starts in 1841 with the Poor Law Commissioners' order ratifying the guardians' decision to purchase a three-acre site called Potter's Close at a cost of not more than £400, and approving building at a cost of not more than £2,600. Day was probably the prompter of this proposal. Bishop's Castle was the place chosen, as it was geographically central, and it satisfied the principle that a general workhouse should be located at the customary market centre of the union.[67]

In 1842 Day found that the guardians had backed away from the project of a new building and had drawn up simpler proposals for improvements at the existing workhouses, proposing to spend £90 at Clun and £150 at Bishop's Castle, although 'the feeling of the majority [was] to resist all further expense'.[68] Day vetoed these inadequate measures.

Henry John Whitling was the architect of the new workhouse at Bishop's Castle. He was then practising in Shrewsbury. He had ample previous experience of workhouse design, as described on p. 16, and had competed for the design of Bideford workhouse in Devon. Whitling's design for Clun union workhouse was approved and given the seal of the Poor Law Commissioners on 25 August 1842. It was to accommodate 150 inmates, as had been agreed in 1836. It was loosely based on the cruciform layout, incorporating four airing yards within a square enclosure as advocated by the Poor Law Commissioners' architect, Sampson Kempthorne, with rooms for the governor and matron in a central block. In order to minimise initial costs Day arranged 'that so much of the plans as relates to a detached hospital be omitted'. This left a scheme which was better than the existing arrangements for the children, but no better for the other classes of pauper. Day ordered a dining room to be included in the design, as he disapproved of allowing paupers to eat in their day rooms, on the grounds that it was harmful to families in the workhouse, who would benefit by being allowed to dine together. He also ordered the addition of a vagrants' ward.[69]

The new workhouse was to be of the general type, accommodating all classes, including the children. Whitling planned for the accommodation of male and female inmates in the north and south wings respectively. There was also a lying-in ward. The four airing yards were for the use respectively of boys, girls, men and women. The laundry buildings were attached to the women's yard. No allowance was made for infirmary cases, although there had been two separate sick wards at the rear of the site in Whitling's original design.

The kitchen was in the ground storey of the central block, beneath the rooms of the governor and matron. This central block was of three storeys and the wings radiating from it were of two storeys. Only three of the wings of the cross were initially built; the rear wing was omitted. The children of each sex had a dormitory above a schoolroom. A smaller two-storey block at right angles at the end of each children's wing housed the adult paupers. The front wing contained a lying-in ward above a chapel, but the intention to include a chapel was short-lived. (See Figure 24.)

At the front there was to be a range of buildings set back from the street. At its centre was a gabled two-storey part with a ground-storey bay window. This was flanked by a single-storey range on each side, consisting of two windows and a central entrance. That at the left was the guardians' boardroom, that at the right the reception for paupers. An originally windowless lower range beyond the boardroom at left contained the laundry, and a similar low range beyond the paupers' entrance at right contained the casual wards. These frontage buildings were to form a symmetrical composition with the taller parts at the centre. The building was to be of stone with a brick backing ('rough stone from a quarry to be approved by the architect', which was to be given 'hammer-dressed quoins to all external angles') and stone dressings to openings ('solid head stones 9" on face by 6" thick' backed by brick arches). The style was simplified domestic Tudor (described in the

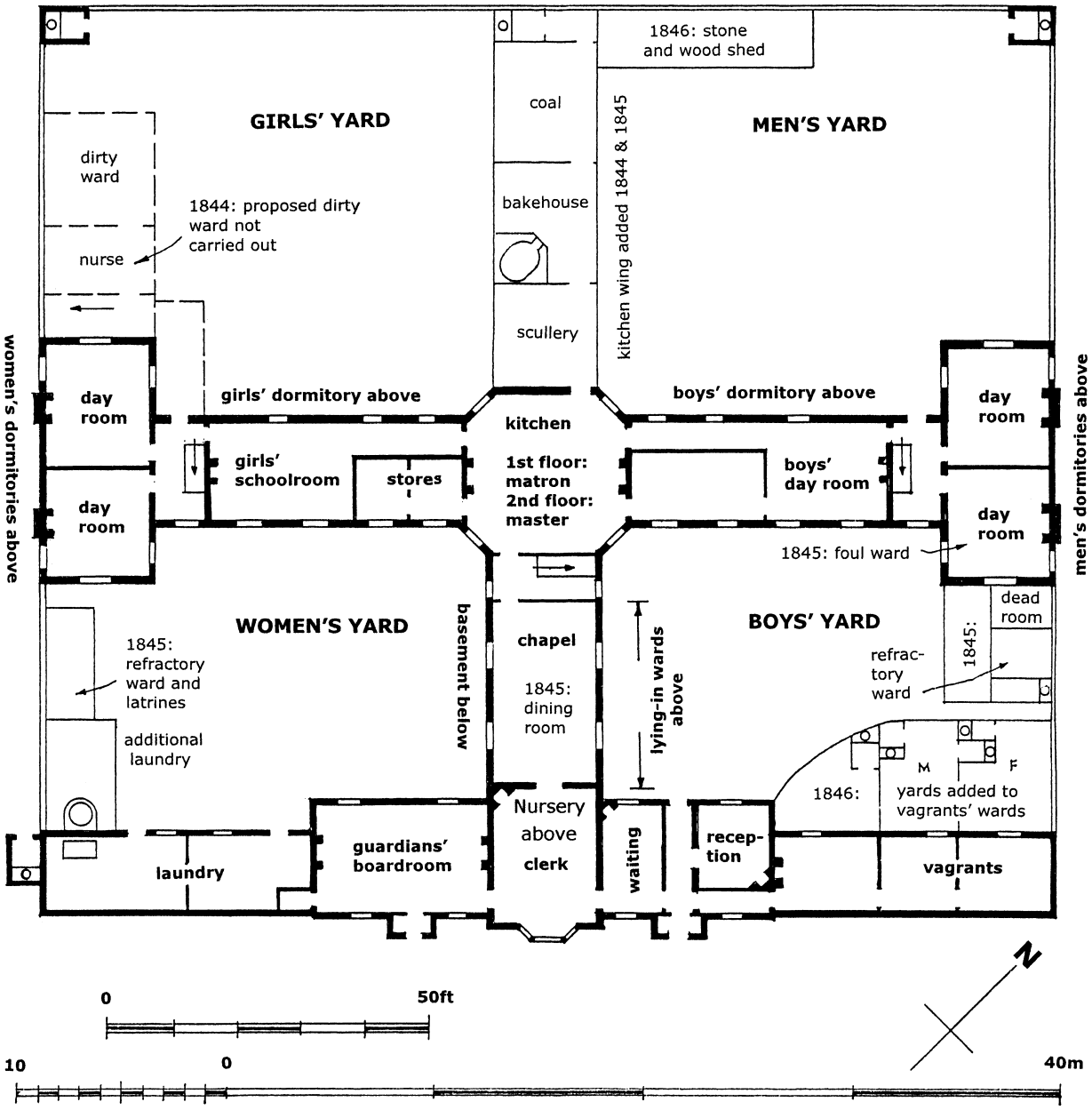

Figure 24 Ground floor plan of Clun union workhouse at Bishop's Castle. The original plan for three wings of the standard four-wing layout, within a layout about 160 ft. square, much altered and added to in the early years. (Principally after Whitling's and Haycock's drawings: SA PL 6/112.113. with some minor conjectural details.)

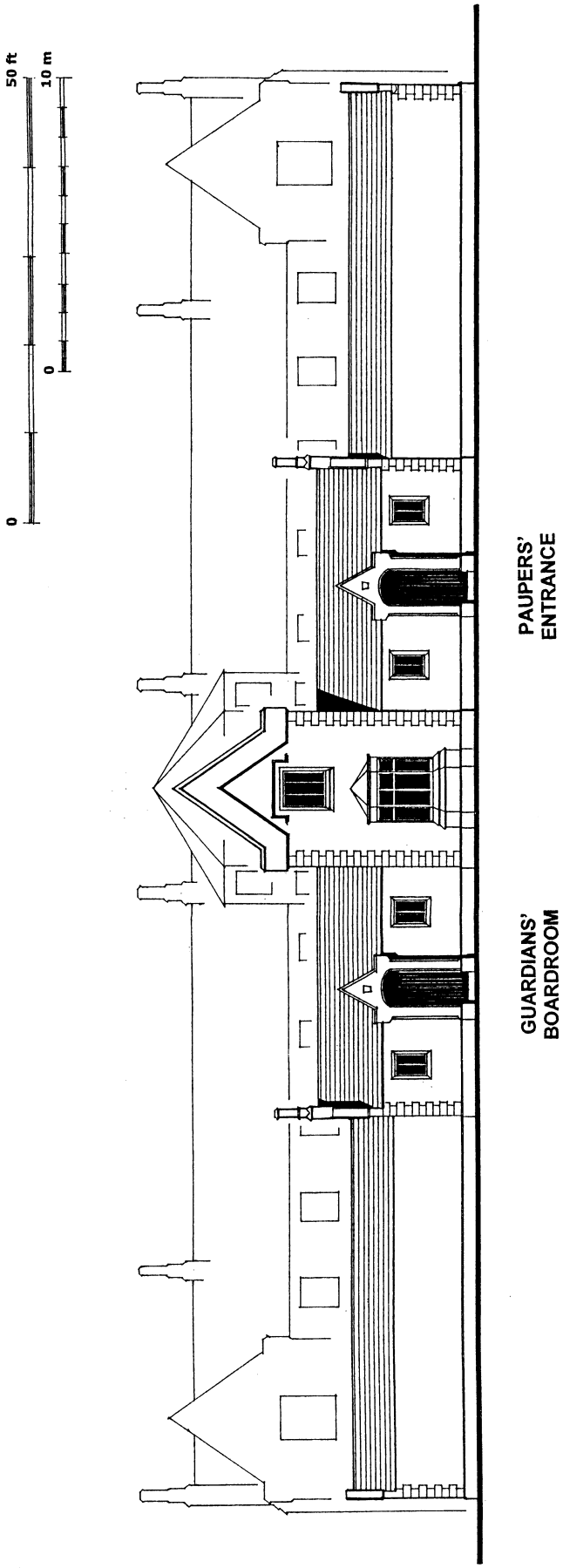

Figure 25 Front elevation design (redrawn) of Clun union workhouse at Bishop's Castle, showing the embellished and mostly single-storey frontage concealing the bulk of the main building. The Clerk's office is at the centre of the frontage building. The windowless front range to the left is the laundry department, that to the right is the vagrants' ward, the latter entered by a gate in the right side wall. (Principally after Whitling's drawings: SA PL 6/112.)

specification as 'Elizabethan') with prominent parapets to the gables at the centre and over the porches, and mullion-and-transom windows. The upper window at the centre, which lit the end of the lying-in ward, was of three lights and was to be embellished with a label moulding. (See Figure 25.)

Windows were to be in oak, with decorative quarry glazing in lead, but this was amended to simple iron casements. The front entrance doors were to be given Gothic heads and chamfered fillets. There were to be fancy iron hinges costing up to £1 a pair. Embellishment extended to some details not in the public façade. The chapel windows, although visible only from the front yards of the workhouse, were to be trefoil-headed. The internal boardroom doors were to be panelled and also given Gothic heads. There was to be a cellar beneath the chapel, with the chapel floor carried on cast-iron girders. The roof was slate, fixed with 'iron glazed nails', and given a stone crest.[70]

The specification was in draft in May 1842. There are features of the contract documentation which appear amateurish and unprofessional; it might be gathered that Whitling was not running a substantial office. It is not clear whether there was a bill of quantities; nothing of this description survives in the records, though it was normal practice to provide bills of quantities in workhouse contracts. The design was neat and not unattractive.[71]

The workhouse was not, however, built as designed. The detailing was simplified, to the loss of a great deal of its character. The pitch of the roofs of the front range of buildings was lowered to be the same as the utilitarian buildings at the middle or rear of the site, and the prominent parapets to the porches and gable ends were omitted. Instead, the porch gables and other gables were treated as projecting verges, with slightly scalloped barge boards. The prominent rusticated quoins of the design were omitted, the stonework at corners being no different to the facing stonework in general. The stone has been described as Acton Stone.

A weakness in the original design was its poor sanitary provision. Privies with soil pits were provided for the intended 150 inmates, probably one privy to each yard. There was to have been one water closet, but it was deleted from the specification.[72]

The guardians advertised for tenders from builders, and accepted that of Joseph Menhennitt of Radnor. Menhennitt undertook to build the workhouse for £2,650 and to provide sureties.[73] Menhennitt's first payment is recorded on 12 November 1842. The contract does not stipulate the stages for payment, merely '£2,650 to be paid in instalments as certified by the architect', but it appears to have been the case that a payment would be allowed whenever a further £100 was justified. The balance of £50 'for all latent defects' was to be paid six months 'after the buildings and premises shall be completely done and finished'. The last regular payment known was on 9 August 1843, followed by an 'allowance' of £200 on 14 September. There was some dispute with Menhennitt over his work, which appears to have gone considerably over cost, and in 1845 the guardians' minutes record an instruction to their clerk to 'take the necessary measures for immediate proceedings against Mr Menhennitt the late contractor for the building of the present workhouse and to recover the balance due from him and his sureties'.[74]

The contract, dated November 1842, required the roofs to be covered by 1 June, and the remainder of the work to be completed by the '1st of October next'. The contract period was agreed in advance to be 12 months[75], but work seems to have continued well beyond this, as there are several indications that it was completed in about October 1844. A later reference indicates 87 paupers, of all classes, in the new workhouse at the probable date of opening in 1844, and 72 in 1846.[76]

The guardians were put into difficulties late in the contract when Whitling fled the country in pecuniary embarrassment. Having lost their architect, they turned to Edward Haycock, the Shropshire county surveyor, to oversee the completion of the buildings. Haycock drew up additional plans which were submitted to the Poor Law Commissioners, and in December 1844 they were returned with the Commissioners' suggestions for further alterations. In January 1845 the new plans, including the previously omitted rear wing of the cruciform layout, were approved by the Commissioners. A handsome fee of £300 was paid to Haycock.[77]

The new rear wing added by Haycock was single storey and contained a scullery, bake house and coal store. In the front wing Haycock also converted Whitling's chapel into a dining room, and adapted the men's ward to create an infirmary. Despite the loss of the chapel, the guardians were advertising in 1846 for 'tenders' for the post of chaplain. Part of the boys' yard was divided off to create small yards for male and female vagrants, and two refractory wards (punishment cells) and a dead house were added. In March the guardians applied to the Public Works Commissioners for a loan of £1,500, to be repaid over ten years. This included £900 worth of work identified by the guardians as necessary and a further £600 for work directed by the Commissioners.[78]

A major consideration in favour of the new poor law in the minds of contemporaries was the superior local management which the new system could bring to bear on the problems of the poor, since unions rather than parishes were henceforth the basis of organisation. In the backwaters of Clun this advantage was illusory, the new guardians finding themselves out of their depth; they were not helped in their building venture by the

inadequate performance of their architect. With the difficult completion of the workhouse the troubles of the 'farmers and shopkeepers of a very inferior grade' who were the guardians were not over. They were in trouble in 1845 over a relieving officer who was found to be trading as a carrier and fishmonger.[79] Worse was to come when their workhouse governor and registrar, Francis Williams, engaged in January 1846, proved to be incompetent and unable to keep his books and accounts in satisfactory order, and only evaded dismissal by resigning and committing suicide.[80]

In August 1846 Col. Wade, the assistant poor law commissioner, required an additional office to be provided for the superintendent registrar of births and deaths. He also required separate receiving wards for the male and female paupers, and also a male infirmary. The guardians were allegedly dismayed at having to do work additional to that shown on plans already sealed by the Commissioners as approved, although their previous dealings with Day must have forewarned them. It was later agreed that the guardians' boardroom might double as the registrar's room, a fireproof safe being added for the storage of his books and papers.[81]

The guardians also built a shed in the men's yard for wood and for stone for the inmates to break. As to other alterations, their resistance was successful as their minutes in December 1846 record that

> 'no further alterations or additions are necessary, except to divide and partition off the room now used as the men's dormitory and to make part thereof into an addition for an infirmary, if it should at any time be rendered necessary, and if emergency should arise the two divisions of the room may be used as a sick ward or any other purpose; they further consider there is sufficient room in the wing called the boys' dormitory, which comprises two large rooms, to appropriate one room to the men'.

