

SOCIAL HISTORY

SOCIAL CHARACTER

In the 1230s surnames began to be widely used to record tenants, previously they were often known only by a Christian name.¹ In 1327 there were ten taxpayers in Hull tithing paying a total of 9s. 6d. but nine in Rumwell paying a total of 13s. Rumwell always seems to have had the larger farms. Fideoak was included with Taunton extra portam episcopi tithing in 1327 when the lord of Fideoak was the largest taxpayer in the parish.² In 1334 most tax was paid from Fideoak.³ That had changed by 1524 although that tithing had one taxpayer assessed at over £13 out of a total of three, Rumwell had 18 taxpayers of whom the three wealthiest were only assessed at £6 but most of the wealth was in Bishops Hull tithing, probably because of the growth of the town area where Robert Hill was assessed at £30 but of 41 taxpayers 11 were assessed at over £5 including Simon Farewell at £26.⁴

It is not clear how the castle influenced the social structure of the parish if at all in the Middle Ages but during major building work many master masons and carpenters were lodged in the castle and when the bishop visited the lavish provision of food and drink indicates large numbers of guests and servants. The papal legate's visit with the bishop in 1218 required the purchase of 250 dishes.⁵ There were occasional royal visits and King John's infant daughter Princess Eleanor, later wife of Simon de Montfort, was housed in the castle with an entourage of nurses, servants and knights until 1219.⁶ In 1280 the castle was used as a prison for Eleanor's son Amaury de Montfort.⁷ The king's justices and other magnates stayed at the castle in 1367 when making the boundary perambulation between

¹ SHC, T/PH/win 1208—45.

² F. Dickinson, *Kirbys Quest etc* (SRS 3), 147, 150—1; above, econ. hist.

³ Glasscock, 'Subsidy of 1334', 264.

⁴ TNA, E 179/169/180.

⁵ SHC, T/PH/win 1217—18.

⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1210—11; *Cal. Pat.*, 1377—81, 189; *SDNQ*, XXVII, 127—130.

⁷ *Cal. Chart.* 1327—41, 422; *Cal. Pat.* 1272—81, 403; *SDNQ*, XX, 65.

Devon and Somerset.⁸ It is not clear whether Henry VII and his large entourage stayed in the castle while in Taunton in 1497 but some of them probably did. However, such influxes of people were rare and there was little in the way of a garrison except during the turbulent times in the 13th century but the castle officers and their servants would have been in regular attendance.⁹ The presence of minor or deputy castle officers, the farming of the town mills and the gradual development of the castle bailey into the Castle Green urban area in the post medieval period may have increased the taxable wealth of Bishops Hull tithing. By 1524 most of the parish's wealth was in Bishops Hull tithing, where the wealthiest taxpayer was Robert Hill, tenant of the town mills assessed at £30.¹⁰

Tenant farmers dominated the social structure of the rural parish until the 18th century. Under the customs of Taunton Deane manor widows could keep their copyholds on remarriage so they were important landholders and remarriage was common but prospective husbands had to pay a fine to the manor as did single women, or their parents if they were under age, to be allowed to marry.¹¹ The Farewell family lived well in their Great House and that is reflected in their monuments in the church and the fact that they were taxed on land but most residents were of more modest means. In 1641 of 101 taxpayers only nine paid more than 5s.¹²

Probate inventories indicate some prosperity. A woman had silver, pewter and two looms in 1625 and another in 1640 had a book. A farmer in 1640 had a sword with belt, a gun and a desk and like many others a large sum of cash in his purse, expensive clothing and linen.¹³ In 1665 there may have been 16 houses with four of more hearths out of 63 taxed

⁸ SHC, T/PH/win 1366—7.

⁹ Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 10—11, 270; T.J. Hunt, '13th-century Building Accounts, *PSANHS*, CXV, 40—1; SHC, T/PH/win 1264—5; *Cal. Pat.* 1266—72, 143.

¹⁰ TNA, E 179/169/180.

¹¹ SHC, T/PH/win *passim*; DD/SP/71—161.

¹² Above, landownership; Howard and Stoate, *Protestation Returns*, 261—2.

¹³ SHC, DD/SP/1625/8, 1640/37, 580.

including the Great House with 11 and another, probably an inn in the Taunton area with 12. At least one entry appears to be relate to more than one property, possibly a divided house and one man had increased his number of hearths to four by new building but 11 taxpayers were worth less than 20s. a year or were too poor to be rated. In the 1670s 34 people were exempted.¹⁴ Nicholas Charlton, dissenting minister, died in 1682 leaving a well-furnished house with a least ten rooms including a study with books worth £20, plate, pewter and linen.¹⁵ However, Richard Buncombe and his wife Sarah who died in 1684 left mainly household goods and their most valuable possessions were two horses and their hay.¹⁶ The cloth trade undoubtedly brought wealth to some. Sergemakers and fullers could be capitalists or workers. Several gentlemen including the Gunston family of Upcott on Bishops Hull were the sons of sergemakers who had invested in property.¹⁷

The independent and dissenting character of the parish may be reflected in its part in national events. Nineteen men were fined up to £4 each for involvement in the 1497 rebellion.¹⁸ Sixteen soldiers were buried in 1644—5 victims of the Civil War sieges of Taunton Castle and there were also civilian casualties.¹⁹ The castle endured a series of sieges having been held for Parliament but that garrison withdrew in 1643 apparently leaving captive royalist sympathisers behind. There were said to be 80 men in the castle when it was taken after a siege by Robert Blake. Thereafter began a series of sieges by Royalist troops finally lifted in 1646 and in 1647 there were over 100 men holding the castle.²⁰ Forty-six men were implicated in the Monmouth Rebellion, some connected with the cloth industry and malting, and including a black servant. Farmer like Arthur Parsons was later pardoned with

¹⁴ E. Dwelly, *Som. Hearth Tax Returns*, I, 32—4; II, 156, 304—5.

¹⁵ SHC, DD/SP/1682/29; below, rel. hist.

¹⁶ SHC, DD/SP/1683/84.

¹⁷ SHC, DD/SP/205, 1682/30, 1695/3; above, landownership.

¹⁸ A. J. Howard, *Fines Imposed...in 1497*, 3.

¹⁹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/1.

