

HISTORY OF FINDON, West Sussex

There was a Friendly Society in the parish between 1794 and 1856, with 80 or 90 members in the early 19th century.

A racecourse was opened on the downs west of Muntham House in 1814, and apparently still existed c. 1843. Horse races are also said to have been held during the 19th century under West Hill in the south-west part of the parish. At the inclosure of the common downs in 1856, Nepcote Green was allotted to the parish for recreation; it was later managed by the parish council.

Findon Cricket Club was founded in 1867 and was still thriving in 1977. A subscription lending library was founded in the parish in 1857 but seems to have lapsed after 1861. It was re-founded about the end of the century, and between 1911 and 1923 was housed in the Wattle House on Nepcote Green. There were clubs for women and girls and for working men in the parish in the early 20th century, of which the former at least met at the Wattle House.

A Village Hall was built in 1933 in the High Street, the library being afterwards transferred there. Many social amenities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were due partly or wholly to the benefactions of the families of the successive 'squires' of **Findon Place**, Muntham House, and Cissbury, especially the Margessons, the Thynnes, and the Wyatts.

A Convalescent Home opened in the parish in 1885 took many patients from London. It usually had about a dozen inmates, and still flourished in 1905 but the building had become tea rooms by 1934. Another home for invalids and incurables, run by the Anglican Sisters of Mercy, was moved to **Findon from Worthing in 1934.** It left the parish in 1967, its premises in Nepcote Lane being later occupied by the Roman Catholic Sisters of Our Lady of Sion.

The **Findon Manor demesne** was in hand in 1210, in 1326, and in 1425, but was at farm in 1476. In 1326 it comprised 140 acres. of arable and a century later 273 acres. Fixed rents of free and villein tenants were worth £5 in 1326 and £6 in 1425; in 1476 the rents of free tenants totalled 19s. 5d., and those of tenants at will £16 7s. 11d. Labour services had apparently been almost entirely commuted by the latter date.

The predominant type of agriculture in the Middle Ages seems to have been arable, since in 1341 the tithe of corn was £12, and that of fleeces and lambs only £2; moreover 3 plough-lands formerly in cultivation were then lying fallow. Other animals kept in the parish at that date included cattle, pigs, and poultry, and among crops were hemp and apples, the tithe of cider yielding £1. The downs provided abundant pasture.

In the mid 13th century there had been four sheepfolds in Findon, including two at Muntham and another sheepfold called Lowys in the north-east part of the parish. One of the Muntham sheepfolds was mentioned again in 1380. The wool merchant Walter Randolph apparently had a flock in the parish in 1296. In 1425 several pasture belonging to the Findon manor demesne farm, perhaps including Church Hill, totalled 300 acres.

Only one reference has been found to common pasture rights in Findon in the Middle Ages, but they were presumably as important then as later. Not all the downland in the parish belonged to the manors within it, however, for much of the north part of the parish was common down of Washington manor.

Wheat, barley, oats, tares, and peas were grown in the parish in the 17th century, and clover and sainfoin were mentioned in 1777. Sheep remained important, numerous flocks being recorded, up to c. 900 in size. In 1803 5,302 sheep were listed in the parish, the largest total in Bramber rape. Common pasture rights on the downs were frequently mentioned between the 16th and 19th centuries. The downs of **Findon manor** in the south and east on which common rights remained in 1793 were West Hill on the border with Durrington (62 acres), Little Hill, near Cissbury Ring (381 acres), and Great Hill in the east, which included Nepcote Green (581 acres).

CHARITIES FOR THE POOR

Henry Hilton of Clapham by will proved 1641 left the sum of £24 annually for 99 years out of his lands in co. Durham, to be distributed among the 12 poorest inhabitants of the parish. Nothing had been paid in 1651 but arrears were received in 1684 and 1687. In 1724 the income had been reduced to £16 by the fall of rents but nothing further is heard of it. Between 1801 and 1805 donations of 1s. each were made to the poor at Christmas, apparently as a personal charity of the vicar.