After this, alterations were less frequent. A later assistant poor law commissioner, Aneurin Owen, ordered addition ventilation for the women's ward. Further improvements to the workhouse are not recorded until a major modernisation in the 1870s, when new wards were added to improve the hospital facilities of the establishment.[82]

The workhouse at Bishop's Castle continued in the late 19th century and early 20th century as Stone House Hospital. There were tramp wards, altered in 1899. The buildings were demolished in *c*.1965 and the site developed for housing.[83]

Drayton[84]

Richard Price's trust was set up in 1739 to provide bread for the poor and education for the children of Drayton and Hodnet.[85] This was a period when the establishment of workhouses was encouraged by Parliament, and the property of the trust became the parish workhouse of Drayton. A workhouse using the premises of Price's trust existed by 1757, when rent for it is mentioned in churchwardens' accounts. It was on the south side of Shropshire Street at SJ 6728 3395. The buildings were initially the unimproved old property of the trust. They were described as five messuages joined together, with a three-bay barn, coalhouses and a water mill. Some addition or alteration to the buildings in 1813 might be inferred from the fact that from September in that year meetings of the vestry were held at the workhouse. This workhouse probably served mainly for children and the aged and infirm. A pre-1818 list of paupers in the workhouse indicates 19 names, 14 male and 5 female. Two of the males were noted as old men, one other was an idiot; of the females one was blind and one dumb. One family was present. The workhouse was known as 'the poorhouse' or 'the house of industry' and had 35 inmates in 1829. At this time it possessed three spinning wheels, but the inmates were mainly engaged in farm work. It then contained 15 beds, and there is reference to numerous farm animals, equipment and stores of produce, including a 5–ton haystack. In the Charities Inquiry Report of 1839 the Commissioners could not find out how the parish officers of Drayton had acquired the sole title to Price's Trust property.[86]

The parish administration of Drayton and its poor in the 18th century and early 19th century has been investigated and described by N. and S. V. Rowley. Drayton was early in attempting to reform its parish administration on the lines of a select vestry. Ten vestrymen were appointed to form a committee, which seems to have had the poor law as its main concern.[87]

Drayton poor law union was declared on 3 October 1836. The board of guardians was led for many years by Thomas Twemlow, one of the *ex-officio* magistrate members, with the Rev. Alex Buchanan initially as vice-chairman. Twemlow has been described in Chapter 1. Most of the guardians were farmers. The assistant poor law commissioner, William Day, had to stress to the guardians that the old workhouse 'would make a good *subsidiary* house either for old people or a school – but as the *only* house it is totally unfitted'. In their early days the guardians argued for the consolidation of their whole establishment in this workhouse, and they achieved their aim, despite objections from Day and the Poor Law Commission.[88]

The guardians employed William Manly Wilkinson as clerk and William Crutchley of Woore as their workhouse governor. They paid the parish a rent of £40 a year for the old workhouse in Shropshire Street. They also acquired old parish workhouses at Spoonley and Hodnet, which they used briefly. For Spoonley they paid a rent of £10 a year, and for Hodnet £18 for a year. An old parish poorhouse at Cheswardine was also taken, and rent of £5 5*s*. paid to the churchwardens for a third of a year, but it was apparently never used. They also allowed parish cottages to be disposed of at Stoke upon Tern and Mucklestone. When Ashley in Staffordshire came into the union in 1837 they acquired cottages there for which they had no use. They disposed of them in 1840.[89]

At the principal workhouse in Shropshire Street there was space at the rear for development, but investment in improvement was inhibited by Price's trust to which the overseers' tenure was subject. Discussions of the inadequacy of the old building dominated the early years of the board of guardians. An inspection committee under the Rev. Alex Buchanan in November 1836 took the view that they could accommodate about 60 men and 60 women there. In 1837 a committee under the Rev. James Lee, vicar of Drayton and vice-chairman of the board, generated a file of correspondence on the subject of accommodation, including a report claiming that 'the Drayton house, with certain proposed alterations, would completely accommodate 127 paupers'. A letter from the clerk observed that by comparison with the Poor Law Commission's own published model plans the workhouse at Drayton could fit in 200 paupers. Day's view was that the Drayton workhouse could contain no such number. He could find sufficient space for only 55 beds (each sleeping two adults), and even then some of the suggested bed positions were unacceptable because they would be directly below windows. The guardians instructed their clerk to send a plan to the Commissioners to demonstrate how ample the capacity of the workhouse was, but Day advised the commissioners to insist on the plan being marked up to show all the proposed bed positions. The Commissioners responded as Day had advised them, and the old workhouse was approved for the accommodation of 100 paupers.[90]

The Tithe Survey of Drayton in 1837 indicates the buildings at this period, prior to any of the early changes brought about by the guardians. It notes the workhouse (in Little Drayton) as the property of the churchwardens. It shows a narrow range of buildings about 140 ft. long fronting Shropshire Street on the south side. There were several yards at the rear of the site, with four detached buildings. The Charities Inquiry Commissioners in 1839 described the workhouse as 'a large building in Little Drayton, used as a poorhouse, with a garden and croft adjoining' and indicated that it was no longer possible to distinguish the original 'five messuages joined together' of Price's Trust.[91]

Many minor improvements were carried out by the guardians. Within the main range there was a kitchen, which was initially converted into a day room for old men. A dining room was formed, and the boardroom was given up to become a bedroom. A building in the rear yard, previously used as a mill, became the new kitchen. Early alterations and whitewashing were done cheaply by the labour of paupers in the workhouse. In their report of November 1837 the visiting committee recommended numerous further improvements which the guardians hoped would render any enlargement of the workhouse unnecessary, their recommendations mainly concerning the buildings in the rear yards. There were already separate exercise yards for the old men and old women. The women were to be given a detached sick room, there being one in existence for the men. It was regarded as much more satisfactory in times of fever or infectious disease to have a sick room detached from the main building, and by removing the women's sick room from the main building more sleeping accommodation could be provided for the able-bodied women. The committee also noted that in the women's part of the workhouse there was a storeroom containing a considerable quantity of oakum, apparently awaiting sale. Storage of oakum (unpicked fibres of old tarred rope) in quantity was very dangerous because of the risk of fire, so the committee also recommended this to be removed to a storeroom at the rear, freeing further sleeping space within the main building. They proposed to divide an existing day room in one of the rear yards, designated for lunatics, to provide a new oakum store, noting that the room had never been required for lunatics and was currently used only as a workshop. They passed on the medical officer's advice to provide a number of ventilators, including two in the schoolroom.[92]

The charitable trust, which it was feared would inhibit the guardians from the more drastic solution of enlarging the workhouse to the rear, was not seen by Day as an insuperable problem, but the guardians were advised by the Commissioners to obtain counsel's opinion before proceeding with any attempt to acquire the freehold or spend money on development. A favourable opinion was obtained by September 1838. The guardians acquired four cottages and sheds at the west end of the workhouse, 'to be purchased for a boardroom, register office and other rooms for the paupers'. In the Tithe Survey these appear to be three tenanted cottages and one void cottage, the property of Lee Thomas. Payment of £170 was made to an owner, George Crisp and £60 to a mortgagee, George Goodall. These cottages are marked on the 1843 plan as the property of Swinnerton. The guardians thus became owners of a workhouse which was part freehold, part leasehold.[93]

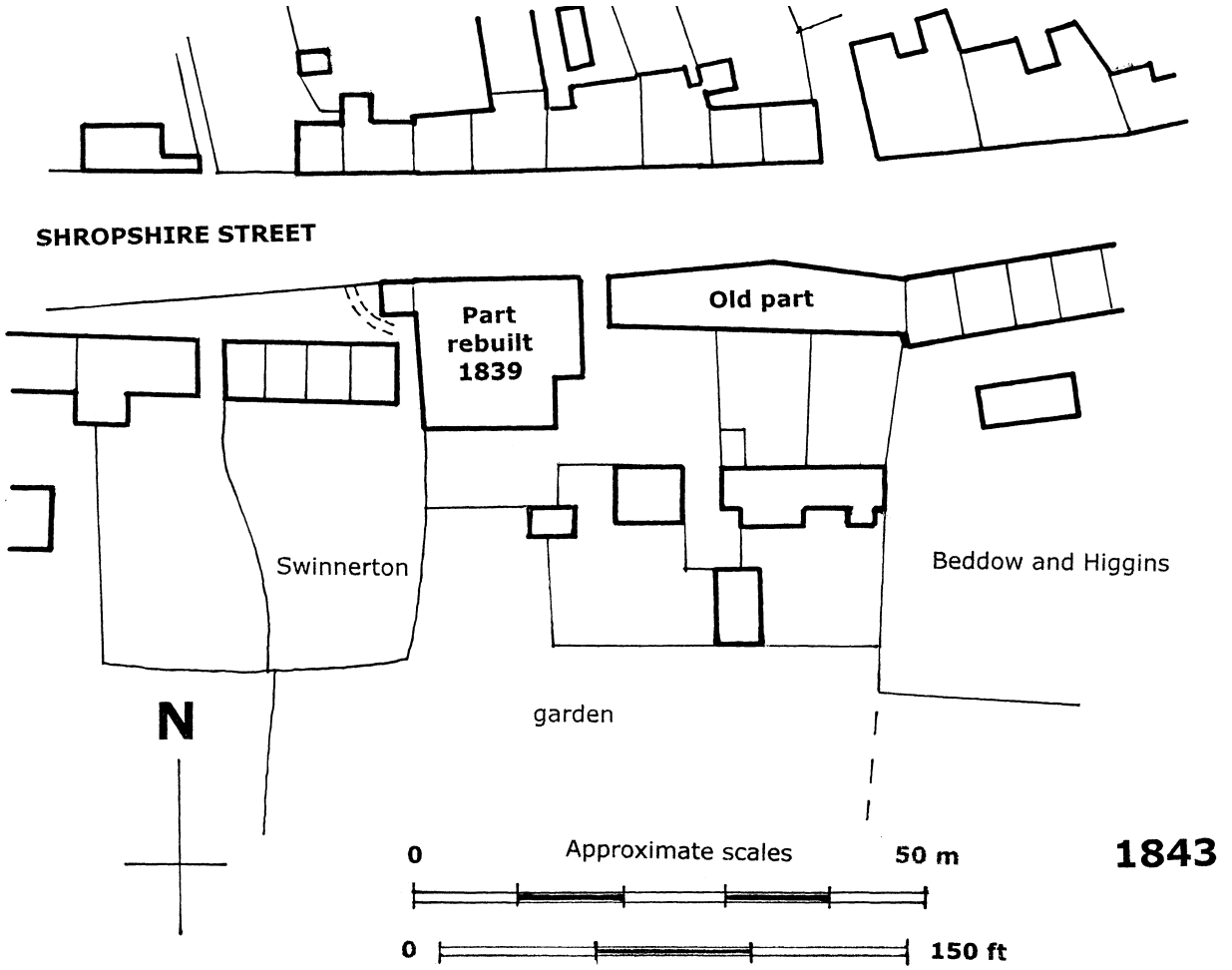

Figure 26 Former parish workhouse in Shropshire Street, partially improved in 1839 to serve as Drayton union workhouse. (Based on Robert Malabar's survey, 1834.)

The plans for improvements at the workhouse were drawn up by Samuel Pountney Smith, a young architect-builder who was already working as contractor for the workhouse at Church Stretton. To the guardians of Drayton union he was 'Mr. Smith, architect of Shrewsbury.' In June they received plans and a specification from Pountney Smith for a rebuilding in which they might dispense with the vagrants' rooms and the 'hospitals' in the rear yards. Pountney Smith's advice was that the total outlay would amount to about £1,500. In July the guardians resolved to 'advertise for tenders to make the additions and alterations at the workhouse according to the plans and specifications prepared by Mr. Smith and approved by the Poor Law Commissioners, such tenders to be sent in on or before the 24th instant'. The accommodation was to be for 207 paupers. At the same time they advertised for a loan of £1,400 on the security of the poor rate to fund the purchases and the work. Pountney Smith himself submitted the winning tender (the only one recorded) and on 6 August he met the board to sign a contract to carry out the work for £1,120 with payment in three equal instalments, completion to be by 31 July 1839. Assuming, as usual, an immediate start, this gives a contract duration of about 12 months. The work was paid for by a loan of £1,400 from the Exchequer Loan Commissioners, to be repaid in ten instalments. Pountney Smith's first payment of £373 6*s*. 8*d*. was recorded in July.[94] (See Figure 26.)

Pountney Smith reported the work finished on 28 August, after a six weeks extension of time. The building committee met to inspect it a week later, and they recommended payment of Pountney Smith's second instalment. After the rectification of some defects, the guardians ordered the release of the final third of the payment in October. Some parts of the old workhouse, notably the school, were retained unimproved. Further piecemeal work, including fever wards, a new schoolroom, laundry and other improvements, was planned in 1841, for which Pountney Smith was again to be the architect, but this was not carried out. Their investment in improvements made the guardians anxious to obtain the freehold of the 'old' part, but although it was offered to them by the Drayton vestry for £1,500 in 1842, attempts to come to an agreement still foundered on the problems of the original charitable trust.[95] The old workhouse remained in use until superseded by Quarry House near Buntingsdale Road in 1853. The site is now occupied by a side street, the Old Armoury.

Education of their juvenile paupers was not a high priority for the guardians. They acquired an unsatisfactory schoolroom as part of the original workhouse buildings which they continued to use for six years. The building committee described it as 'a low thatched building and in bad repair' when advising its replacement in 1842. More eloquent of the guardians' careless attitude is their employment of Luke Matthews as teacher. Matthews appears to have been a quasi-pauper and was apparently paid no salary.