²⁰ Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 274—5.

several others. Among the less fortunate were Col. Richard Bovett and two others who were hanged and three men who were transported to the West Indies. Some parishioners were missing, possibly killed at Sedgemoor. The castle hosted the Bloody Assize after the rebellion.²¹

From the late 18th century large houses were built at Rumwell, Barr, Upcott and in Bishops Hull village, occupied by wealthy and powerful non-agricultural families from outside the area. That may have changed the social and political nature of the parish and made farming families and tradesmen less influential. It may also have increased patriotism for example and possibly willingness to join the services especially as there was at least one Waterloo veteran in the parish. Smith John Chedley was only 16 when he enlisted in the 3rd Foot at Exeter in 1810 and husbandman Richard Vickery was 18 when he joined the 46th Foot at Taunton in 1816 but he was later discharged as unfit.²² In 1814 Lieutenant Munbee ‘adjutant of the district’ was in the parish.²³ In the 1860s the adjutant of the West Somerset Yeomanry lived at Rumwell House.²⁴ The presence of these and other military men in the parish may have influenced local men to joined the army, navy and marines in the 19th century. They were often very young including brothers Henry and Walter Radford who joined the navy aged 15 and Henry and Edgar Rowsell who joined the marines and the navy respectively at 19 and 17.²⁵ Col. Charles Dance of Barr House (d. 1845), son of architect George Dance, left his Waterloo sword and medal to his son.²⁶ Hector Collis of Upcott dies as a young ensign in India in 1849.²⁷ The Taunton militia had had a training ground near

²¹ W. M. Wigfield, *The Monmouth Rebels 1685*; *Cal. SP Dom.* 1686—7, p. 78; Taunton, intro.

²² TNA, WO 25/328, 385.

²³ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/9.

²⁴ *Kelly’s Dir. Som.* (1861—6).

²⁵ TNA, ADM 139/747/35643, 139/855/5500, 157/2116/50, 188/348/200953.

²⁶ SHC, DD/BR/cb/4.

²⁷ MI in ch.

Stepswater in the 19th century.²⁸ The village erected an arch and rang the bells when Captain Manley of Bishops Hull House returned safely from South Africa in 1902.²⁹

The presence of wealthier families also increased the demand for domestic service in the form of gardeners, grooms and coachmen as well as resident servants. In 1851 in Bishops Hull Without there were 74 female and 15 male domestic servants³⁰ and in 1871 the Manor House had a butler and five female servants and four other houses had at least four servants each.³¹ In 1881 there were 20 gardeners, although some may have been commercial, and seven coachmen, Frethey House had seven servants and Upcott Hall had eight including a butler and a page.³² By 1891 at least 24 households had servants and 110 domestic and stable servants were recorded.³³ Numbers declined slowly to 93 in 1911 when there were 32 gardeners.³⁴ In the Within area the development of large houses along Wellington Road was partly responsible for the large numbers of servants in the later 19th century although even modest households had one or two. Hotels and institutions also required large numbers of both resident and non resident staff. Servant numbers in the area declined gradually from 76 in 1851 to 60 in 1871 before remaining steady at 45 to 50 until after the First World War after which there was a sharp decline. In 1939 even Clarke's hotel had only one member of staff living in and the Winchester Arms two.³⁵ There were still many gardeners but large houses were run with the help of one of over a dozen daily women.³⁶

By contrast there were 16 paupers in 1851 including a former schoolmistress and silk workers and 14 in 1871.³⁷ Overcrowding does not seem to have been a problem in rural

²⁸ Taunton Courier, 19 May 1869; BNA accessed 1 Nov. 2017.

²⁹ Taunton Courier, 21 May 1902; BNA accessed March 201.

³⁰ TNA, HO 107/1923.

³¹ TNA, RG 10/2375.

³² TNA, RG 11/2369.

³³ TNA, RG 11/1878.

³⁴ TNA, RG 14/14246.

³⁵ TNA, HO 107/1923; RG 9/1619; RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369; RG 12/1878; RG 13/2277; RG 14/1424; RG 101/7041f.

³⁶ TNA, RG 101/7087i.

³⁷ TNA, HO 107/1923; RG 10/2375.

Bishops Hull in the mid 19th century, apart from a few large families, possibly because lodgers were not common although in 1841 a gardener with six children managed to take in four female lodgers.³⁸ However, lodgers were common in the houses in Tangier, many back to backs, and in 1871 two families were in caravans in the cattle market.³⁹ An unnamed couple of hawkers with five teenage children were camping with a van in 1881.⁴⁰ In 1911 a large number of young workers were lodging in Tangier area and several houses were overcrowded.⁴¹

In 1891 there were 121 houses with fewer than four rooms in the rural parish of which 13 had only two rooms. In the urban area there were at least 14 houses with only two rooms and five with three⁴² There had been an improvement in the rural area by 1901 when at least 12 houses were unused and only one three-roomed and no two-roomed houses were recorded.⁴³ Some of these tiny cottages were on farms and were in a poor state by 1910 when many homes lacked indoor sanitation.⁴⁴ However, by 1911 more small houses had been created, possibly by subdivision, and there were 83 with four rooms and 25 with only three. There was overcrowding in the tiny terraces on Shutewater Hill and New Road where one family had ten children. A labourer, his wife and six of their 12 children aged 2 to 27 squeezed into three rooms and next door another family with seven children did the same. Poor conditions may have contributed to very high infant mortality in some families with three women losing between four and six children. Some families included their dead children's names on the census return. In the urban area houses were smaller especially the Tangier back to backs and there were nine houses with two rooms, 6 with three and 40 with

³⁸ TNA, HO 107/959.

³⁹ TNA, RG 10/2375.

⁴⁰ TNA, RG 11/2369.

⁴¹ TNA, RG 14/14246.

⁴² TNA, RG 12/1878.

⁴³ TNA, RG 13/2277.