The Liptrott Charity in Memory of the Queen's Jubilee was set up in 1887 by Mary Liptrott, with £150 stock to provide fuel. The Brown Family Charity Fund comprising the interest on £200 was set up under the will of Emily Ellen Burrage, dated 1953, for a similar purpose. In 1977 the income of both charities was used to provide groceries. **The Findon Relief in Sickness Fund**, administered for general charitable purposes in 1977 under a scheme of 1971, was the successor to the **Findon District Nursing Association**, started c. 1897. In 1974 its gross income was £285.

In 1789, the **Thakeham Gilbert Union** was formed by the parishes of Ashington, **Findon**, Sullington, **Thakeham**, Washington and Wiston. **The Union erected a Workhouse in 1789-1791 at the south side of Rock Road, Heath Common.** The surveyor for the construction was Stephen Rowland.

Parish Workhouses

[\[An Account of Several Work-houses...\]](#) [\[Parliamentary Reports\]](#) [\[Quaker Workhouses\]](#)

Prior to 1834, under the Old Poor Law, the primary responsibility for poor relief — including the operation of workhouses — was placed with the parish. Examples of early parish workhouses can be seen at places such as **Chichester (from about 1681)**, Witham (1714), and Mildenhall (1720).



Chichester workhouse from the south, 2001



Witham parish workhouse, 2002.

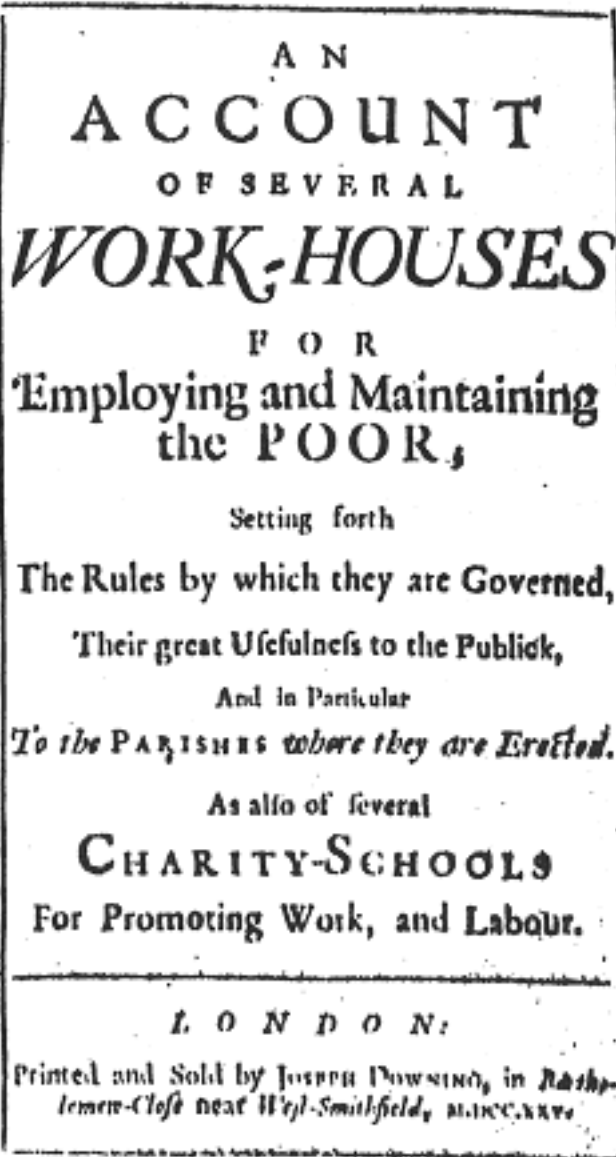
© Peter Higginbotham.

A significant impetus to the provision of parish workhouses was [Knatchbull's Act](#) of 1723 which introduced the 'workhouse test' whereby a pauper would only be granted poor relief through being admitted to a workhouse. In the wake of Knatchbull's Act, several hundred parish workhouses were set up.