In 1849 the workhouse school was visited by Mr. Symons, one of the newly appointed education inspectors. He reported it to be satisfactory, apart from the lack of the required wall maps of the Holy Land and England and Wales, and the fact that many of the children and their teacher were suffering from fever. The teacher was probably Martha Crutchley, the governor's daughter. He stated, however, that due to the foul smell of drains he was prevented from remaining in the school for as long as he would have wished. Displeased with this comment, the guardians observed that the inspector was in error, as there were no drains close to the school and they themselves were not 'able to detect any offensive smell except what naturally arises from a large number of children being congregated together'.[96]

Quarry House

The proposal to build a new workhouse was first considered in 1849 in consequence of the failure of the guardians' attempts to purchase the freehold of the old workhouse in Shropshire Street. The existence of Price's charitable trust led to the need to appoint trustees to fulfil its conditions and guarantee an unencumbered freehold, but when they failed to get trustees to act the guardians simply decided to abandon the purchase and look elsewhere. A recent history of cholera in the old workhouse possibly helped to persuade them to discontinue it. They advertised unsuccessfully in the Staffordshire and Shropshire newspapers and through handbills to obtain an offer of land for a new workhouse. A committee then searched for a site and had an offer of one for £1,500, but they decided to defer any decision, as Drayton Heath was about to be enclosed, and they would have a good chance then of obtaining a suitable site there. In January 1851 they were still looking for a site, and the committee was authorised to attend a sale of the newly enclosed land and bid for a plot of between four and six acres. They obtained a plot of 5¼ acres.[97]

The guardians thought that they needed only to apply to the Poor Law Board to provide them with a suitable plan, requesting one on the most approved principles. They decided at first on a workhouse for 350 inmates, but they stipulated omitting the usual boardroom and registrar's office because at the time they considered that they might retain the old building in Shropshire Street for these purposes and as a relieving officer's station. They were strengthened in their resolve to retain the old building because of the £1,400 they had invested in improvements there. Receiving no response from the Poor Law Board, the guardians then resolved to consider alternative plans drawn up by Crutchley (their workhouse governor or his son) and their clerk, and to advertise also for plans in the Birmingham, Chester, Stafford and Shrewsbury newspapers. They offered a premium of 30 guineas for the winning design, but they did not commit themselves to use it or employ the winning competitor. The deadline was to be 8 April, allowing about a month for entries to be prepared. On the day following the deadline the building committee considered no fewer than 13 designs, accompanied by cost estimates ranging from £2,500 to £6,776. They shortlisted the designs by Crutchley, estimated to cost £3,948, by Griffiths, estimated at £2,500 and by Barry, estimated at £3,000. Barry's they considered to be the best plan, but capable of improvement. Barry was the Liverpool architect, Thomas Denville Barry (1815–1905). He was declared the winner, but the guardians awarded a premium of 10 guineas to Crutchley, and instructed him to go to Liverpool to assist Barry to revise the plans to their requirements.[98]

Thomas Denville Barry was an Irish-born architect, originally practising in Leamington Spa, who came to Liverpool in 1845 and went in partnership with James Murray there until 1863. After the dissolution of their partnership Barry moved to become city surveyor of Norwich, but he returned to practice in Liverpool from 1872 until his retirement in about 1888. He had a large and varied practice in architecture and engineering, and he was at one time president of the Liverpool Architectural Society. He was architect for the Whitechapel workhouse and the Norwich Great Hospital Industrial School as well as the workhouse at Little Drayton.[99]

Barry was asked by the guardians to provide a sufficiently detailed estimate to enable them to apply for funding. He was also asked to 'state his terms for seeing the works properly carried out', as this was not part of the competition. The building committee received suggestions from the Poor Law Board for improvements to the plans, most of which they accepted. The committee members evidently expected to do most of the supervision themselves, aided by occasional visits from their architect. They rejected the suggestion of employing a clerk of works to carry out a constant on-site supervision of the work in detail. They had still to get a contractor, and they resisted the suggestion to advertise the work 'in detail by measurement'.[100]

The committee received 15 tenders for carrying out the whole, and a number of tenders for separate trade portions, of the work. The tenders for the whole ranged from £4,200 to £5,707, but even the cheapest was £1,023 above what they had legal authority to spend. Barry must have had a considerable influence in attracting tenderers, as five were from Liverpool and one each from Birkenhead, Chester, Derby and Manchester. The local firms, two from Wellington and one from Market Drayton, were among those submitting the highest tenders. The Liverpool firm of Arthur and George Holmes, the eventual winner, tendered for £4,267.[101]

The immediate consequence was serious doubt about being able to afford to build, and Barry was advised not to proceed with any detailed drawings or other work until instructed. The Poor Law Board suggested to the guardians that their plans were too ambitious, and that they should be aiming for a workhouse to accommodate 160 rather than 200 paupers. The guardians appear to have had little idea of proportioning the new workhouse to the numbers of paupers they normally maintained, and they simply resolved to build as big a workhouse as they could afford. They set about a long process of reconsideration, cutting every unnecessary detail. For instance, they decided that the foundation work could be done by the free labour of paupers. They came down to a target size of 130 paupers, and invited Barry to attend their meeting and revise his plans. They received approval from the Poor Law Board in April 1852, with a limit capacity of 128 paupers. The clerk wrote to the tenderers requesting revised offers, which were received in May. The initial winner was Josiah Jones of Drayton, for £2,508, but he lost the work as he could not find sureties to guarantee his performance. The choice then went to Arthur and George Holmes of Liverpool, for £2,558.[102]

The new workhouse was at SJ 6620 3332. The design was a partial realisation of the usual cruciform layout within a square enclosure, based on the model design published by the Poor Law Commissioners, but with the front parts and all perimeter buildings omitted, and the rooms planned for corridor access. It arose from a cost-cutting decision in December 1851, that the 'whole range of buildings in front of the main building and forming part of the boundary of the girls' and boys' yards may be dispensed with'. The central building at Little Drayton thus became the front building, but it was of the usual square form, with canted corners. Three wings were attached to it, one at left, one at right and one to the rear. It is described as having an axial hub and with axial corridors running through it. The wing to the left was for the males, that to the right for the females, the wing to the rear for kitchens. The rooms were cross-lit and the upper rooms reached by stairs in bays. There was a separate infirmary at the rear of the site with isolation wards. The central block and the attached wings were of two storeys.[103]

Work was evidently at an early stage in June 1852, when the building committee ordered the enlargement of a cellar. In July the minutes refer to a detached block for sick and infectious inmates, not yet started. In September 1852 the guardians instructed Crutchley to inspect the work on their behalf, and in October the committee ordered the addition of a dead house against the wall nearest to the road. On this occasion they were still apparently meeting in their old boardroom in Shropshire Street. The committee held its meetings at the new workhouse from March 1853. Roofing work was in progress in April. Barry's attendance on site was recorded in May, which must have been the date of completion. After completion the committee considered various minor additions; they lacked a porter's lodge, a shoemaker's shop, and a probationary ward. They also considered putting up agricultural buildings at the north-west corner of the site. The building committee ceased its recorded meetings in June 1854.[104] The new workhouse was known as Quarry House and survived to the end of the poor law in 1930 and into the late 20th century. Vagrants' wards and an attached disinfector to the design of George A. Craig were added in 1898. Craig also designed the infirmary built in 1899, including a lying-in ward and a nurses' room. The workhouse has been demolished and the site is now occupied by housing.

Ludlow

Ludlow poor law union was formed in July 1836, and it was the first Shropshire union to have plans drawn up for building a new workhouse. Charles Walker was the first chairman, with two vice-chairmen to assist him. They had difficulties, some due to political interference, in the appointment of officers for the union and in the management of their old workhouses. They also adopted more ambitious plans than they could cope with for their new workhouse at Gravel Hill. The actions of this board of guardians are of more than usual interest, despite their inauspicious start, for their careful planning of the workhouse and the extensive research for this purpose which they conducted under the leadership of Dr. Thomas Stocker.[105]

Lechmere Charlton, a very active magistrate member of the board of guardians, was an ardent Tory, and Samuel Oliver, the assistant overseer of Ludlow temporarily employed to manage the old workhouse in Ludlow, was an ardent Radical, and in William Day's opinion 'they have done nothing but quarrel'. From the magistrates' bench Charlton had told Oliver that he was convinced that no overseer could possibly go to heaven.

Oliver had the wit to reply that he found that observation disappointing, as he had not expected to see the magistrate in another world.[106]

One of the first matters of friction with which Charlton was involved on the new board was the choice of governor and matron for the workhouse, for whom an annual combined salary of £50 was offered. As was usual, the board sought to employ a man and wife without 'encumbrances'. William Graham, a man of about 40 with a wife, but also with a daughter aged four, applied. Graham was supported by Charlton. Day was not favourably impressed with 'the little man', and he hoped that a better candidate might yet apply. When the post was re-advertised, Graham applied again, but another candidate, of the name of Stoker, appeared, who had the advantage of not possessing a family. Against the wishes of Day, the chairman of the board of guardians and of Mr. Knight of Downton, the board voted 14 to eight in favour of Graham. Day was irritated by what he regarded as Charlton's interference and sought to get the central board of the Poor Law Commission to reject Graham, but he advised them to reject him on the grounds that as Graham had a daughter he did not meet the job requirements, not that Charlton's machinations had led the other board members to an unwise choice. Graham was, however, confirmed in office and started at work in November 1836. By early 1837 Day was complaining of wasteful and unexplained expenditure by Graham and other officers.[107]

At the beginning of the new union the guardians decided to make temporary use of two run-down old workhouses, in Ludlow and Leintwardine. Another Ludlow workhouse in Upper Galdeford was not retained. One of the workhouses to be used was the former Lane's House, the other was on the road to Wigmore in the parish of Leintwardine in Herefordshire. The inadequacy of these workhouses for the purposes of the new poor law was evident. Even under previous parish-based management both had been considered unsatisfactory, and architects' plans for replacement or improvement had been commissioned for both, but not carried into effect.[108]

The principal workhouse available to the guardians was a timber-framed house in Old Street (SO 5134 7450, now 56, Old Street), which had been used charitably from the late 17th century by Thomas Lane's trustees. The timber framed part is dated 1621 on one gable. A large stone building (surviving) to the south and a building to the north (not now surviving) were part of the old workhouse. The poor had been set to work there, but the charity had changed its character in accordance with less indulgent 18th century ideas, and the house had become a house of correction. It had acquired a cell with a window grille. The change appears to have come about when it was conveyed under Sir Job Charlton's will of 1691, whereby 'Ludlow will be provided with a house of correction, which I do not find hath ever had any as yet'.[109] In 1831 Ludlow Vestry had drawn up plans for its replacement. There were also plans for substantial improvements at the other workhouse, at Leintwardine, drawn up by Matthew Stead in 1835. The proposals for improving both these workhouses had received the seal of the Poor Law Commissioners. The guardians did not continue with these plans, but nevertheless they took urgent measures to restore the Leintwardine workhouse into usable condition as a temporary makeshift; by October 1836 it was reported to be once more ready for occupation, apart from a lack of furniture. After repairs the union used both old workhouses until the completion of their new workhouse at Gravel Hill in 1839. The Old Street workhouse subsequently became an almshouse under the name of Lane's Asylum. The Leintwardine workhouse appears to have been demolished.[110]

The building of an entirely new workhouse at Gravel Hill was a very early decision. At the start of the new board a committee of the guardians was set up to search for a suitable site and to obtain plans. The board of guardians was still only in its first month when two alert architects, hunting for commissions, submitted workhouse designs. One was George Wilkinson, a prolific workhouse architect.[111] The other was John Whitling, who later became the architect of Clun workhouse. Whitling even produced a model to show at the board meeting. The board instructed their clerk to write to the architects explaining that advertisements inviting designs for a workhouse to accommodate 250 to 300 paupers would shortly be published. It says much for the standardisation of workhouse design that architects thought they could anticipate the board's requirements.[112]

A remarkable feature of the history of the Ludlow workhouse was that in response to their advertisement no fewer than 13 architects submitted designs to the board of guardians.[113] The four designs which they shortlisted were by Bateman and Drury of Leamington, John Plowman, John Whitling, and Matthew Stead junior of Ludlow. Bateman and Drury were the originators of a Birmingham architectural practice which was to be of leading importance down to the 20th century; Joseph Bateman had designed Warneford Hospital in 1832, and the firm later designed the prodigious Tudor-Gothic workhouse at Birmingham Heath in 1850. They are not otherwise noted as workhouse designers.[114] John Plowman of Oxford was mainly a church architect, but he designed Bicester workhouse in 1835, and Cirencester and Evesham workhouses in 1836.[115] John Whitling is described as of London (though when he got the commission for Clun in 1842 he set himself up in Shrewsbury), and he was the designer of workhouses at Beaminster and Bridport in 1836.[116] Amongst the architects not shortlisted were George Gilbert Scott, later well known as a leading church architect, but then beginning his professional career as a protégé of Sampson Kempthorne, the Poor Law Commissioners' official architect, with a large number of workhouses in the Oxford area[117], and William Thorold, who designed at least six Norfolk