⁴⁴ TNA, IR 58/82128.

four. Two of the two up two downs in Nursery Place housed nine people each and three adults lived in a two-roomed dwelling.⁴⁵

Although Bishops Hull is a popular commuter area, half the population worked in Taunton and a few commuted further afield including London, the presence of so many care homes and housing schemes for the elderly meant that 28 per cent of the population in 2011 was over 65 and 14 per cent was limited by poor health or disability. Of people responding to a village survey in 2005 over 10 per cent had retired to the parish but over six per cent had lived there all their lives.⁴⁶

Migration

It is probable that the three Bretons taxed on their wages in the 1520s were in the Taunton area of the parish.⁴⁷ As were probably many paupers removed in the 18th century. However, most recorded migration earlier was out of the parish like the day labourer who became a horse thief in Devon in 1552,⁴⁸ those going to London like Simon Brimsmead, apothecary in 1650, although he returned⁴⁹ or the many people who lived in Taunton and elsewhere and were ordered to be returned to Bishops Hull in the 17th century. One couple were returned in 1715 and again in 1716. In 1731 there were 174 families or individuals whose legal settlement was elsewhere and among 17 added that year were people from Devon, Wiltshire and Cheshire. William Innall and his family were returned to Lyme Regis and Rebecca wife of William Brown was arrested as a vagabond in 1741 and ordered to be removed to Hartland, Devon via two houses of correction.⁵⁰ Most exchanges of paupers appear to be

⁴⁵ TNA, RG 14/14246.

⁴⁶ Census; VCH office, Bishop's Hull village plan (2005)

⁴⁷ TNA, E 179/169/180; www.englishimmigrants.com: accessed 29 July 2015.

⁴⁸ Cal. Pat. 1550—3, 383.

⁴⁹ SHC DD/SP/325/185; T/PH/vch/86.

⁵⁰ SHC, Q/SR/90/304/56—7, 305/192—3, 309/56, 115; D/P/b.hl/9/1/1; DD/SAS/PR/23.

within the Taunton area but a widow was removed to Rotherhithe, Surrey in 1767.⁵¹ The huge disparity across genders and age-groups in 1831 cannot be solely due to high infant mortality. There was a much smaller number of males aged 10 to 20 than for the cohorts either side whereas there were more females and in the 20 to 30 age group there were more than twice as many women as men presumably finding domestic service or laundry work. After the age of 30 the figures for both sexes were proportionate.⁵²

Long-distance emigrants included Lewis Bondfield who ‘travelled’ in the 17th century and was not heard of again⁵³ and convict William Whitlock transported to America for seven years in 1720.⁵⁴ James Poole a tailor went to Newfoundland c. 1732 and by 1747 his daughter, having no news of him, believed he was dead.⁵⁵ William Tuxbury, fuller, was planning to emigrate to America in 1782.⁵⁶ Henry Buncombe wrote home from Canada between 1845 and 1852 and died at Wilmont, Waterloo County in 1857, the home of a namesake from Taunton, probably his uncle.⁵⁷ Some of the children of John Tytherleigh of Bishops Hull moved to south Wales before 1865 and one son emigrated to America before 1879.⁵⁸ The parish encouraged emigration to America in the 1830s. but some emigrants were unwilling like the child sent to Botany Bay with her mother in 1832.⁵⁹

There are several large houses of the late 18th and early 19th century in the village, Barr, Upcott and Rumwell indicating the popularity of the area with wealthy people wishing to be near Taunton. Retirees in the 19th century included plantation and slave owners Thomas Milliken Mills (d. 1774) of Nevis and his relatives, John Williams of Nevis (d. 1791) and Robert McGhie of Upcott House who owned over 2,100 a. of sugar plantations in

⁵¹ SHC, Q/SR/310/49—50, 153,312/71, 152, 313/121, 134, 322/4/16, 336/1/5.

⁵² SHC, D/P/b.hl/23/3.

⁵³ SHC, DD/SP/31.

⁵⁴ SHC, Q/SO/9 f 262.

⁵⁵ SHC, DD/SP/24c.

⁵⁶ SHC, DD/SP/319/156.

⁵⁷ SHC, DD/CH/77/5, 80/6, 109/7.

⁵⁸ SHC, DD/CH/111/7.

⁵⁹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/13/2/9; below, this section.

Jamaica.⁶⁰ Others were military men like Sir Charles Dance at Barr and Capt. Frederic Brandreth at Rumwell Lodge, although the latter went bankrupt in 1871 and his two carriages and other goods were sold.⁶¹ Several people had returned from India or had served the East India Company. Many of the houses built along the Wellington road between the 1850s and 1950s were intended for middle-class families.⁶²

In the early 21st century over six per cent of the population was not British born.⁶³

COMMUNITY LIFE

Sport

There as neither fair nor revel in the parish in the 1780s.⁶⁴ Bullbaiting at Rumwell resulted in many injuries to the young men involved in 1821.⁶⁵ A cricket club was recorded in 1870.⁶⁶ Before 1886, when they were described as disused, the Taunton Vale Foxhounds had kennels near the Red Lion Inn probably in the care of the huntsman who had arrived in the parish shortly before 1880.⁶⁷ There were tennis courts at Stepswater off Wellington Road in the first half of the 20th century. By 1904 there was possibly a bowling green opposite. A roller skating rink was built on the site of the latter c. 1909 by the Taunton Skating Rink Co and opened on Whit Monday 1910 with a large asphalt rink and pavilion.⁶⁸ It was short-lived and in 1920 was replaced by a garage workshop and a new rink was opened in Station Road, Taunton.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ TNA, PROB 11/1002/134, 11/1593/333; SHC, DD/SP/7/2.

⁶¹ SHC, DD/BR/cb/4; Trewman's Exeter Flying Post, 7 June 1871; BNA accessed June 2016.

⁶² TNA, RG 10/2325; RG 11/2369; RG 12/1878; RG 13 2277; RG 14/14246.

⁶³ Census.

⁶⁴ McDermott and Berry, Rack's Survey of Som. p. 268.

⁶⁵ Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser 21 June 1821; BNA accessed June 2016.

⁶⁶ SHC, DD/CH/93/2.

⁶⁷ TNA, RG 11/2369; OS Map 1;10860 Som. LXX.SE (1889 edn, surv 1886); DD/DP/184/6.

⁶⁸ OS Map 1:2500, SOM. LXX.11 (1904, 1914, 1929); TNA, IR 58/82125; SHC, A/BMG/5/2; A/DIF/116/229; D/B/ta/24/1/41/537.

⁶⁹ OS Map 1:2500, SOM. LXX.11 (1914, 1929); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/50/801.