Unlike the large union workhouses erected following the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, parish workhouses were generally small establishments, and often in rented existing buildings rather than specially built premises. The running of workhouses was often handed over to a contractor who would, for an agreed price, feed and house the poor. He would also provide the inmates with work and benefit from any income generated. This system was known as 'farming' the poor.

Sometimes a parish might run a workhouse for a few years, then give up on the practice, only to try it again a decade or two later in different premises. It is therefore difficult to give any definitive list of where parish workhouses operated.

An Account of Several Workhouses...



An Account of Several Workhouses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor published, anonymously, by SPCK (the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) was one of the earliest directories of parish workhouses in England. In the early 18th century, SPCK was a small but influential London-based organisation which strongly promoted the use of workhouses. SPCK published a variety of resources such as recommendations for masters, guides to rules and diets etc. In many respects, their '*An Account of Several Work-houses...*' was a practical guide to the setting up and running of a workhouse.

The first edition of 1725 listed 126 establishments, while an enlarged edition of 1732 added a further 55. According to Slack (1990), the total number of workhouses in operation nationwide by 1732 may have been more than 700. The *Account's* list, given below, included a small number of **Charity Schools for Work and Labour** (indicated by a '*') although many of these appear also to have accommodated adults. Spellings are as in original sources.

After 1834

The Gilbert Union was dissolved and replaced by **Thakeham Poor Law Union** which was formed on **14th May 1835**. Its operation was overseen by an elected Board of Guardians, 16 in number, representing its 14 constituent parishes as listed below (figures in brackets indicate numbers of Guardians if more than one):

Sussex: Ashington, West Chiltington, Coldwaltham, **Findon**, Hardham, Parham, Pulborough (3), Stopham, Storrington, Sullington, **Thakeham**, Warminghurst, Washington, Wiston.

The population falling within the union at the 1831 census had been 7,311 — ranging from Parham (population 46) to Pulborough (1,979) and Thakeham (597). The average annual poor-rate expenditure for the period 1832-35 had been £9,796 or **£1.6s.10d per head of the population**.

The new Thakeham Union continued to use the existing workhouse for the enlargement of which the Poor Law Commissioners provided an expenditure of £2,355 in 1836. **In 1853, it was further enlarged to accommodate 250 inmates**. The building had a double-courtyard plan. Its location and layout can be seen on the 1896 map.



Thakeham former parish workhouse, 2004.

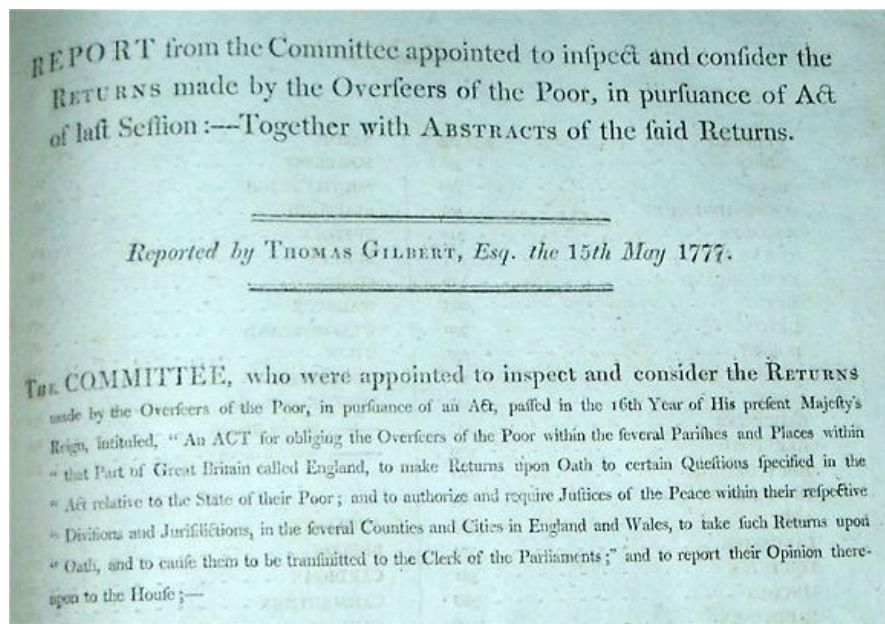


Thakeham workhouse site, 1896.