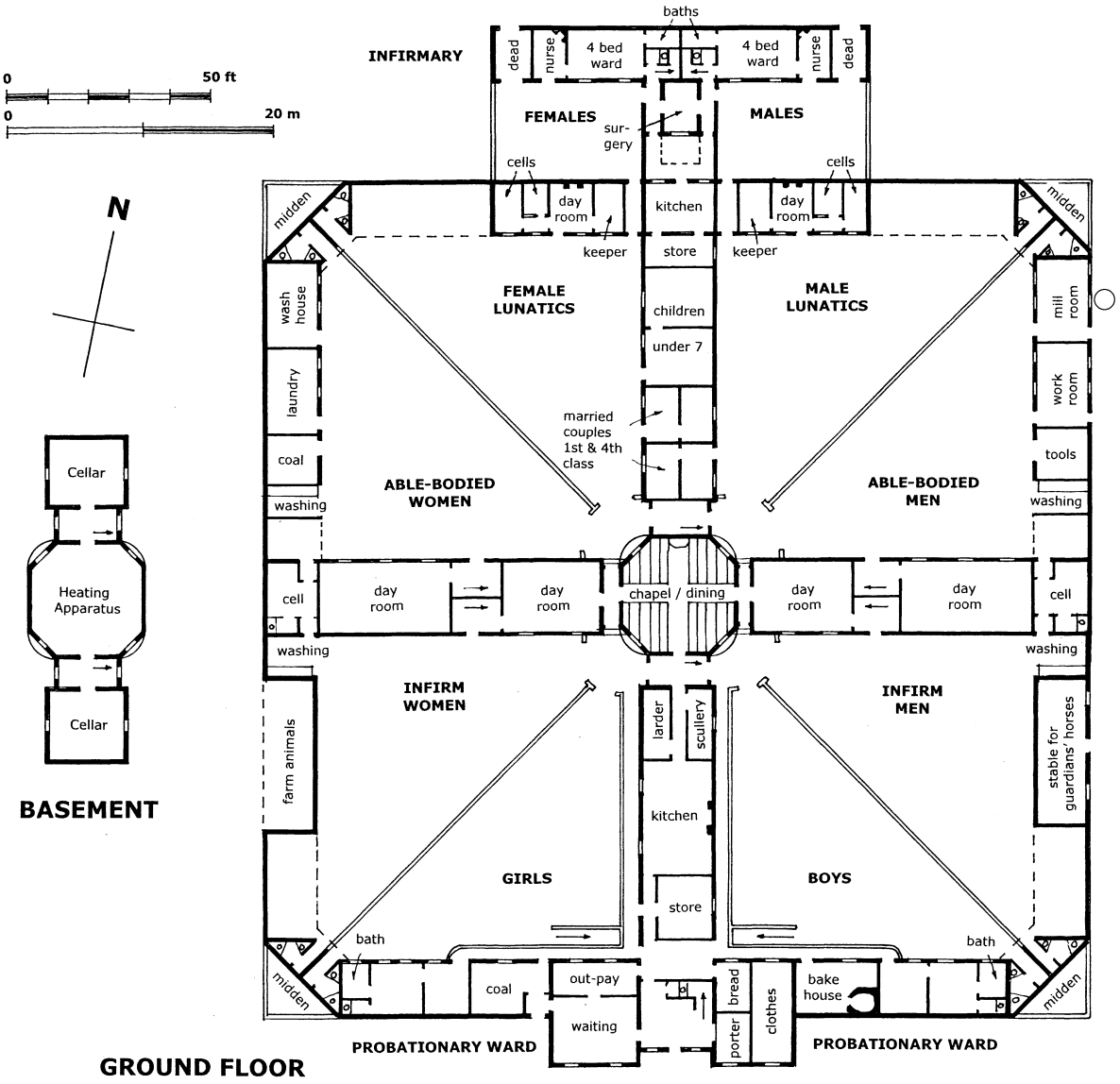

Figure 27 Basement and ground floor plans of Ludlow union workhouse as originally designed in 1836. By subdivision of the conventional four yards eight classes are catered for. A pencil addition on the original drawing shows the mill room being considered as a male vagrants' ward and the adjacent work room as a female vagrants' ward. (After Stead's drawings: SA PL 9/9/2/1-4.)

workhouses.[118] The winner against this ferocious competition was a local man, Matthew Stead junior, the son of a Ludlow mason or builder.[119] Matthew Stead junior was already known to some of the guardians, having designed the enlargement of the workhouse for Leintwardine parish vestry the year before. In the final vote Stead won over John Whitling by 5 votes to 2, and was appointed 'if his father be to superintend the building'.[120] Nothing further appears in the guardians' minutes about the father and his rôle until the end of the project, when he was paid a fee as 'architect'.

The guardians soon had occasion to regret their decision. Stead's design for the 250–inmate workhouse was estimated by him to cost a little over £2,000 to build; a realistic estimate, in the view of a more experienced architect obtained two years later, should have been at least £4,000. The plans were accepted by the board on 21 November and sealed by the Poor Law Commission 13 December. (See Plate 15 and Figures 27 and 28.)

The architectural detailing was to be Regency-Classical, the front elevation with a plinth and with a string course at the level of the sill of the first floor windows; the main string course was to be above the first floor windows; and there was to be a cornice and a parapet. The centre unit of the main front elevation was recessed and carried up to a slight pediment; the advanced units flanking this were to be hip-roofed with the hips concealed behind parapets. The plan overall was well laid out and based on the usual 'panopticon' centre with a cross of four wings within a surrounding square, but with extra divisions to create eight instead of the usual four airing yards. It catered for classifying the paupers into men, women, girls and boys, and also infirm men and

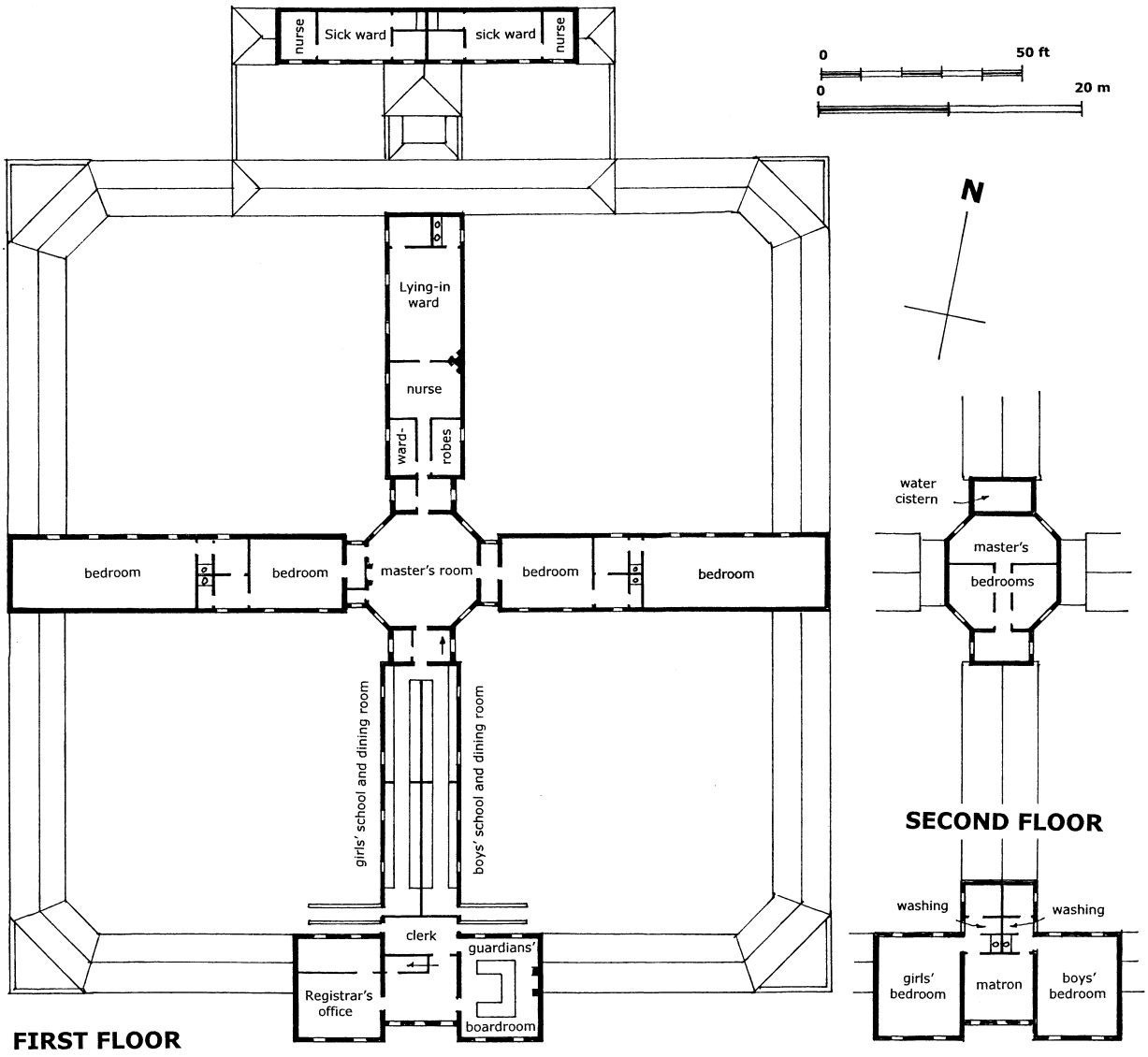

Figure 28 First and second floor plans of Ludlow union workhouse as originally designed in 1836. The partitioning of the governor's day rooms at first floor level at the centre of the building is not indicated. (After Stead's drawings: SA PL 9/9/2/1-4.)

infirm women; the last two airing yards were for male and female lunatics. There was the unusual feature of some provision for married couples. An additional block at the rear outside the main square catered for male and female infirmary cases. The centre building contained the chapel and dining room, its roof to be surmounted by a cupola and weather vane. The front wing contained the kitchens. The south-facing front block (the only part now remaining) was for reception and administration, and included the board room of the guardians.[121]

The clerk immediately placed advertisements in the newspapers to invite builders to tender. But by 2 January it was feared that Stead's design could not be constructed for less than £4,500, more than double his estimate. Notices were placed in the papers withdrawing the invitation to tender. At a special meeting of the guardians on 11 January Stead explained that the design could be carried out either in brick or in stone, and if the latter it would be at a cost of about £3,000. He was instructed to employ some of the paupers to dig to ascertain whether there was likely to be sufficient usable building stone on the site. On his favourable report the clerk re-advertised for builders, stating that there was suitable stone and also clay for brickmaking within the building site.[122]

Four tenders were considered on 1 February. Blakeway Smith[123] tendered for £4,357. Ann Smith[124] tendered for £4,000, on the proviso that there was sufficient stone for the building to be quarried on the site. John Collins of Leominster put in a tender for £3,520. Stuart of Shrewsbury tendered for £3,795 in brick or £3,480 in stone, if sufficient was available. Faced with these prices, all exceeding Stead's estimate, the board instructed Stead to

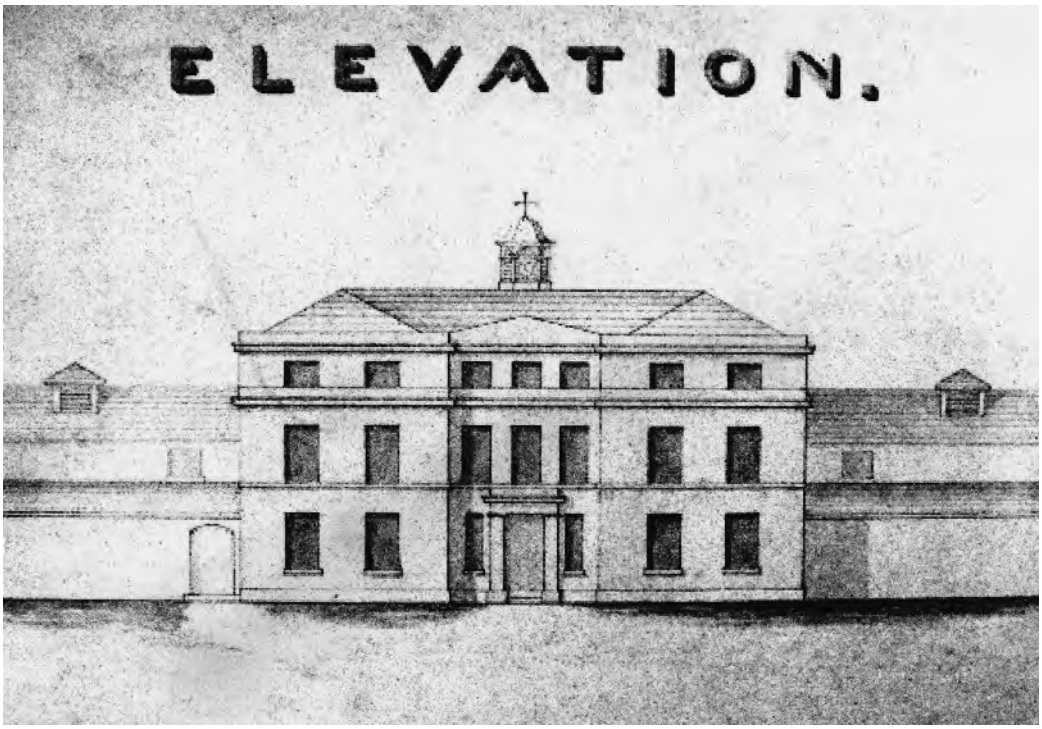

Plate 15 Elevation of the front building (to south) of Ludlow workhouse as originally designed by Matthew Stead in 1836. (Permission of Shropshire Archives: PL 9/9/2/1-4.)

alter the design to reduce cost. In a second meeting to consider revised tenders a fortnight later Collins' tender was reduced to £3,400. Stuart declined to tender as he considered the plans and specifications no longer agreed, and the other builders appear also to have declined. Stead was ordered to make his plans and specifications agree by 12 o'clock on the following Monday, or lose the commission. He kept to this deadline, and a committee of the board reconsidered the designs. The original design shows a continuously roofed perimeter building, covering sheds and minor offices; early maps show that these were mostly omitted, as were the yard walls dividing the girls from the infirm women, and dividing the able bodied men from the male lunatics. The committee met on 27 February to consider fresh tenders, but one of the tenderers complained that the drawings had been retained by the architect and he could not measure them. Tenders were finally obtained on 6 March: Collins' tender for £3,070 was then accepted. At the fourth attempt the guardians at last had their contractor.[125]

The guardians soon had occasion to regret this decision also. John Collins attended and signed his contract on 15 May 1837, and his father also attended and signed a bond for £1,000 to guarantee performance of the contract. On 29 May the board engaged Matthew Stead junior, not as their architect, but as their clerk of works at wages of 2 guineas a week, it being apparently already understood that in future his father was to be the 'architect'. This employment appears to have commenced about mid July, which must have been the date of the start of the contract. The contract was evidently intended to be completed in twelve months. They clearly regarded Stead as intelligent and reliable, but very inexperienced.[126]

A month later the building committee of the board had to meet to consider Stead's complaints about Collins' neglect of the work and his absence from site. Another month later, on 24 July, the building committee reported to the full board that 'there was not any stone up, and a sufficient number of men were not employed'. Collins appears to have thought that he could shrug off the complaints of the board and their clerk of works, but in November he was given written notice that 'unless he proceeded with it properly' he would be dismissed from the contract. Collins, however, then managed to convince the board that the real problem was that he needed advance payments, and the board agreed to his request.[127]

On 4 December Stead again complained, reporting that Collins was not paying the workers. Collins was threatened in the following week with six days notice, and Stead himself was paid the week's advance to ensure that it reached the workers as wages. Collins again weathered the storm and continued as contractor. On 22 January 1838 the building committee reported to the board that the value of the work completed was only £1,063 (a third of the contract), and that in Stead's view there would be a considerable overspend and overrun. In an interview before the board, Stead roundly condemned Collins for inattention to the work, misappropriation of the money paid to him, and even theft of cash:

'Has Mr Collins' attendance been regular? – Certainly not. He has been very inattentive. He has been away more than two months at a time.

'Have [the weekly advances] been regularly paid to the full amount of the sums advanced? – Certainly not! The money has been taken away by the contractor and used for other purposes. [Goes on to describe theft of cash.]'

At last the board proceeded to ask the advice of the Poor Law Commission, and were informed that Collins was clearly in breach of contract and might be dismissed.[128] Again Collins wrote to the board, this time proposing that his father should become the agent for superintending the work, and that all payments should be made through the clerk of works.