Public Houses and Clubs

The Old Inn in Bishops Hull village and the Crown at Rumwell appear to have been the only licensed premises in the rural parish until c. 1839 when they were joined by the New Inn, opposite the church, and the Boot beerhouse on Shutewater Hill.⁷⁰ A friendly society met at the Old Inn in 1815. In 1843 it was said the doors of alehouses were kept shut during divine service.⁷¹ In the 19th and 20th centuries public houses and clubs were used for inquests but especially the Crown at Rumwell, presumably because of its position on the turnpike road.⁷²

The Old Inn had a skittle alley behind the cottages to the east, demolished in 1911 when a new alley built behind the inn, and a clubroom in 1915.⁷³ The New Inn also had a skittle alley with a clubroom over in 1900.⁷⁴ During the war it was the headquarters of the local Home Guard.⁷⁵ In the early 20th century there were also skittle alleys at the Boot, the Crown at Rumwell, which also had a clubroom,⁷⁶ the Red Lion nearby but formerly in Wilton,⁷⁷ and the Royal Crown on Wellington Road.⁷⁸

There was a billiard room near the castle, south of the hotel coachhouse, described as new in 1821 and let with the hotel until the 1860s.⁷⁹ In 1873 a group of men agreed to build a club room adjoining it and by 1899 the large clubroom and billiard hall occupied the land around the coachhouse alongside the entrance drive to the castle. It had various owners and was sometimes known as Harrisons Club but until 1910 or later was occupied by the Taunton Club Committee and in addition to billiards had card and reading rooms, a bar and skittle

⁷⁰ Robson's Dir. Som. (1839); SHC, Q/REI/35/3; Q/RLa/19/7, 9—10; TNA, HO 107/959.

⁷¹ SHC, D/D/Va /2/12.

⁷² e.g. Taunton Courier, 12 May 1841, 7 June 1893, 19 May 1906, 20 May 1914, 3 Jan. 1934; Bristol Times and Mirror 15 Feb 1870; BNA accessed 9 Nov. 2017.

⁷³ OS Map 1:2500, LXXXV. 11 (1904 edn); TNA, IR 58/82127.

⁷⁴ SHC, DD/CH/77/5.

⁷⁵ SHC, D/R/ta/24/2/112; A/DQO/40/6, 25.

⁷⁶ SHC, QS/LIC/1/5; DD/KIT/19/9; TNA, IR 58/82128.

⁷⁷ SHC, A/DQO 40/7.

⁷⁸ SHC, D/R/ta/24/2/92.

⁷⁹ SHC, DD/CN/29/7; D/P/west.m/23/24; T/PH/chn/1.

alley all centrally-heated.⁸⁰ In 1921 the premises were used as stockrooms but the remains survived until the late 20th century.⁸¹ With the coachhouse they were cleared to enlarge the hotel car park.

The order of the Moose have had their hall at Tower Lane on the site of the former hide depot since c. 1980.⁸²

The Congregational chapel used a former workshop as a club room by 1910.⁸³ The Constitutional Club for men was built in 1911—12 near the Old Inn, extended into an adjoining house in 1977 and remained open in 2017 as a bar and entertainment venue for members.⁸⁴ A reading club was recorded in 1870 and the former Sunday schoolroom was a parish reading room by 1890,⁸⁵ and for dances, whist drives and meetings in the 20th century.⁸⁶ A second reading room at Rumwell in 1904 to 1910 was a cottage, formerly an Independent chapel.⁸⁷

Bishops Hull Labour Party, founded in 1929, organised social events and outings and at its height in 1945, when Taunton had a labour M.P., had 240 members.⁸⁸ There was a scout troop at St Johns by 1923 and by 1925 a cub pack there and a combined scout and cub troop in the village.⁸⁹ Although there were skittles and cricket clubs in 1947 there was no playing field. A group was formed after the war to provide a hall and playing field and land was reserved but there were still no playing fields in 1979 when there was a boys' football club. Scouts and guides, women's institute, and branches of the Conservative and Labour parties

⁸⁰ SHC, DD/DP/72/3; DD/SAS/S1122/1/43/54; TNA, IR 58/82126.

⁸¹ SHC, D/B/ta/14/6/7.

⁸² Above, econ. hist.

⁸³ Below, rel. hist.

⁸⁴ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/16; TNA, RG 78/855.

⁸⁵ SHC, DD/CH/93/2; *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 16 Dec. 1890: BNA accessed June 2016.

⁸⁶ SHC, A/AGH/1/35.

⁸⁷ OS Map 1:2500, SOM 70.14 (1904 edn); TNA, IR 58/82127.

⁸⁸ SHC, A/BCH/1—3.

⁸⁹ SHC, A/CVB/7/3/1.

were active and the mobile library visited the village.⁹⁰ At Tangier a scout and guide centre for the Taunton area was established in the early 1970s.⁹¹

In the 1980s a playing field and children's playground were established on land south of church and west of the school and they remained in use in 2017 with a small pavilion. The new school hall was built to serve also as a village hall. However, both hall and pavilion were regarded as inadequate by 2017 when there were plans to replace both.⁹² The County Council built a large two-storey youth club at Tangier near Stepswater in the early 1970s with games hall, meeting rooms, television room, bar and workrooms but it closed in 2000 and after a fire was demolished.⁹³ The site was a supermarket in 2017.

Public entertainment

There was a ballroom at the castle in 1747,⁹⁴ which might have been the great hall when it was not in court use, or the 1st floor room in the west range said in 1791 to have been used formerly as an assembly rooms and theatre.⁹⁵ In the 1860s the great hall was fitted out as a theatre and a group of minstrels appeared there in September 1867.⁹⁶ The Somerset Archaeological Society, founded in 1849, moved into the castle after buying it in 1874 with 142 chairs, 72 wooden seats, two gasoliers, washstands and 25 yards of damask curtains.⁹⁷

Entertainments were held on Castle Green in the early 19th century such as Ryan's Arena c. 1826 with rope dancing and equestrian entertainment,⁹⁸ circuses and the Assize fair, a pleasure fair from 1817 or earlier. They were occasions of disorder and their abolition was

⁹⁰ SHC, A/AGH/1/35.

⁹¹ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/229/14772.

⁹² Above, educ.

⁹³ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/224/14216.

⁹⁴ SHC, Q/RRw/1.

⁹⁵ Webster, Taunton Castle, 198.