In 1930, the site was taken over by West Sussex County Council and operated as a Public Assistance Institution until its closure in 1936 and demolition. A new school was opened on the site in 1940, known in recent times as Rydon Community College.

Parliamentary Reports

In 1776-7, a Parliamentary survey of poor-relief expenditure in England and Wales, published as the *Abstracts of the Returns Made by the Overseers of the Poor*, included an inventory of workhouse provision.



The table below gives a county-by-county list of the parishes or townships operating workhouses and, where available, the number of places available in each. Spellings are as in original sources.

Sussex

Aldingborne (30), Angmering (20), Ardingly (20), Arlington (60), Arundell Borough (40), Ashington (8), Barnham (14), Battle (55), Beeding (14), Berkley (40), Bersted (25), Bexhill (40), Billingshurst (45), Birdham (23), Bolney (15), **Bosham (26)**, Brede (30), Brighthelmston (70), Brightling (40), Burwash (70), Buxted (25), Chayley (40), **City of Chichester (140)**, Chiddingly (25), West Chiltington (15), Chithurst (6), Cowfold (15), Crawley (8), Cuckfield (60), West Dean (18), Ditchling (20), Easebourne (26), Eastbourne (50), Ewhurst (45), Fairlight (30), Farnhurst (16), **Finden (15)**, Fletching (38), **West Grinstead (30)**, Hailsham (40), Hastings—All Saints (30), Hastings—St Clement (60), Hastings—St Mary of the Castle (20), Heathfield (40), Heene (6), Herfield (60), Herstmonceux (45), Heyshott (12), West Hoathly (40), Hollington (24), Hooe (30), Horsham Borough (80), Horstedkeyns (60), Hurstpierpoint (25), Iden (20), Ifield (20), Itchener (6), Itchingfield (4), Kirdford (60), Lameing (10), Lewes Borough (30), Lindfield (32), Littlehampton (20), Maresfield (20), Mayfield (50), Midhurst and Liberty of St John (30), Midlavant (12), Mountfield (30), North Mundham (16), Ninfield (15), Northam (40), Oving (12), Petworth (70), Poleing (12), Portslade (8), Poynings (20), Pulborough (46), Ringmer (24), Rogate (18), Rotherfield (50), Rottingdean (17), Rudgwick (30), Rusper (40), Rustington (10), Rye (60), Salehurst (100), Seddlescombe (30), Selsey (35), Shermanbury (15), Shipley (26), New Shoreham Borough (20), Slaugham (24), Slindon (10), Slynfold (13), Sompting (15), Steyning Borough (18), Storrington (34), Stoughton (50), Terwick (5), **Thakeham (20)**, St Thomas in the Cliff (30), Ticehurst (40), New Timber (9), Trotten (24), Uckfield (30), Wadhurst (30), Waldron (30), Warbleton (60), Warnham (20), Wartling (40), **Westborne (90)**, Westfield (36), Wilmington (8), Winchelsea—St Thomas the Apostle (24), Wisborough Green (80), Withyham (43), Wivelsfield (16), Worth (20).

Database of Poor Law records for West Sussex

Poor Law Record

Reference Number: Par/130/32/
2/9

Parish: Lurgashall
(near
Petworth,
Sussex

Order type: Summons

Date: 24 Jan 1732

Type	Name	Marital Status	Age	Occupation	Comment	Foreign Parish	Foreign Parish 2
Subject	Edward LILLYWIGHT				Summons to appear before J.Ps		