In April a new board of guardians was elected, and a new building committee formed. On 16 May this committee reported to a special meeting of the full board that Collins was now dismissed.[129] Stead was to continue as agent, at the same salary, and the building committee was to 'inspect the works continually'. They would attend the site every Saturday and inspect all the accounts. Alas, they soon discovered that there is more to the supervision of building than checking accounts, and a sad note in the minutes of 21 May states that they 'inspected the proposed new workhouse on Saturday last, but feel themselves at a loss to offer any opinion as to the manner in which the building has hitherto been conducted, or as to the expense which up to this time it has incurred'. They fell back on reliance on Stead's judgement, and asked him to compile accounts and advise whether another contractor should be engaged. Fortunately by 9 July they were able to report satisfactory progress under the new regime. The committee then warmed to its task and started to undertake extensive heating researches, at a cost beyond that contemplated by the full board. William Day reported to the Poor Law Commissioners:

'In consequence of the failure of the contractor the guardians are now completing the building of their house themselves. The report [of the committee on heating] is interesting, the principal guardian who, I have no doubt, drew it up being Dr. Stocker, the leading physician in that part of the county. . . . The facts are these. The contractor of the house broke after it was 1/3 finished – the guardians, instead of procuring, as they ought to have done, a second contractor to finish it, undertook the remainder of the building themselves. They very soon found themselves at a loss as to several matters of detail, and especially as to the best mode of warming and ventilating it. The original resolution was for hot water, but one of the guardians, Dr. Stocker M. D. was opposed to this, and finally they resolved upon the committee of inspection to procure information. The committee not being able to collect satisfactory evidence in the unions immediately adjoining, extended their travels further than the resolution of the board contemplated'.[130]

Three members of the committee and Matthew Stead junior (here described as architect) travelled to Devon and back, visiting what must have been a carefully chosen selection of large new workhouses, some still being built, others completed and already in use. Their main conclusion was to condemn heating by circulating hot water, and to advocate open fireplaces in all occupied rooms, but they also gathered valuable information on furniture and fittings. The board as a whole was highly favourable to their conclusions and approved payment of their expenses. They ordered the insertion of fireplaces and chimneys generally in the new workhouse, but they did not rush to adopt the proposals for furniture and fittings.[131]

The workhouse proceeded towards its completion uneventfully thereafter, except for the mounting realisation on the part of the guardians that they were going to overspend considerably. At the end of November the work was sufficiently advanced for the guardians to be able to meet in the new building, using the governor's day room pending the completion of their boardroom.[132]

Completion costs were investigated in September. The accepted tender figure of £3,070 was now only a baseline, and sundry extras amounted to £475. The problems of quarrying building stone on the site had been considerable, and the work had been made more difficult by the discovery that the best stone was actually beneath the buildings, so there were backfilling and additional foundation expenses amounting to £528. The addition of the chimneys was costing £126. All this brought the estimate to £4,199. Then there was the purchase of land, £512, Stead's salary as clerk of works £184, still to be spent on unfinished building £913, fittings about £500, and (forgotten by the guardians) some fee as architect to be paid to Matthew Stead senior, bringing the total to well over £6,000. The guardians proceeded to borrow a further £1,000 from the Royal Exchange Assurance Company. Nothing appears in the records of any recovery of Collins senior's £1,000 bond, which may have lacked substance. Matthew Stead senior's fee as 'architect' was agreed in January 1839 as 3½ %, calculated on the accepted tender sum, i.e. £107 9*s*. There was a subsequent dispute when Mr. Stead senior tried to claim £212 (3½ % of a little over £6,000) instead. The guardians might have had some cause for thought when Robert Clive of Oakley

Park, Ludlow, a future chairman of the guardians, obtained a copy of the drawings for a workhouse for 200 paupers by the Poor Law Commissioners' own architect, which was said to have cost only £1,900.[133]

In their anxiety over the overspend the guardians seem again to have lost confidence in the Steads, their clerk of works and architect. They turned to Edward Haycock, the Shrewsbury architect, for a report on the workhouse. His report, received in February 1839, informed them that the original tenders had been far too low for any reputable builder to do a satisfactory job. As to the quality of the work carried out, it was entirely acceptable. The decision to use stone instead of brick was right, as the stone was of good quality, and walling 1ft. 6in. thick could be built of it at 4*s*. per square yard, compared with 14in. brickwork at 7*s*. per square yard. His check of the accounts showed no misappropriation of funds. Despite this, when Stead's services as clerk of works were ended on 23 March the guardians' minutes gracelessly note that 'the services of Mr. M. Stead as building agent be no longer required, that his salary be discontinued, and that he be directed to dismiss the workmen this evening and not to employ them any longer'. So much for nearly two years of intensive work in the service of the board. This marks the completion of building. On 6 May 1839 a carter was paid for moving paupers from Leintwardine to Ludlow. [134] While the workhouse was being constructed Matthew Stead's career in general was active, including Borough Council commissions. For the Council he designed or improved Ludlow gaol, designed a police station house, inserted a gallery and formed offices in the Guildhall and converted a warehouse into offices for the Clerk of the Peace. He was also architect for some new buildings at the top of Mill Street.[135]

It was not unusual for workhouses to be altered in their early years, either over a period of time as the board's requirements changed or even, as seen for instance in the sorry case of Clun, before the project was completed. Ludlow workhouse, by contrast, was a built to a successful plan which did not have to undergo a major programme of alterations. Much of the credit must go to the architect of the project, Matthew Stead junior, although it may be that the board's requirements, perhaps through the activity of Dr. Stocker, were better thought out than was sometimes the case. Although demoted from architect to clerk of works for the duration of the project, it must appear from Haycock's endorsement of the quality of the work that Stead continued to give good service. His fault was inexperience, in giving the board unrealistic expectations of the likely cost; this created great problems including the employment of an incompetent builder who had to be dismissed. Whether Stead knew Collins' reputation or not, he must have welcomed him as he was desperate to have the tenders reduced, but even if he did he lacked the status to advise the board not to engage with such an unreliable contractor. The board itself was the author of many of its own misfortunes. They were perhaps flattered by the clamour of architects begging for the commission. They indulged themselves in alterations to the heating arrangements without awareness that this would impinge on completion time and cost. They failed to make proper use of the advice which they could have obtained from the assistant poor law commissioner, who could have guided them away from pitfalls.

Plate 16 Ludlow. The front building (facing south) of the former Ludlow workhouse.

The Ludlow workhouse survived little altered into the 20th century, when it was transformed from a poor law institution into a hospital. Robinson of Hereford was the architect of improvements in 1904; in 1906 sundry improvements included extensions to the infirmary at a cost of £745, for which B. Weale of London was architect. Other improvements in 1907 included a receiving ward, a nurses' room, a laundry, a heating chamber and hot water apparatus, with John Butter of Ludlow as the architect.[136] Following the ending of the poor law the wards were rebuilt. The front part is all that remains of the original building.[137] (See Plate 16.)

Wem

Wem was one of the last unions in Shropshire to be formed.[138] Walsh came to the conclusion that although Wem was a town in decline it was chosen in 1836 to be the centre of a union because the assistant poor law commissioner had greater difficulties with other towns in north-west Shropshire. The more thriving town of Whitchurch in particular would have been better suited to take the lead in this union, but it was ruled out as it declined to dissolve its incorporation.[139]

The parish registers show that there had been a workhouse in Wem from as early as 1739.[140] There are many 18th-century references in the vestry minutes to the workhouse and its frequently changed staff. The governors were generally engaged under annual contracts. A survey of Wem in 1806 indicates that the workhouse was then in High Street. The workhouse was owned by the parish but as early as 1811 it was mortgaged to George Powell for £400, presumably to fund improvements: in that year the overseer Thomas Sandland was instructed to 'divide the larger rooms to make the house more commodious and comfortable'. The overseers had toyed with the idea of farming out the workhouse at that time, but the idea came to nothing. In 1814 rooms mentioned were a parlour, lobby, small beer pantry, cellar, lower kitchen, brewhouse, milkhouse, dining room, bakehouse, school room, passage, room over the dining room, store room, room over the brewhouse, garret over the dining room, garret over the brewhouse, little store room, room over the old kitchen, and room over the parlour. There were a barn and cowhouse in the yard.[141]

In 1834 the assistant overseer for the parish reported to the inquiry commissioners that there was a workhouse in the town, the inmates of which were some men aged from 40 to 80 and eight women aged from 30 to 50. It was located at the west end of High Street at SJ 5089 2885, and was an old building adapted to receive parish paupers. The building, which survives, consisted of a three-storey range with its gable to the street, with a lower abutting range at its left. (See Plate 17.)

It was probably only minimally altered and adapted to serve the needs of the parish. This was a capacious building, but evidently ill-suited to the requirements of the union. After the union discarded it, it was described in 1841 as 'house, maltkiln, garden &c.'.[142] The workhouse was under mortgage in 1836 when first rented by the board of guardians.[143] The gabled range has since been shortened at rear. The abutting part has been doubled and the additional part heightened at front.

The other serviceable workhouse of the union, at Prees Heath, was also of at least 18th-century origin. There are occasional references to a workhouse in the Prees parish registers from 1783, sufficient to indicate that the parish possessed a workhouse continuously from then down to the time of introduction of the new poor law.[144] There was a parish workhouse at Ightfield, which the guardians did not require, and which in November 1837 they consented to sell. It had been bought by the Ightfield churchwardens in 1819 for £161 when it was described as a 'dwelling house with a shop, slaughter house, stable and garden'. There was also parish property for the benefit of the poor at Loppington disposed of for £300.[145]

The Wem guardians first met on 17 November 1836 and elected Sir Robert Chambre Hill of Prees Hall[146] as their chairman and Richard Wycherly Smith of Wem as vice-chairman. Thirteen parishes were included in the union. The guardians initially made use of two old parish workhouses, at Wem and Prees, before consolidating their whole establishment in one new building on the outskirts of Wem. The transition from the temporary system using ex-parish workhouses to the new one in purpose-designed premises was, in the case of Wem, particularly difficult. The assistant poor law commissioner, William Day, found the guardians and their chairman exceptionally obstructive and uncooperative.

A committee of the newly formed board of guardians was appointed to examine 'whether the old house at Wem was repairable or not.' It was rented from the overseers of the parish at £30 per annum. The workhouse at Prees was rented from Sir Rowland Hill at £22 per annum. The guardians also initially hired a separate boardroom and register office at £5 per annum. They advertised for a chaplain for each of the two chosen workhouses, although they appointed only one to conduct services in the two workhouses alternately. Edward Ebrey and his wife were employed as governor and matron of the Wem workhouse. Ebrey may be the same person who was the governor in the 1820s. Edward Ebrey had been the assistant overseer of the parish when it

Plate 17 The Wem parish poorhouse in High Street, discontinued in 1837.

had been governed by a Select Vestry. After six months in office under the guardians it was evident that Ebrey was, or had become, incompetent, and unable to keep records, and the board resolved to dismiss him and his wife. Ebrey, however, resigned in time to avoid this, and William Kendillon and his wife were appointed in place of the Ebreys until the workhouse was closed in 1838. Francis Mace and his wife were a young couple appointed governor and matron of the Prees workhouse in place of the parish employees, Mr. and Mrs. Hughes.[147]

The initial intention of the guardians was to use the existing workhouse at Wem for the able-bodied inmates and that at Prees for the aged and the children. An immediate difficulty in making Wem the principal workhouse was experienced because the parish overseers owned it subject to a mortgage and by unenfranchised copyhold under the Duke of Cleveland. Although the Duke stated his willingness to grant a freehold in the event of the guardians purchasing it, the guardians seem not to have trusted him. They considered abandoning Wem and sending all the in-paupers to Prees, but there were difficulties there because the Prees workhouse was owned by the chairman's brother, Sir Rowland Hill, who would not permit it to be improved or any able-bodied paupers to be housed there. Day considered the option of sending all the in-paupers of the union to the Prees workhouse 'absurd'.[148]

The children were sent to the Wem workhouse. There was a schoolroom there, for which the guardians ordered repairs in March 1837. Mary Kendillon, the wife of a relieving officer, was appointed teacher. No teacher was appointed at Prees.

By late 1837 the guardians had divided into three parties on the accommodation of the in-paupers. The first party wanted to go ahead with the purchase of the Wem workhouse, hoping to rid itself of the mortgage and trusting the Duke to enfranchise the tenure. The second party was that of the chairman and the majority of the guardians, wanting to move the entire establishment to Prees despite the objections of Sir Rowland and, for different reasons, of the assistant commissioner. The third party wanted to get rid of workhouses altogether and, in Day's words, 'burke' the union. 'All', he noted, 'seem disinclined to build', so he did not press that option although it would be an obvious way out of the problems. The matter was urgent because the union had only a tenancy of the workhouse, and the person to whom the parish had mortgaged it had died and it was thought that his trustees were about to insist on payment or seize it. Day spelt out the options, including building afresh, but recommended continuation with the old Wem workhouse if possible.[149]

In September 1837 the guardians decided to abandon their initial intention to purchase the Wem workhouse from the parish. They resolved to acquire a better building, which could take the place of both their old workhouses. The party on the board favouring abandoning the Wem workhouse was strengthened by the fact that a gasworks had just been built opposite and it could be argued that the situation was becoming unhealthy.[150] They found a newly built house in nearly five acres of land at Barnett's Bank to the north of the town near Creamore which they decided to buy and enlarge. It was on offer for £1,400 which they negotiated down to £1,300. Funds for the purchase and estimated costs were acquired from the Exchequer Loan Commissioners in two loans totalling £2,800 which were paid off over a number of years.[151] Plans for alterations and enlargements to convert the house into a workhouse were drawn up by Robert Graham, an architect-builder known to the board as Sir Rowland Hill's architect. Graham considered the cost of the additional work should not exceed £1,000.