⁹⁶ SHC, DD/CH/22/4.

⁹⁷ SHC, DD/SAS/S1122/1/36.

⁹⁸ SHC, DD/X/BRO/2/52.

requested from 1854 but it was only in 1871 that shows and pleasure fairs were banned from Castle Green.⁹⁹

Ploughing matches were held at Stepswater in 1829 and 1841.¹⁰⁰ In 1875 the Royal Agricultural Show was held on the fields south of Wellington Road near Stepswater. The weather was poor but Prince Christian attended and over 47,600 people paid to enter the showground. About 275 stands, livestock sheds and horse boxes were built on the ground the materials of which were sold on the ground after the show together with 1,000 Windsor chairs and other items.¹⁰¹

The Gaumont cinema was built in Corporation Street in 1931—2 as a theatre and cinema but in the late 20th century it became a bingo hall, which it remained in 2017.¹⁰²

World Wars

The castle endured a series of sieges during the Civil War. At first it was held for Parliament but they withdrew in 1643 apparently leaving captive royalist sympathisers behind. There were said to be 80 men in the castle when it was taken after a siege by Robert Blake. Thereafter began a series of sieges by Royalist troops finally lifted in 1646 and in 1647 there were over 100 men holding the castle.¹⁰³

During the First World War 131 men old enough to vote were away on active service in 1918, sometimes two or three from the same household and up to eleven from one family. Many served in the Somerset Light Infantry but others were in the flying and supply corps and one served with an Australian unit.¹⁰⁴ At home the parish established a war savings

⁹⁹ Taunton Courier, 3 Apr. 1817, 30 Mar. 1853, 6 Apr. 1870, 8 Nov. 1871: BNA accessed 1 Nov. 2017. In 1909 Harry Frier painted a romantic retrospective view of the assize fair as might have looked in 1854: Jones, Harry Frier, 99.

¹⁰⁰ Western Times, 21 Nov. 1829; Taunton Courier, 27 Oct 1841: BNA accessed 1 Nov. 2017.

¹⁰¹ Taunton Courier, 21 July 1875; West Somerset Free Press, 31 July 1875: BNA accessed 1 Nov. 2017.

¹⁰² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/75/1563.

¹⁰³ Webster, Taunton Castle, 274—5.

¹⁰⁴ SHC, Q/REI/15/2; A/AYR; Taunton Courier, 23 Feb. 1916: BNA accessed March 2017.

association in 1916. In 1920 a war memorial was planned for the churchyard but nonconformists wanted it fenced off from churchyard and the vicar and others refused.¹⁰⁵ It was eventually built on the pavement opposite where it still stands. Another sour note was a letter from a female parishioner in 1920 objecting to people who had not served having allotments.¹⁰⁶

The coronation was celebrated in 1937 with a dance, sports and cakes.¹⁰⁷ Within two years another war had broken out and Bishops Hull established a Home Guard unit, the 4th platoon of the Taunton South Company, with over 30 members based in the New Inn.¹⁰⁸ In 1940 during the Second World War, Marshalsea's garage on Wellington Road became an RAF Maintenance Unit responsible for the salvage of crashed aircraft in south-west England. The unit took over the land behind on both sides of the Stepswater. At first civilians were mainly employed but in 1941 RAF servicemen were brought in with up to 360 employed and from 1942 WAAF members also worked there and the unit also carried out repairs. A six-bay hangar was built and 17 officers, 504 airmen and 51 WAAF members were based on the site. Between March and June 1944 alone the unit attended 473 crashes and salvaged 12 enemy aircraft. In September 1945, the unit moved to Culmhead aerodrome. The Stepswater site was cleared, although many buildings were still standing in 1953, and much of it is now covered by a large supermarket and car park.¹⁰⁹ However on the far west of the site is the present headquarters of the Taunton and District Air Training Corps.

Early in the war many parishioners had assumed extra duties as air raid wardens, nursing auxiliaries and special constables. The owner of Upcott Hall on returning to military service let the property to the Glen Steamship Company, which ran convoys, and then to a

¹⁰⁵ SHC, D/D/cf/1920/14.

¹⁰⁶ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/6/5.

¹⁰⁷ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/5/3/15.

¹⁰⁸ SHC, A/DQO/40/14, 25; J. Wilson, *The Somerset Home Guard*, 185.

¹⁰⁹ Som. HER 16614; aerial photo. 1953: britainfromabove.org.uk/en/image/EPW051946.

Christian community group who farmed the land.¹¹⁰ A village produce association was formed to supply seeds, potatoes, lime and fertiliser to members who paid a small subscription and met in the Constitutional Club. It continued after the war but was wound up c. 1952 when the balance was given to the village hall association.¹¹¹ In 1951 the Territorial Army established a centre on Mountway Road including a drill hall, rifle range, stores, lecture, instruction and mess rooms and accommodation for the caretaker. In 2016 it was the headquarters of the Rifles.¹¹²

EDUCATION

Probably the only school in the 17th century was the grammar school by the castle although there was an unlicensed school in 1620.¹¹³ A schoolmaster was accused of not attending church in 1636.¹¹⁴ Most children in the late 18th and early 19th century would have obtained most of their education at the chapel or church Sunday schools but by 1833 five day schools were recorded including one started in 1823 and teaching 24 children, 15 paid for out of land. There were two girls' schools with 20 and 30 pupils respectively and two mixed schools teaching 16 children all taught at parent's expense.¹¹⁵ There was one schoolmistress in the village in 1841 presumably teaching at one of the above schools although they seem to have been short-lived.¹¹⁶ A ragged school was recorded at Tangier between 1847 and 1849.¹¹⁷

Grammar School

¹¹⁰ TNA, MAF 32/119/262; RG 101/7087i.; SHC, D/RC/ta.g/2/5/2, 16 Mar, 4 Apr, 17 May 1944.

¹¹¹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/6/7.

¹¹² SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/115/4502.

¹¹³ SHC, D/D/Ca/220.

¹¹⁴ SHC, D/D/Ca/310; D/D/Vc/41.

¹¹⁵ Educ. Enq. Abstract (1835), p. 795.

¹¹⁶ TNA, HO 107/1923.

¹¹⁷ Taunton Courier, 17 Jul. 1847, 7; 30 May 1849, 4.

