

Charities

Before the Reformation many people made chantry bequests, that is, money for the priest to say or chant prayers for their souls. One who did so was the Widow Jeferye, born Alice Clarke, who left the income of about 10s per annum from 27 acres of farmland in Stratfield Saye. By ancient custom a third was used for repairs to the church and a third for relief for the poor.

Richard Benyon assumed management of Clarke's Charity in 1813 and is said to have made good deficiencies from his own pocket. Additional land was purchased from time to time and by 1837 a farm of 75 acres was let to the Duke of Wellington for £70 per annum, with additional income from sale of timber. The charity's capital of £735 produced an income of £22 per annum.

Expenditure included £1,273 for rebuilding the church tower and £348 for other repairs. £550 was contributed towards the new church.

Much less than one-third seems to have been spent on poor relief. Twelve old people each received one shilling per week but this dole gradually ceased as each one died. By 1841, when all twelve were gone, the £9 per annum that had been given for Sunday School expenses was increased. Payments varied from £21 to £26 per annum. £78 helped set up St. Mary's School and by 1862 £39 per annum was being paid, plus £30 to the new school at Mortimer West End.

In 1873 the Duke purchased the farm for £4,288 10s. Accumulated capital allowed £7,588 14s 7d in Consols (a type of government bond) to be transferred to the Charity Commissioners who by 1879 appear to have taken a hand in the expenditure. They sanctioned £70 for the church, £86 for schools, £8 for school prizes, £42 for poor relief and a salary of £2 2s for the clerk. Mortimer schools still receive money from Clarke's Charity.

There were other charities, and perhaps the most interesting was the Bread Dole. During the seventeenth century several parishioners left small sums to provide bread or money for the poor. By 1726 these came to £109 altogether, and this sum was invested in land at Wardens Wood, then owned by James Parsons who added to the sum. Bread and money was given at the north porch of the church on the 21st of December, St. Thomas's Day. In 1890 a double distribution of bread was made through the kindness of Sir John Mowbray. By then money was no longer given and Wardens Wood had become Warenes Wood.

The Brocas Charity was intended to provide housing for three labourers' widows. Mrs Harriot Brocas gave three tenements at Goddards Green and £2 per annum for repairs, which proved insufficient. The cottages were sold for £204 and from the interest £1 17s per year was paid to each widow.