The house is at SJ 5150 2977, in Love Lane, on the west side of the Whitchurch Road. It was a two-storey building acquired from Miss Burton. The plan was double fronted and two rooms deep, and it had a symmetrical front of three bays. There was some embellishment of the central window surround in the upper storey. When considering additions to convert it into a workhouse, the vice-chairman suggested some improvements which Graham adopted in November. One improvement was to include a 'hospital' in the new part. Work evidently started promptly as £2,300 was borrowed from the Exchequer Loan Commissioners for the purchase and the building work in February 1838.[152]

Thomas Francis was awarded the building contract for £1,167. Additional buildings were erected on three sides of the rear yard, which was itself subdivided into smaller yards. The rear ranges were utilitarian and of

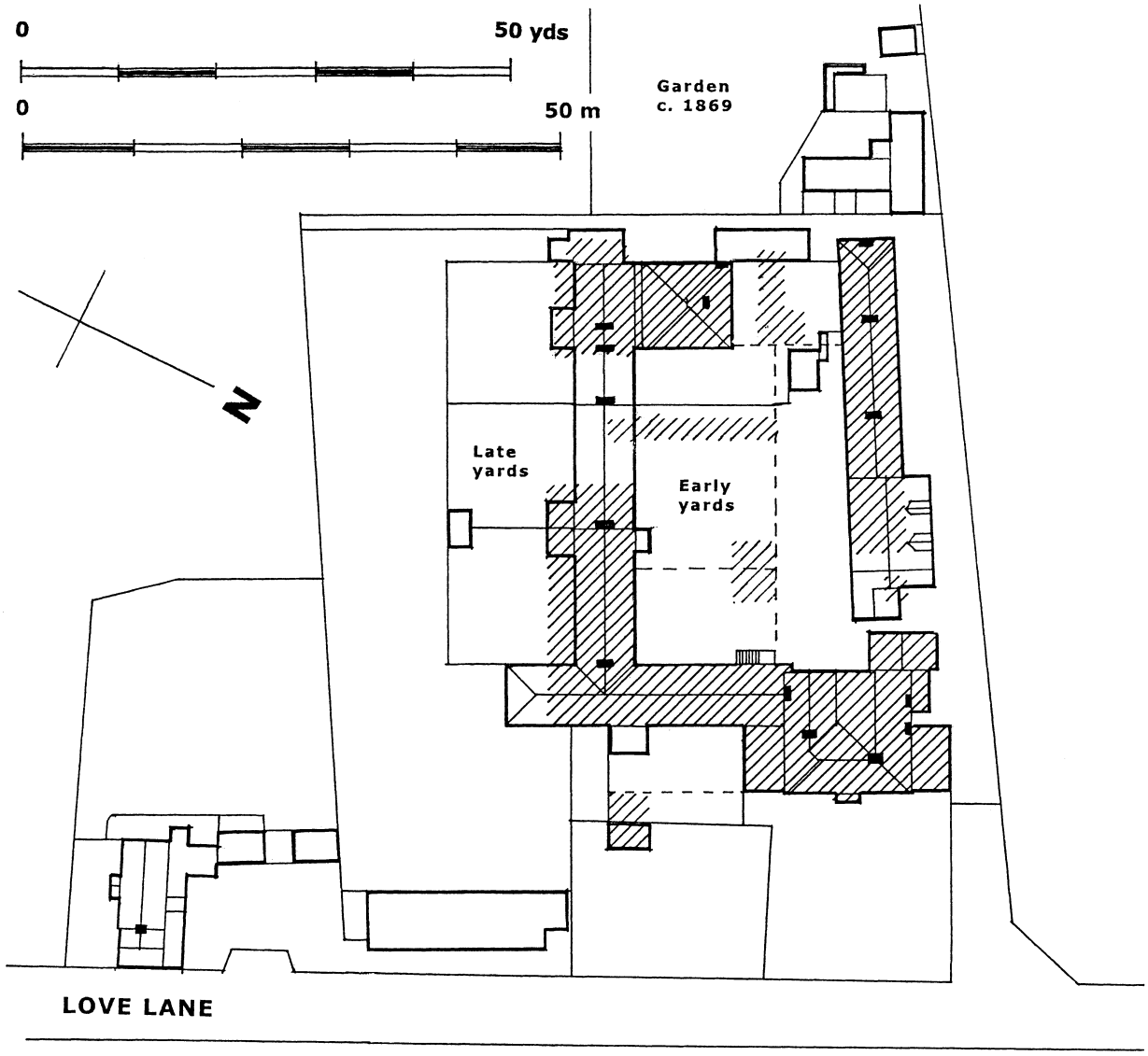

Figure 29 Plan of Wem workhouse in 1880, hatched to indicate the approximate extent of the buildings present in *c*.1840.

two storeys, apart from part on the south side which was of three storeys. There was a large garden beyond. In March 1838 the board was able to resolve to hold its future meetings in the new boardroom, probably in a room of the original house. It was hoped to complete the additions by the end of June, but it was not until August that they were declared fully ready. From August the building was insured at the Manchester Fire Office. The builder was paid four instalments of £200 from May to September, plus a further £300 in January 1839. The architect's fee for the plans, specification and 'inspecting the building from time to time' was £20, paid in September 1839. The workhouse was capable of containing 200 inmates.[153] (See Figure 29.)

Three male and eight female inmates from the old workhouse in Wem were moved to Prees in December 1837. With the completion of the new workhouse all the Prees inmates were moved there in September 1838, the leases on the old workhouses being allowed to lapse. By 1860 the old workhouse buildings in High Street were the property of the Free Grammar School.[154]

The Tithe map of 1841 shows that the basic layout of the new workhouse, as two long rear wings appended to the house and enclosing yards, was already largely complete. In that year the guardians felt the need for a probationary ward to prevent infectious persons entering the workhouse directly. They decided to build a dwelling house for the Wem relieving officer with an adjacent tramps' ward for £150, as this would free the existing tramps' room to become the probationary ward. A loan of £250 was raised. They hoped that a recent introduction of typhus and smallpox into the workhouse would not be repeated. An extension of the buildings was constructed in 1845 by Thomas Everall for £522 19*s*. 6*d*.[155]

The earliest reliable block plan of the workhouse buildings is derived from the Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1880, augmented with information from photographic surveys. Some indication can be obtained of the early ranges of buildings by comparing the outline of the buildings recorded in the Tithe Map in *c*.1840.[156]

Additions to the original set of buildings were made down to the late 1840s. From then until 1870 no further significant additions or alterations were evidently needed. Although the ledgers of the union record no building work of any significance over this period, they do suggest that the gardens at the rear of the workhouse site were brought into production in about 1869 when a 'pigs and land account' started to be kept. Building work resumed in the 1870s with 'alterations', and a big contract for building vagrants' wards was carried out in 1872 and 1873 by Toumey for £369, plus numerous smaller sums spent over the 1870s.[157]

Plate 18 Wem. Landona House in Love Lane, purchased in 1838, the main building of Wem union workhouse. The render and white paint are recent.

The territory served by the Wem workhouse was slightly reduced in 1854 by the loss of the parish of Ightfield to the newly created Whitchurch union. The workhouse continued in use to the end of the Wem union in 1930, when it was closed as a workhouse, and Wem came under the Drayton Guardians' Committee. It was known later in the 20th century as Landowna (now Landona) Farm. After some years of agricultural use the buildings were converted in *c*.1990 into a residential home for the elderly. (See Plate 18.)

Notes

1 The main sources for the Bridgnorth workhouses are NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence, and NMR: files 100978 and 101713. SA: PL3 union records are unfortunately incomplete, the surviving minutes not commencing until 1859. Also *Bridgnorth Journal*, 14 & 21 Aug. 1858: Obituary of W. W. Whitmore; *Dudmaston, Shropshire* (National Trust 1988 and 2000); NLW: MS 3147F, Day to Lefevre, 16 May 1836; Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 16 June 1836.
2 *Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, 1834 (PP, 1834, xxvii): Appendix A: A. J. Lewis, 'Salop, Hereford and Monmouth', 661A; also *op. cit*. replies to queries; NLW: MS 3142F, fol. 276, Day to Whitmore 30 Jan. 1837; *Report of Charities Inquiry Commissioners* (1839) 502.
3 NLW: MS 3147F, W. Day to Lefevre, 17 Mar. 1837.
4 SA: BB/E/1/5/2/13/1, John Wood's map of Bridgnorth, 1835; BB/G/1/2/16, agreement with Jolley, 13 March 1740; BB/G/1/2/28, Yates' workhouse account book [on paper watermark-dated 1801]; DA2/134/10/5, Dilapidations order 1859; 1861 Census.
5 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 24 June 1836; NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners 27 Aug. 1836; SA: DA2/134/11/103–5, 106, Correspondence concerning lease of workhouse, 1836; DA2/155/5, Lease of St Leonard's workhouse from T. Whitmore and the Corporation to the Guardians of the Poor.
6 NLW: MS 3147F, Day to Lefevre, 15 Feb. 1837; SA: 6395/4/2, Abstracts of accounts, 1841; Census of St. Leonard's, Bridgnorth 1841; Census of St. Mary Magdalene's, Bridgnorth 1841; Census of Quatt Malvern 1841.
7 SA: BB/E/1/5/2/4, Plan of land belonging to almshouses, 1792.
8 SA: DA2/134/15/24, Order of Poor Law Commissioners to Bridgnorth Guardians; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 23 July 1847, 28 Apr. 1848; *The Builder*, 29 Apr. 1848; Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 619; SA: PL3/2, Guardians' Minutes, 22 Oct. 1859; Census of Workhouse at the Innage, 30 Mar. 1851.
9 SA: PL7/8, Drayton Guardians' Minutes, 16 Apr. 1851.
10 Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 627; *BAL/RIBA Directory of British Architects 1834–1902*, 382.
11 The Barbers came from East Anglia, probably at a date later than 1837. They were in Bridgnorth by 1841, when Seth Barber was noted as the master of the National School (in Listley Street) in St. Leonard's parish: Census of St. Leonard's, Bridgnorth 1841, 1851; Pigot, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1849, 8; Cassey, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1871, 86.
12 There was an acre of gardens to the north side of the workhouse, but this was charity property from the late 18th century and was not occupied by the workhouse.
13 NMR: file 100978.
14 *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 9 Mar. 1849: 'Industrial District Schools'.
15 NLW: MS 3147F, 5 Oct. 1836, Day to Lefevre, 17 Mar. 1837.
16 SA: PL9/38/1/4, H. Garland, 'Some facts respecting the farm school at Quatt', pamphlet, 1848. The Webbs castigate the common misapprehension that outdoor relief was abolished: S. and B. Webb, 'English Poor Law History, Part II: The Last Hundred Years', *English Local Government*, **8**, Cass reprint, 1963, 142ff.
17 SA: 6395/8/1, Lease, Whitmore to Board of Management.
18 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 9 Mar. 1849.
19 K. Morrison, *The Workhouse* (English Heritage), 1999, 138.
20 W. W. Whitmore, 'To the Rate Payers of the South East Shropshire District School' (in SA: 'Local pamphlets', CO1 1407); Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 655; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 1 Mar. 1850, 5 Apr. 1850; Census of Quatt Malvern, 1841; SA: DA2/186/1/2, Diet order, 1847; PL 5/8, Letter, 2 Dec. 1848, from Clive, chairman of Ludlow guardians, calling meeting; Report, 18 Dec. 1849, by Cleobury Mortimer declining to participate; Letter, 30 July 1849, from Poor Law Board.
21 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 14 Sept. 1849.
22 F. D. Hill, *Children of the State*, 1868, 75–8.
23 *Salopian and West Midland Monthly Illustrated Journal*, Sept. 1875.
24 F. D. Hill, *op cit*., revised edition, ed. F. Fowke, 1889; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 4 Sept. 1903.
25 Poor Law Commissioners, *First Annual Report*, 1835, 18.
26 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commission, 22 July 1836. The main sources for Church Stretton workhouse are SA: PL4, union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; and NMR: file 101721.
27 *Commissioners' Report on Charities in England and Wales*, 1839, Church Stretton; SA: P67/B/1/1, Church Stretton Churchwardens' Accounts, 22 July 1839; PL4/1, Guardians' Minutes, 2 Sept. 1836, 22 July 1836, 9 Dec. 1836.
28 SA: PL4/1, Minutes, 18 Aug. 1836.
29 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 25 Dec. 1837 (state of old workhouse).
30 Churchwardens' Accounts, *loc cit*; SA: PL4/1 Minutes, 14 Oct. 1836, 11 Nov. 1836, 18 Nov. 1836, 9 Dec. 1836, 27 Mar. 1837, 7 Apr. 1837, 1 May 1837. The title to the site was subject to a trust of £20 which the board took over: Letter enclosed in Account Book, SA: PL4/19. Mrs Coleman, the lady of the manor, had an interest in part of the site which was copyhold, which she later sold to the board for 10*s*: PL4/1, Minutes, 29 Dec. 1837.
31 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Guardians, 25 Apr. 1837.

32 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 1 Sept. 1837; SA: PL4/1, Minutes, 2 June 1837, 13 Oct. 1837; PL4/19, Ledger: no record of payment.
33 NMR: file 101721; *The Builder*, 19 Sept. 1891, 232; D. Bilbey, *Church Stretton*, 1985, plate 83.
34 SA: PL4/1, Minutes, 16 Feb. 1838, 2 Mar. 1838; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 9 Feb. 1838.
35 SA: PL4/1, Minutes 8 Feb. 1839, 22 Feb. 1839, 1 Mar. 1839, 31 Aug. 1839; P67/B/1/1, Churchwarden's Accounts, 4 June 1839, 22 July 1839.
36 Tithe Survey of Church Stretton; Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 527; SA: PL4/1, Minutes, 24 Aug. 1838; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 8 Feb. 1839. (The master and matron were offered £40 per annum plus board and lodging. There was the usual stipulation that they were to have 'no encumberances'.)
37 SA: P67/B/1/1, Churchwardens' Accounts, 21 May 1839, 4 June 1839, 22 July 1839, 2 Mar. 1840, 19 Mar. 1840.
38 NLW: MS 3147F, Day to Belton, 5 Oct. 1836.
39 'Education of Children in Shropshire Workhouses', Poor Law Commission, *Fourth Annual Report*, 1838, 276.
40 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 26 Mar. 1842; MS 3147F, Day to Robinson, 27 Mar. 1842; MS 3141F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 24 June 1843.
41 *VCH Salop*, **X**, 72ff.
42 NLW: MS 3157F, Day to Lefevre 30 Jan. 1838.
43 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' (PP, 1834, **xxvii**), replies to queries. The main sources for Cleobury Mortimer workhouse are SA: PL5 union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; and NMR: file 101722.
44 SA: PL5/74, to Poor Law Commissioners, 2 May 1837; PH/C/23/2, Late 19th-century photograph of workhouse; Photograph in *Shropshire Star*, 5 Feb. 2003 (R. Farlow).
45 The early 18th-century lord of the manor was William Lacon Childe, 1699–1757, who built Kinlet Hall in 1727 and Lacon Childe School *c*.1740: see biographical note in *Trans. Shrops. Archaeol. Soc.,* 1908, 136–8. For this family see *Cleobury Chronicles,* **1,** 1991, and **5**, 1995.
46 *Commissioners' Report on Charities*, 1837, 276; S. F. Auchmuty, *History of the Parish of Cleobury Mortimer*, 1911, 15; SA: PL5/66, from Poor Law Commission, 21 Feb. 1837.
47 SA: P71/L/1/1, Workhouse stock, various dates.
48 NLW: MS 3157F, Day to Thomas Botfield, 3 July 1836.
49 SA: PL5/1, Minutes, 6 July 1836, 26 July 1836; PL5/3, Minutes, 6 May 1839.
50 SA: PL5/1, Minutes, 1 Aug. 1836; Plans in PL5/66 (papers 1836–49); Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 640. Many builders at this time styled themselves 'architect-builder', but Thomas Hare did not make any claim to professional status, and he can hardly be regarded as the guardians' architect; on several occasions he tendered to the board as carpenter to supply pauper coffins. In directories of the period he is identified simply as a builder, with an address in High Street, Cleobury Mortimer.
51 In 1840 an anonymous correspondent, perhaps an aggrieved tradesman, complained to the Poor Law Commission about the union's custom of employing local builders without advertising, contrary to an official circular of 1839 reminding guardians of the need for probity in the commissioning of such work. The Commissioners regarded the complaint as sufficiently serious to write to the board for explanation, though they would not normally respond to an anonymous complaint: SA: PL5/4, Minutes, 24 Aug. 1840, reproducing letters.
52 SA: PL5/1, Minutes, 17 Oct. 1836, 15 May 1837, 6 Mar. 1837; PL5/74, Letters, 1836–7, 23 Feb. 1837, to Thomas Botfield, 4 Apr. 1837, to all guardians, 4 July 1837 to B. & I. Cooke of Birmingham.
53 SA: PL5/1, Minutes, 23 Oct. 1837.
54 SA: PL5/74, Letters, 1836–7, 2 Mar. 1837 to Poor Law Commissioners with vestry minutes of 27 Jan. 1837.
55 SA: PL5/2 Minutes, 7 May 1838; Bentley, *History, Guide and alphabetical and classified directory of Kidderminster and Bewdley* (1840) 42; Bentley, *History, Guide and alphabetical and classified directory of the Borough of Worcester* (1840) 150.
56 SA: PL5/2, Minutes, 22 May 1837, 24 Sept. 1838, 2 July 1838.
57 SA: PL6/321 [Clun union] Plan of unidentified workhouse, 1843; PL5/6&7, Minutes, 26 July 1846, 17 Jan. 1848, 5 June 1848.
58 SA: PL5/7, Minutes, 31 July 1848, 21 Aug. 1848.
59 SA: PL5/8, Minutes, 24 Sept. 1849.
60 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commission, 26 Nov. 1836.
61 The main sources for Clun workhouse are SA: PL6 union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; and NMR: file 101723.
62 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' (PP, 1834, **xxvii**): replies to queries; Poor Law Commissioners, *Second Annual Report*, 1836, 607; Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1851, 697; NLW: MS 3142F, note dated July 1836.
63 Day refers to 'workhouses' in 1836: NLW: MS 3142F: f.157; SA: 1141/61, Bargain and Sale, Philip Morris and Richard Edwards to Churchwardens and Overseers; NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commission, 24 June 1837.
64 Poor Law Commissioners, *Third Annual Report*, 1837, 216; NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commission, 25 Sept. 1840; 1841 Census.
65 Trinity Hospital was founded 1613 by the Earl of Northampton: Pigot, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1849, 16.
66 SA: PL6/23/1, Minutes, 5 Dec. 1844, 24 Feb. 1848.
67 Order dated 16 Mar. 1841, recited in SA: PL6/111, Indenture, Guardians and Public Loan Commissioners, 1842.
68 NLW: MS3142F, Day to Poor Law Commission, 18 Aug. 1842.
69 H. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, 3rd ed., 1995, 1045. See also *Directory of British Architects* (RIBA, 1993). Whitling was elected Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1837; NLW: MS3142, Letter to Poor Law Commission, 18 Aug. 1842.
70 SA: PL6/111, 112, 114: specification; drawings.
71 SA: PL/6/111, Specification; I N Duncan Wallace (ed.) *Hudson's Building Contracts*, 10th ed., 1970, 114.