The schoolhouse was built in the south of the castle precinct overlooking the moat in 1522 by Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester at a cost of over £250. Roger Hill, supported the school by paying the master until his death c. 1545 after which the school stood empty despite a petition for Crown support. By his will proved in 1555 William Walbee or Walbye gave 20 marks to endow the school, which was invested in a house and land in Hawkchurch, Dorset. The master was appointed by the Warden of New College, Oxford and was usually a clergyman and fellow of that college.¹¹⁸ The school's estate was said later to be poor land and the rental was only c. £32 gross in the early 19th century having been reduced to quit rents only.¹¹⁹

In the later 16th century it was claimed that 200 boys were taught by the schoolmaster and an usher largely supported by the borough of Taunton.¹²⁰ The school suffered in the Civil War and was in decay in 1649.¹²¹ The master petitioned in 1655 that the school house was ruinous and wanted the boundaries restored so that he could restore the house and school 'to its former dignity'. However, there is little evidence of major damage to the structure of the building, which may have been protected by the 18 ft high earthworks thrown up against its walls, which the master paid to have removed.¹²² Presumably the work was completed by 1662 when the master was licensed to teach a Latin school. His successors William Badsey, John Kent and Thomas Jenkins were licenced between 1680 and 1691.¹²³ In 1690 on the death of John Kent the accommodation comprised a parlour, hall, kitchen, cellars, coal house, five bed chambers, one for the maid, closet and study, all very well furnished including books

¹¹⁸ VCH Som. II, 444—5; TNA, PROB 11/37/247; SHC, T/PH/bod; DD/V/TAB/27.

¹¹⁹ 5th Rep. Com Char. 484—9; SHC, DD/TBL/45.

¹²⁰ BL, Add. Ms. 30277, f. 3.

¹²¹ SHC, DD/SP/18/20.

¹²² SHC, DD/SP/64; DD/TBL/45; Webster, Taunton Castle, 260.

¹²³ SHC, D/D/Vc/41; D/D/Bs/42—3.

and pictures, and a garden with canopied seat. Only a single chair was recorded in the schoolroom, presumably that was his own.¹²⁴

One of the best known masters was the Revd James Upton (d. 1749) who became master in 1712 and found windows bricked up and inserted a new ceiling. It is probable that already the school relied on paying boarders and that the attics were inserted at this period to accommodate them. Upton held several livings including Bishops Hull from 1731 and is credited with raising pupil numbers to 200.¹²⁵ Among the school's pupils in the 18th century was Benjamin Hammet whose portrait hangs in the former schoolroom.¹²⁶ It was intended as a free school but by the mid 18th century there were no boys on the foundation and parents paid. In the early 19th century boarders paid £35 for board and £8 for tuition annually and entitlement to free education for local boys had been forgotten even though it was still sometimes called the Taunton Free Grammar School.¹²⁷ The master was often appointed on the petition of local clergy and gentry, who sometimes passed over skilled teachers in favour of needy local clergymen. Such sinecure masters included James Hurley (d. 1783) who left the buildings in a bad state and used part of the school as a wood store.¹²⁸ Another was the Revd John Townsend who held the post 24 years in succession to his father but was said to be unable to teach and admitted in 1809 the school had been empty for two years but refused to allow a charity school to be held there.¹²⁹ He had 20—30 pupils in 1818 for which he received £52 6s. 8d. made up of the endowment income and £3 from each pupil. One of his pupils was Charles Trevelyan, later governor of Madras but it was said that the assistant

¹²⁴ SHC, DD/SP/1690/32.

¹²⁵ SHC, DD/V/TAB/27; *ODNB* Jas Upton: accessed 12 Apr. 2018.

¹²⁶ M. McDermott, *Sir Benjamin Hammet 1736—1800* (Taunton, 2017), frontispiece, 4.

¹²⁷ *VCH Som.* II, 445

¹²⁸ SHC, DD/TBL/45.

¹²⁹ SHC, D/P/tau.m/17/1; DD/TBL/45.

taught and when he left the school was deserted. In fact there seem to have often been times when the school was empty of pupils despite a regular succession of masters.¹³⁰

The school comprised schoolroom with attached house under one 135-ft roof and a western extension overlooking a gravel walk to the south and a garden on the west containing a mount. The boys had a privy across the lane leading to the school.¹³¹ The land behind the school was thought to have once formed part of the school but was then occupied by the Castle Hotel gardens and stableyard leaving no playing area. The school's estate was said to be poor land and the rent was only c. £32 gross.¹³² A playground was given in 1825.¹³³ The school was known as Taunton College School by the 19th century and functioned like any other private school. Later masters included the Revd William Robert Crotch, son of the musician Dr William Crotch who died while visiting in 1847. In 1833 there were 60 boys of whom 35 were boarders¹³⁴ but in 1842 the master was worried about a proposal for a proprietary school, possibly the Castle House school, and wanted to raise an endowment and teach modern languages and sciences. He charged £105 pa for up to four private pupils.¹³⁵ By that date there was competition from other schools and the accommodation was inadequate despite additional building and alterations to provide for boarders. Only two boarders were recorded in 1841 but none in 1851 but although the school was said to have fallen into disuse it was still occupied by the master, his family, an assistant and four servants. An attempt was made to secure day boys at low fees and the master blamed the fact that surrounding land was built on so he could not expand the premises. In 1855 Revd Frederick Smith was appointed

¹³⁰ Educ. of Poor Digest (1819), 774; ODNB Sir Chas Trevelyan: accessed 12 Apr. 2018; SHC, DD/TBL/45.

¹³¹ SHC, D/B/ta/31/5/12.

¹³² 5th Rep. Com Char. 484—9.

¹³³ SHC, DD/TBL/45.

¹³⁴ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/3; DD/DP/94/4; Pigot, Dir. Som. (1830); Educ. Enq. Abstract (1835), 795; Robson's Dir. Som. (1839).

¹³⁵ SHC, DD/TBL/45.

headmaster and gave £1,500 to revive the school. As incumbent of Holy Trinity, Taunton, and later of St John's Bishop's Hull, he appointed an acting headmaster.¹³⁶

There were only four boarders in 1861 and total pupil numbers fell to 22 in 1864. However, in 1866 under George Tuckwell 62 boys were taught classics and mathematics for 10 guineas a year, or 60 guineas if boarding. Boarders had four meals a day, one with meat, and were taught for 31 hours a week and had 16 hours play. There was no corporal punishment. The school had a museum, laboratory and botanical garden.¹³⁷ In 1867 the school was incorporated as Taunton College School Co Ltd with a proprietary school under the presidency of Viscount Bridport to raise capital of £12,500 for new buildings on a 14-a. site in South Road, Taunton. It was said that the portrait of Bishop Fox was taken to the new building when it opened in autumn 1870 with a hall and temporary iron chapel. Here the boys were also taught French, German, Sanskrit, music and drawing.¹³⁸ In 1871 there were two resident assistant masters, matron, seven servants and 20 boarders but the school struggled financially. In 1879 the company was wound up and the new school, which had cost c. £19,000, was offered for sale. It was acquired by the founders of King's Alfred's, now King's College.¹³⁹

Taunton College School, having reverted to its old status as a charity, moved into the Victoria rooms in the Parade in Taunton and then to its old premises but with only five boarders aged 12-15 and one assistant master in 1881 partly because they had to share with their tenants the Taunton Middle School. Fees were reduced but although the school averaged 35 pupils who achieved academic success the Charity Commission decided to close the

¹³⁶ VCH Som. II, 445—6; TNA HO 107/959, 1923; RG 9/1619; SHC, DD/TBL/45—6.

¹³⁷ VCH Som. II, 445—6; Kelly's Dir. Som. 1866; SHC, DD/TBL/47; Wilts and Swindon HC, 740/46; Royal Com. to Inquire into Educ. in Schools (1868), XIV, 497.

¹³⁸ VCH Som. II, 445—6; Kelly's Dir. Som. 1866; Morris & Co. Dir. Som. 1872; SHC, DD/TBL/47; Wilts and Swindon HC, 740/46; Taunton Courier 9 Jan 1867, 12 Oct 1870, 10 Sep 1879: bna accessed 25 May 2018.

¹³⁹ TNA, RG 10/2370; Taunton Courier 23 Jan 1879, 10 Sep 1879: bna accessed 25 May 2018.

school in 1885 when the headmaster, Henry Knapton become vicar of Spreyton, Devon.¹⁴⁰ In 1890 the foundation and its endowment were transferred to Huish's girls school, which became Bishop Fox's Girls' School.¹⁴¹

The old Grammar school building was sold to the borough council for offices in 1887 on condition that the schoolroom was maintained, however the rest of the building was largely altered and extended. The council vacated the buildings in 1987 and the building was used by voluntary organisations until 2007 when it was leased to the county council as a Register Office and the schoolroom became a civil wedding room.¹⁴²

Taunton Middle School

After Taunton College School moved to its new buildings in 1870 Thomas Rendall took over the old premises for a commercial school for the sons of tradesmen, known as Taunton Middle Class or Middle School opened in 1871 with fees only 13s. 4d. a term. On 1 December 1874 it had 103 boys on the register but it closed under an agreement with Huish's charity. On 18 January 1875 the boys were transferred to the new Huish Middle Class Public Endowed School, founded with the surplus funds of Taunton's Richard Huish charity. The new school, having no premises the boys remained in the old grammar school building and Rendall became the first headmaster. After he left to enter Oxford university the school declined and in 1880 only 21 boys remained. That year the Taunton College School returned to its old premises and the two schools had to share the building. Numbers recovered during the 1880s after the Huish school had moved to vacated school premises in East Street, Taunton.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ TNA, RG 11/2369; RG 12/1759; Taunton Courier 12 Aug 1885, 24 March 1886: bna accessed 25 May 2018.

¹⁴¹ SHC, A/APN/2/6; Taunton, soc. hist., educ.

¹⁴² SHC, DD/V/TAB/27; Webster, Taunton Castle, 249—60.

¹⁴³ VCH Som. II, 445—6; Morris and Co., Dir. Som. (1872); SHC, A/AHO 7, 27; see Taunton, educ.

Sunday Schools

Robert Darch (d. 1737), minister of the Presbyterian chapel, left an annuity of 20s. out of two meadows to teach the poor to read.¹⁴⁴ It is not clear if any school was established. The chapel Sunday school was said to have been started in 1788¹⁴⁵ held in a cottage opposite the chapel and partly financed by the sale of sermons in 1808. A hundred children attended in 1883 when an infant school was added to the chapel with four classrooms and provided with an American organ.¹⁴⁶

In 1904 there were 90 children on the register, some attending in the morning but most in the afternoon, 11 teachers and a librarian although there were only 50 books. Some of the children belonged to a band of hope and there was an annual treat. The children too young for school joined the Cradle Roll. The school also held adult bible classes. In the 1920s there were up to 71 children on the books,¹⁴⁷ falling to 47 children and three teachers in 1958. The school continued into the 1960s or later.¹⁴⁸

John Tyrwhitt of Netherclay House (d. 1812) left £100 in stocks to establish an Anglican Sunday school.¹⁴⁹ It had 60 pupils c. 1818, taught by the parish clerk who was paid £8 from the interest and voluntary subscriptions.¹⁵⁰ It may have closed for a while as in 1833 it was said that the Sunday school had started in 1823. It had 34 pupils.¹⁵¹ In 1839 Revd Rawlins invested £76 10s. for the Sunday school fund but by 1895 the original donor was forgotten.¹⁵² The school was held with the National school in 1846.¹⁵³ Later a small Sunday

¹⁴⁴ SHC, DD/X/SRY/11; below, rel. hist. nonconf.

¹⁴⁵ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2.

¹⁴⁶ E. Green, *Bibl. Som.* II, 478; SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2.

¹⁴⁷ SHC, A/BSL/1—2.

¹⁴⁸ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2; Kirk, *URC, Bishops Hull*, 57—8.

¹⁴⁹ *Taunton Courier*, 27 June 1812; BNA accessed June 2017;

¹⁵⁰ *Educ. of Poor Digest* (1819), 774.

¹⁵¹ *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), p. 795.

¹⁵² SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/1.