72 SA: PL6/119, Sanitary specification, 1856.
73 SA: PL6/111, £2000 Performance Bond. One of the guarantors, Elizabeth Meredith of Rhos, widow, signed with her mark.
74 SA: PL6/111, Articles of Agreement, Conditions of Contract; PL6/23/1, Minutes, 14 Aug. 1845.
75 SA: PL6/111, Conditions of Contract.
76 SA: PL6/23/1, Minutes, 3 Dec. 1846.
77 Colvin, *loc cit*.; SA: PL6/23/1, Minutes, 19 Dec.1844, 2 Jan. 1845. Whitling's flight was probably after August 1844. His membership of the RIBA lapsed in 1846.
78 SA: PL6/23/1, Minutes, 24 May 1846; PL6/113: Haycock's drawings; PL6/111, Indenture, Guardians and Public Loan Commissioners, 1842.
79 SA: PL6/23/1, Minutes, 23 Oct. 1845.
80 SA: PL6/23/1, Minutes, 16 July 1846.
81 SA: PL6/119, Guardians' room and fireproof closet.
82 SA: PL6/23/1, Minutes, 23 Aug. 1846, 24 Sept. 1846, 22 Oct. 1846, 3 Dec. 1846, 29 July 1847.
83 *Municipal Journal*, 19 June1964; NMR: File 101723.
84 Drayton was the normal name of this union in the early years, but it was often alternatively known, officially and otherwise, as Market Drayton. Drayton in Hales is the name of the principal parish, and the town is named Market Drayton. The town consists of the townships of Great Drayton and Little Drayton, both the old and new workhouses being in Little Drayton. The main sources for Drayton workhouse are SA: PL7 union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; and NMR: file 100981.
85 J. R. Lee, *A History of Market Drayton*, 1861, 59. A charity was set up under the will of the Rev. Richard Price, dated 1730, and the trust was created by his widow in 1739 leaving property, the rent of which was to provide an income to benefit Drayton and Hodnet parishes.
86 SA: PL7/1, Drayton in Hales Vestry Order Book, 1799–1818; PL7/1, Drayton in Hales Vestry Order Book, 1799–1818; qC37.2: *Charity Inquiry Commission Report*, 1839, 306.
87 N. and S. V. Rowley, *Market Drayton, A Study in Social History*, 1966, 60–65.
88 NLW: MS 3142F, 16 May 1836, Day to Poor Law Commissioners; SA: PL7/6, Minutes, 20 Mar. 1837.
89 SA: PL7/29, Ledger A: f. 25; PL7/6, Minutes, 22 July 1840; PL7/7, Minutes, 2 Feb. 1842, 4 Jan. 1843, 30 Aug. 1843.
90 NLW: MS 3142F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 5 Apr. 1837; SA: PL/6, Minutes, 7 Nov. 1836, 20 Mar. 1837, 24 Apr. 1837.
91 Charity Inquiry Commission Report, 1839, 306.
92 SA: PL7/6, Minutes, 26 Dec. 1836, 7 Nov. 1836, 30 Jan. 1837, 6 Nov. 1837.
93 Tithe Survey of Drayton Parva, 1839, parcels 705–708; SA: PL7/6, Minutes, 22 May 1837, 24 Apr. 1838, 1 Oct. 1838; SA: PL/29, Ledger A fol. 165; R. Malabar's Plan of Market Drayton, 1843.
94 SA: PL7/6, Minutes, 4 June 1838, 16 July 1838, 6 Aug. 1838; *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 13 July 1838.
95 SA: PL7/6, Minutes, 29 May 1839, 12 June 1839, 28 Aug. 1839, 3 Sept. 1839, 9 Oct. 1839; PL7/7, Minutes, 8 Dec. 1841, 2 Mar. 1842, 8 June 1842; PL7/8, Minutes, 2 June 1847; PL7/29, Ledger A: fol. 216.
96 SA: PL7/9, Minutes, 28 Nov. 1849; Pigot, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1849, 20, lists Martha Crutchley, schoolmistress.
97 SA: PL7/9, Minutes, 10 Oct. 1849, 14 Nov. 1849, 22 Jan. 1851, 5 Feb. 1851.
98 SA: PL7/9, Minutes, 12 Feb. 1851, 16 Apr. 1851. The Crutchley instructed to go to Liverpool might have been the workhouse governor or his son William, then aged about 22.
99 Obituary in *The Builder*, 1 Apr. 1905, 356; *BAL/RIBA Directory of British Architects, 1834–1900*, 57.
100 SA: PL7/9, Minutes, 28 May 1851, 20 Aug. 1851.
101 SA: PL7/9, Minutes, 10 Dec. 1851.
102 SA: PL7/9, Minutes, 21 Jan. 1852 to 14 Apr. 1852, 12 May 1852, 26 May 1852.
103 SA: PL7/9, Minutes, 24 Dec. 1851; NMR: file 100981.
104 SA: 3887 Box 114, Minutes of Building Committee, 1852–1854 *passim*.
105 The main sources for Ludlow workhouse are SA: PL9 union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; and NMR: file 101725.
106 NLW: MS 3148F, Day to Poor Law Commissioners, 21 Sept. 1836.
107 NLW: MS 3178F, Day's letters, 14 Sept. 1836, 21 Sept. 1836, 10 Feb. 1837; SA: PL9/2/1/1, Minutes, 18 Aug. 1836, 7 Oct. 1836.
108 SA: PL9/9/1/1, Leintwardine plans; 4008/F/1, Design for workhouse by E. B. Smith, 1831.
109 *Report of Commissioners for Inquiring concerning Charities*, 1839: J. F. Baxter's evidence 1819.
110 SA: 4008/P/1, Designs for a workhouse submitted to the inhabitants of the parish of St. Lawrence, Ludlow, by E. B. Smith, 1831; PL 9/9/1/1, 'Design for converting the parish poorhouse of Leintwardine into a workhouse'; PL 9/2/1/1, 10 Oct. 1836; qQ61 Accn. 4497/1; Br. Archaeol Assn., *Ludlow Visit Scrapbook*, 1867; R. K. Morris, *Buildings of Ludlow*, 1993, 34, 53.
111 Wilkinson was later to become largely responsible for the Irish workhouses when he became the official architect of the Poor Law Board.
112 SA: PL 9/2/1/1, 3 Aug. 1836; PL 9/2/1/1, 11 Aug. 1836.
113 SA: PL 9/2/1/1, Minutes, 15 Nov. 1836.
114 H. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, 3rd. ed., 1995, 110; Harrison, *The Workhouse*, 1999, 95.
115 Colvin, *op. cit*., 767–8.
116 Colvin, *op. cit*., 1045.
117 Colvin, *op. cit*. 577.
118 Colvin, *op. cit*., 978–9.
119 Colvin, *op. cit*., 920. A relative, Samuel Stead, designed the Assembly Rooms at Ludlow in 1840.
120 SA: PL 9/2/1/1, 21 Nov. 1836.

121 SA: PL 9/9/2/1-4, plans of new workhouse. The majority of the workhouse is now demolished, and the site is now occupied by the East Hamlet Hospital. The remaining fragment is called Ivy House.
122 SA: PL 9/2/1/1, Minutes, 17 Jan. 1837.
123 Edward Blakeway Smith, Corve Street, Ludlow, architect and builder.
124 Miss Ann Smith, builder and cabinet maker, Broad Street, Ludlow: Robson, *Directory of Shropshire*, 1840, 67.
125 SA: PL 9/2/1/1, Minutes, 1 Feb. 1837, 13 Feb. 1837, 27 Feb 1837, 6 Mar. 1837; Tithe map of Stanton Lacy.
126 SA: PL 9/2/1/1, Minutes, 22 May 1837, 3 July 1837, 17 July 1837; PL 9/9/2/5, Purchasing Order.
127 SA: PL 9/2/1/1, Minutes, 30 Oct. 1836, 1 Nov. 1837.
128 SA: PL 9/2/1/1, Minutes, 22 Jan. 1838.
129 Matthew Stead's account of workmen's payments confirms the date: SA: PL9/9/2/6.
130 NLW: MS 3178F, Day to Lefevre, 23 Aug. 1838, 25 Sept. 1838. Dr Stocker was Thomas Alexander Stocker M. D., of 27 Broad Street, Ludlow.
131 SA: PL 9/2/1/2, 20 Aug. 1839.
132 SA: PL 9/2/1/2, 26 Nov. 1838.
133 SA: PL 9/2/1/2, 24 Sept. 1838, 12 Nov. 1838, 8 & 16 Apr. 1839; PL 9/9/5/3–4, 'Stray' plan of workhouse by S. Kempthorne, undated, probably pre-1840.
134 SA: PL 9/2/1/2, 6 May 1839.
135 SA: DA3/100/1, Ludlow Borough Minutes, 27 Oct. 1837, 22 Nov. 1837, 8 Mar. 1838.
136 NMR: file 101725.
137 Most was demolished to make way for the modern buildings of East Hamlet cottage hospital. The surviving part is the three-storey front building, named Ivy House, and part of the two storey front wing. The masonry is sandstone, now showing signs of weathering, laid in courses at the front and east, where visible from the road, and as uncoursed axe-dressed rubble elsewhere. The front and rear gables are carried up and given copings. Sufficient stone of high quality was found to form the window heads in segmental arches. In the surviving parts most of the original sash windows remain.
138 The main sources for Wem workhouse are SA: PL15 union records; NLW: MS 3141-9F, Assistant Commissioner's Correspondence; and NMR: file 101726.
139 V. J. Walsh, 'Administration of the Poor Law in Shropshire', Univ. of Pennsylvania, Ph. D., 1970, 36. Wem Registration District, however, included Whitchurch.
140 *Wem* (Shropshire Parish Registers, **ix,** 1908), 465.
141 Wem Vestry Minutes: SA: P295/174–197.
142 SA: 167/47, Survey by John Welch, 129; 2132/64, Lease of Newport Meadow, 26 June 1835; 3551/2, Plan of Wem from actual survey by John Wood, Surveyor, Caernarvon 1834; PH/W/8/1, aerial photographs;. 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' 1834 (PP, 1834, **xxvii**): replies to queries; Tithe Survey of Wem, 1841, parcel 301 (owned by John Griffiths, tenanted by John Elkes).
143 Vestry Minutes: SA, fiches P295/189, 192–3; SA: PL15/1, Minutes, 21 Dec. 1837: mortgagee threatening to foreclose.
144 Prees Parish Registers, burials, 28 Oct. 1783.
145 SA: PL15/1, Minutes, 23 Nov. 1836, 9 Nov. 1837, 6 June 1839; PL 15/16, Ledger, passim; Charities Inquiry Commission, 1839, 'Ightfield'.
146 Col. Sir Robert Chambre Hill C.B., 1778–1860, brother of General Sir Rowland (first Viscount) Hill.
147 *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 24 Jan 1837; SA: PL15/1, Minutes 14 Dec. 1836, 8 Mar. 1837, 22 Mar. 1837, 15 June 1837; 'Report of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws' (PP, 1834, **xxvii**): *loc. cit.*; I. Woodward and J. Dromgool, *The Story of Wem*, 1994, 76.
148 NLW: MS 3149F, Day to Lefevre, 19 Aug. 1837.
149 *Ibid.*, Day to Lefevre, 24 Sept. 1837.
150 NLW: *op. cit.*, Day to Lefevre, 24 Sept. 1837; SA: 2132/64–65, Lease and mortgage, 26 June 1835, 10 June 1836.
151 SA: PL15/1, Minutes, 14 Sept. 1837, 28 Sept. 1837; SA: PL15/54 Conveyance, Feb. 1838.
152 SA: PL15/1, Minutes, 28 Sept. 1837, 26 Oct. 1837, 9 Nov. 1837, 21 Dec. 1837.
153 SA: PL15/1, Minutes, 13 Sept. 1838; PL15/16, Ledger, fol. 157, fol. 165, fol. 167; PL16/17, Ledger B, fol. 21, fol. 70.
154 SA: PL15/1, Minutes, 7 Dec. 1837, 11 Aug. 1838, 16 Aug. 1838; 1186/132/box 3: Plan of property in Wem by T. B. New (1860).
155 SA: PL15/2, Minutes, 7 Jan. 1841, 24 Oct. 1844, 10 Apr. 1845; SA: PL15/18, Ledger C, fol. 64.
156 1st ed. 25" to 1 mile O. S., surveyed 1880; Tithe map of Wem *c.*1840; SA: PH /W/8/11: photographs by A. P. Wallace, 1965.
157 SA: PL15/18–20, 27–30, Ledgers, *passim*.

CHAPTER 6

POSTSCRIPT

The commencement of the radical reform of workhouses in Shropshire may be dated to the disappointing experiment of the Shrewsbury house of industry, established in 1784. Reform continued to its substantial completion in conformity with the policy of the Poor Law Commission in the 1830s, with sporadic later improvements down to the end of the poor law in 1930. It may be appropriate to draw some general impressions.

It was a credit to the Elizabethan law which made parishes responsible for the poor that means were devised to prevent the poor from dying in ditches, although by the 18th century it had become a wasteful system and disputes between parishes over the related settlement law came to divert too much of parish funds into easy pickings for lawyers. Shropshire in the mid to late 18th century was said to rely heavily on the use of workhouses, or, as they were coming to be called at the time, poorhouses. These houses differed widely in regime, but are not at that time to be confused with houses of correction.

Some of these early workhouses in Shropshire were commercial ventures on the part of persons who could provide the required premises and enter into contracts with parish authorities to find work for the poor, relieving parishes of the burden of keeping the casualties of society from starvation or medical disaster. Most early workhouses in the county, in contrast, were parish owned, and a lesser commercial system also existed, whereby contractors tendered for yearly contracts to provide the management of them and took some of the risks. We have tended to refer to both of the commercial systems as 'farming the poor'. By the end of the old poor law in Shropshire in 1836 the yearly contract system for workhouse management was very widespread, often combined with more efficient parish government through select vestries.

The person whose reforming activities have attracted most notice in these pages is William Day, the assistant poor law commissioner, who was resident in the county and principally responsible for deciding how the new poor law was to be set up in Shropshire and encouraging chairmen of guardians to build appropriately. There has been no occasion to dwell on his social and philosophical views, though they are amply recorded in his writings; these show him to have been representative of the very moral outlook of his time. He was very quick to detect failings and very unforgiving. More important was his action as a reforming force. Like his colleague Edwin Chadwick, Day was evidently impossible to work with, but he was a model of efficiency and deeply concerned to obtain the best for the poor. He had, however, no popular sympathies, and was of the traditional view that the lower orders of people were incapable of self-improvement, and the paternalism of the magistrates and gentry was the only avenue to this desirable object. To him the debate about how to get the best for the poor was a debate to be conducted exclusively amongst educated gentlemen. Day also held strong views on 'the contaminating leprosy of adult pauperism', from which workhouse children must be protected. Hence his encouragement of Whitmore of Bridgnorth and the latter's idea of establishing an industrial school as a model children's workhouse. Day's enthusiasm for the principles of the new poor law was gained from his early experience as a Sussex squire, but he found that what he had learned in Sussex was not necessarily appropriate in Shropshire. He evidently had mixed success in finding a sufficient number of philanthropically minded gentlemen to lead Shropshire boards of guardians; one of best of them, Slaney, called chairing a board of guardians an 'irksome but important duty'. The simple formula of believing that persons of the magistrate class would provide the required leadership frequently failed.

A criticism which might be directed at the use of workhouses under the radical new poor law in Shropshire was its social inappropriateness. In general, though, boards of guardians were better fitted than parish officials to look after the poor, and the substitution of unions for individual parishes in the management of the poor cut out a great deal of futile and expensive dispute over poor persons' parochial settlements.

The 'workhouse test' was a revived disagreeable feature of early-eighteenth century poor law policy, encouraged by the Poor Law Commissioners, which should have resulted in empty workhouses, though it was accompanied in theory with an attempt to forbid out-relief. This prohibition was much disregarded. Even so, the

destitute poor had little option but to enter workhouses, so cottage households were carelessly destroyed in a way that inhibited the poor from returning to normality on discharge.

Many of the moral concerns leading to the segregation of classes of inmate within general workhouses now seem bizarre, but they were a consequence of a reliance on single workhouses, which Day did not altogether like, and such concerns were the common sense of the time. It is interesting to note that such ideas were not as rigid as they are now popularly supposed to have been, some guardians, such as those of Ludlow, recognising the inhumanity of breaking up elderly couples who might become long-term inmates.

Shropshire shared the social problems of the country at large, but the problem of pauperised potentially active labour, the 'able bodied poor', appears not to have been so dominant as that of the unsupported elderly, disabled or very young, the 'impotent poor'. Perhaps typical of Shropshire paupers under the old system were the '15 women, two girls, 17 children, one man and an idiot' living in Worfield poorhouse in 1835. Following the setting up of unions, we considered in Chapter 1 an approximate age and sex breakdown of the workhouse paupers of the county as revealed in 1841. This evidence is somewhat uncertain, but it illustrates the numerical superiority of the young and the elderly compared with persons of more obviously working age. It is tempting to agree with Lacon Childe's suspicion that the reform of the poor law proposed in the 1830s, and condemned by Charlton in Ludlow as 'damned inefficient', was of less relevance to Shropshire than to other counties. The old poor law considered nationally was in difficulties in the post-Napoleonic period, but it could have been regarded as still serviceable, and in counties like Shropshire might have continued usefully with much less drastic overhaul.

The Shropshire evidence certainly indicates that many of the buildings which the new boards of guardians inherited from the parish-based system of relief were old and unsuitable. The great building programme of the new poor law was probably beneficial, although it was arguably an expensive use of limited poor rates when poor relief should have been the priority. It is noticeable how reluctant the main industrial area of the county, the poor law union of Madeley, was to take part in it, though its main workhouse, 40 years in use, was an old building held together with straps. A good feature of the reform was that modern workhouses had something of the character of embryonic infirmaries, and their development in that direction was an important feature of their evolution in later years.

The initial expectation of the Poor Law Commissioners, following Chadwick and his fellow inquiry commissioners, that unions would be able to satisfy their requirements by using existing buildings, proved in Shropshire to be hopelessly optimistic. Nationally from an early date the Poor Law Commissioners changed their view and gave unions, including those in Shropshire, to believe that a major building effort was expected, but in detail it is curious how little the Commissioners appear to have interfered in the workhouse reform of the county or the work of their assistant commissioner directing it.

It is interesting to observe in work for boards of guardians in this peripheral provincial county, under the supervision of the Poor Law Commission, an early stage in the emergence of the modern architectural profession, in the many firms of 'architect-builders' beginning to be professionally responsible to their clients and providing a service to them distinct from the builders contracting to carry out the construction. The most notable case of this new generation of architects was Samuel Pountney Smith, who was very active in workhouse work in his early career as a builder, but who went on to become an eminent architect in later years.

The ferociousness of architectural professional competition was notable. We can detect some difference between the less organised profession of the 1790s and the more modern profession of the 1830s. As part of the provincial building trade converted itself into the provincial architectural profession what remained was a trade which did not command great respect, and the insistence of guardians upon builders providing large sureties shows little confidence in their probity. It is also noticeable that there was often a lack of competition between builders, with tenderers sometimes withdrawing their offers.

Some of the buildings erected for the new poor law show a lavishness which exposes boards of guardians to the accusation of having grandiose ambitions at public expense, although this is not so marked in Shropshire, and one new workhouse, Clun, was appropriately restrained and economical despite its architect's ideas. Some Shropshire workhouses, such as Church Stretton or Ludlow, show that their architects were not opposed to adapting the simple model designs published by the commission.

The new system of establishing a few great workhouses, widely and evenly spread about the county, and open to any casual applicant, also had the unintended consequence of facilitating the habit of itinerant vagrancy, though tramping had long been a problem before that. The lack of initial provision for tramps in many union workhouses in Shropshire seems odd, especially as Day was taken aback by the prevalence of tramping in the county town, but it appears that the problem increased during the nineteenth century and tramps' cells were often a late addition to workhouses.

The natural limits of our subject are the building activities of poor law authorities and the boundaries of the 'registration county' of Shropshire, although, naturally, it is quite impossible to isolate it from the wider

questions of the poor and their welfare. Where this reform in Shropshire took place in the late 18th century it left a legacy of absurdly enormous workhouses. Ever since the work of John and Barbara Hammond in the early years of the 20th century, the actions and motives of the ruling classes in the late 18th century and their Regency successors have been under the deep suspicion and intensive scrutiny of economic and social historians, and some, notably E. P. Thompson, have been extreme in denying any credit to the classes whose actions shaped the environment of the poor. Fortunately the reform of workhouses mainly took place in the period after 1836, and not in the fearful times of fifteen or twenty years earlier. It would be a mistake to see the provision of the second phase of workhouses in the reforming mood of the early Victorian period as just another manifestation of a ruling class repressing the poor because fearful of Jacobinism. A reading of the minutes of boards of guardians throughout the county in the 1830s and 1840s reveals copious evidence of the sceptical, but socially concerned, attitudes to and opinions of the poor of the time by their social superiors. Above all there is a welcome pragmatism. Where the poor law authorities in unions made what now seems the mistake of too readily giving up their old local poorhouses in favour of single new workhouses they were probably justified by the real difficulties of management and poor communications of the time.

The thoughts and decisions of the assistant poor law commissioner, William Day, and of the members of his sixteen boards of guardians (or courts of directors) in the County were far more open and subject to public comment than it had ever been possible for the decisions of the almost anonymous parish officials to be in the era before poor law reform. Nationally the new system generated innumerable published, and probably widely read, reports, and newspapers were quick to use them to fill their columns, demonstrating the intensity of public interest in them. The formation of unions of parishes was an evident good, and the rebuilding work which substituted sound modern building for the broken down hovels and adapted sheds, which had often sufficed as poorhouses under the old system, was equally an evident good, albeit an expensive benefit. To what extent better management could have been grafted onto the old system, with continuing use of old buildings for a workhouse population reduced by greater acceptance of alternatives to workhouse incarceration, is a matter of wishful thought.

INDEX OF NAMES AND PLACES

THE SHROPSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society was founded in 1877 (as the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society), and from that time it became, and has remained, the foremost continuous promoter of research into the archaeology and history of the county. The Society's regularly published *Transactions* have become the journal of record for the county's history and archaeology.

In its early years, and for long, the Society organized an annual excursion for its members. In recent times, however, that side of its activity has increased, and there is now a regular programme of summer excursions and a winter programme of lectures, for which speakers well qualified in their specialisms are engaged. Early in December there is also an annual social meeting, and from time to time day schools are organized – sometimes on topics such as industrial archaeology (so important in Shropshire) and sometimes on a subject of current interest such as that provided in 2009 by the Anglo-Saxon treasure found in Staffordshire.

In 1923 the Shropshire Parish Register Society (founded in 1897) amalgamated with the Archaeological Society, and the work of publishing the county's parish registers was continued. After a lapse that work has been resumed, and the most recent achievement has been the publication of the Bishop's Castle register. Work continues on other parishes, and the Society's as yet unpublished transcripts are available for use.

In addition to its *Transactions* and the parish-register programme, the Society has published occasional monographs and other works: notable in recent years have been the cartularies (registers of property deeds) of Haughmond Abbey (1985; jointly with the University of Wales Press) and Lilleshall Abbey (1997); Dr. Baker's *Shrewsbury Abbey: Studies in the Archaeology and History of an Urban Abbey* (2002); D. and R. Cromarty's *The Wealth of Shrewsbury* (1993; a detailed study of early 14th-century Shrewsbury people from taxation records—which survive so abundantly in the Shrewsbury borough archive and so rarely elsewhere); H. D. G. Foxall's *Shropshire Field-Names* (1980); and the historic county maps published by Robert Baugh in 1808 (1983) and by Christopher Greenwood in 1827 (2008). These maps, whose detail was unrivalled until the Ordnance Survey began work in Shropshire, give a vivid bird's-eye view of the county before the great changes of the Victorian period. Greenwood's map is available as paper sheets and on a CD. Further details of the Society's publications for sale (most of them at a 10 per cent discount to members) appear elsewhere in this volume.

In addition to the *Transactions* members receive a twice yearly *News Letter*, which keeps them in touch with all the Society's activities and work and with its programmes of excursions and lectures.

For further information about the Society, and how to join it, see:

www.shropshirearchaeology.org.uk

RULES

1. The Society shall be called 'The Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society (with which is incorporated The Shropshire Parish Register Society)'
2. The Society's objects shall be the advancement of the education of the public in archaeological and historical investigation in Shropshire and the preservation of the county's antiquities. In furtherance of those objects, but not otherwise, the Society shall have the power (i) to publish the results of historical research and archaeological excavation and editions of documentary material of local importance including parish registers, and (ii) to record archaeological discoveries.
3. Management of the Society shall be vested in the Council, which shall consist of the President, Vice-Presidents, Officers, and not more than twenty elected members. The President and Vice-Presidents shall be elected at an annual general meeting; they shall be elected for five years and shall be eligible for re-election. The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected at each annual general meeting; the other officers shall be elected by the Council and shall consist of a Membership Secretary, Editor, Editor of the *Newsletter*, Meetings and Field Meetings Secretary, Librarian, Publications Secretary, and any other officers deemed necessary by the Council. Officers shall act in an honorary capacity. Not more than twenty members of the Council shall be elected by the annual general meeting. Members of the retiring Council shall be eligible for re-election and their names may be proposed without previous notice; in the case of other candidates a proposal signed by four members of the Society must be sent to the Secretary not less than fourteen days before the annual general meeting. The Council may co-opt not more than five additional members for the year.
4. At Council meetings five members shall be a quorum.
5. The Council, through the Treasurer, shall present the audited accounts for the last complete year to the annual general meeting.
6. The Council shall determine what number of each publication shall be printed, including any complimentary offprints for contributors.
7. Candidates for membership of the Society may apply directly to the Membership Secretary who, on payment of the subscription, shall be empowered to accept membership on behalf of the Society.
8. Each member's subscription shall become due on election or on 1st January and be paid to the Membership Secretary, and shall be the annual sum of £14 for individual members, £15 for family and institutional members, and £18 for overseas members, or such sums as the Society shall from time to time decide. If a member's subscription shall be two years in arrears and then not paid after due reminder, that membership shall cease.
9. The Council shall have the power to elect honorary members of the Society.
10. Every member not in arrears of his or her annual subscription shall be entitled to one copy of the latest available *Transactions* to be published, and copies of other publications of the Society on such conditions as may be determined by the Council.
11. Applicants for membership under the age of 21 may apply for associate membership, for which the annual subscription shall be £1. Associate members shall enjoy all the rights of full members, except entitlement to free issues of the *Transactions* and occasional publications of the Society. Associate membership shall terminate at the end of the year in which the member becomes 21.
12. No alterations shall be made to the Society's rules except by the annual general meeting or by an extraordinary general meeting called for that purpose by the Council. Any proposed alteration must be submitted to the Secretary in time to enable the Secretary to give members at least twenty-one days' notice of the extraordinary general meeting. No amendment shall be made to the rules which would cause the Society to cease to be a charity at law.
13. The Society may be dissolved by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of those present with voting rights at either an annual general meeting or an extraordinary general meeting called for that purpose, of which twenty-one days' prior notice had been given in writing. Such a resolution may give instructions for the disposal of any assets held by the Society after all debts and liabilities have been paid, the balance to be transferred to some other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to those of the Society.