¹⁵³ Nat. Soc. *Schs Inquiry* (1846—7), 4—5.

schoolroom was built, described as newly-built with large playground in 1882, on the garden of Laurel House. It was attached to the south of the pair of cottages later known as School, now Old School, Cottages off Bishops Hull Road.¹⁵⁴ In 1893 umbrellas were given to the children who attended regularly.¹⁵⁵ In the early 20th century the building was extended to the south and also used as parish rooms.¹⁵⁶ In 1940 it was let to Plaistow evacuated school.¹⁵⁷ The Sunday school was given up c. 1963¹⁵⁸ and after the present school and village hall were built from 1978 the building became a private house.¹⁵⁹

By 1905 St John's Sunday school held two sessions on Sunday in the parochial school at Tangier and 150 children went on the treat.¹⁶⁰ In 1922 63 children were catechised and there were four unpaid Sunday school teachers rising to eight in 1933 when 109 children attended.¹⁶¹

The National School

A school, of grey sandstone,¹⁶² was built in Shutewater Hill and given to the church in 1846 in trust for the education of the poor and housed both National and Sunday schools. The managing committee subscribed towards the cost. The National school opened with 24 boys and 28 girls and a further 26 boys and 17 girls who attended on Sunday. There was only one classroom but there was a house for the schoolmistress who was supported by a monitress and other teachers.¹⁶³ In the early 1860s the mistress received £40 and a monitress was paid

¹⁵⁴ SHC, tithe award; *Taunton Courier*, 10 May 1882: BNA accessed March 2017; OS Map 1:2500, SOM 70.11 (1890 edn); Hist. Build. List. 1175744, 1344466.

¹⁵⁵ SHC, A/BEU/3/1.

¹⁵⁶ OS Map 1:2500, SOM 70.11 (1904, 1930 edns).

¹⁵⁷ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/3; A/DQO 40/20.

¹⁵⁸ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/3.

¹⁵⁹ Below, this section.

¹⁶⁰ SHC, D/P/ta.jo/2/8/1.

¹⁶¹ SHC, D/P/ta.jo/2/9/12.

¹⁶² E. Jeboult, *A Popular History of West Somerset* (1893), 141.

¹⁶³ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/6/11; Nat. Soc. *Schs Inquiry* (1846—7), 4—5; TNA, HO 107, 1923.

£3 18s. but by 1866 the school had the first of a long succession of male head teachers.¹⁶⁴ The school relied on donations and subscriptions as the government grant covered less than half the cost and school pence only amounted to between £10 and £14 a year.¹⁶⁵ There were 103 children by 1873 when a short-lived church school, possibly at Barr, taught 78 boys.¹⁶⁶ The diocese gave a grant for pupil teachers in 1880.¹⁶⁷

By 1890 the school was regarded as unsatisfactory and the site at the bottom of Shutewater Hill as unhealthy. Also, the inadequate income meant that the school had no money for books and other essentials. A school board was established and plans were drawn up for a new school in Gipsy Lane.¹⁶⁸

The Board School

In 1891 there were 109 children on the books including up to 44 infants but some children had a bad record of absenteeism and attendance was only 85 per cent. Truancy was a problem especially when the circus came to Taunton and the school suffered vandalism and arson. The children had a half-hour scripture lesson each day and a singing lesson during which the pupil teacher had private study. The boys had a drawing class each week and the girls learnt sewing on Monday afternoons.¹⁶⁹

The new school, known as Bishops Hull Without Board Schools, opened in Gipsy Lane in 1893 and the old school was demolished and the land used for allotments. The new building comprised a large mixed schoolroom, a galleried infant schoolroom and two smaller classrooms. The divided playgrounds for boys and girls with infants had water closets and the school had separate entrances and cloakrooms. Alongside there was a two-storey four-

¹⁶⁴ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/18/3/1; PO Dir. Som. (1861—75); Kelly's Dir. Som. (1883—1939)

¹⁶⁵ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/18/3/1; DD/CH/93/2.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, ED 2/391/2.

¹⁶⁷ Bristol Mercury and Daily Post, 16 Jan. 1880: BNA accessed June 2016.

¹⁶⁸ Bristol Mercury and Daily Post, 16 Dec. 1890: BNA accessed June 2016; SHC, A/BEU/3/1; C/CA/1/18/3.

¹⁶⁹ SHC, A/BEU/3/1.

bedroom teacher's house with a large garden.¹⁷⁰ Most children in the parish appear to have gone to the Gipsy Lane school. Pupil numbers had risen to 181 by the end of 1893 and the following year there were 219 on the books taught by four teachers in the standard classes and one teacher and two monitresses in the infant room. Teacher training continued to be an important part of the school and pupil teachers had lessons from 7.30 to 8.30 three mornings a week and on the other two days between 12 and 1.¹⁷¹ However, there was no record of children in the 1890s moving on to secondary school although and only a few in the early 20th century.¹⁷² Early exam results and reports were poor although attendance had improved slightly by 1900.¹⁷³ Mary Ann Bird (d. 1899) left money to the churchwardens and the Congregational minister to provide prizes for needlework at the Board School.¹⁷⁴ However, in 1918 the money was given to an adult¹⁷⁵ and the charity was dormant by 1978 and, despite attempts to reactivate it, ceased in 1995.¹⁷⁶

Bishops Hull Council School

In 1903 there were six teachers, two pupil teachers and two monitresses and 193 children on the register and reports had improved. The building was also used for evening school, council meetings and village events.¹⁷⁷ When the first church school at Galmington was built, its site was a detached field belonging to Bishops Hull parish and in 1905 two parishioners of Bishops Hull Without were trustees.¹⁷⁸

By 1905 the school, now known as the Council School, was divided into infants, with an average attendance of 68 children taught by six staff and a mixed school with an average

¹⁷⁰ SHC C/CA/1/18/3.

¹⁷¹ SHC, A/BEU/3/1.

¹⁷² SHC, A/BEU/4/1—2.

¹⁷³ SHC, A/BEU/3/1.

¹⁷⁴ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2; D/PC/b.hl/2/22.

¹⁷⁵ SHC, DD/C/44.

¹⁷⁶ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/2; Kirk, URC, Bishops Hull, 41.

¹⁷⁷ SHC, C/E/4/380/37.

¹⁷⁸ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/22; Wilton, soc. hist., educ.

attendance of 104 children and five staff. Half the staff were pupil teachers or monitresses. By 1915 the school was once more regarded as a single entity.¹⁷⁹ In 1911 many girls only attended school part time as they were expected to work at home included paid work like dressmaking.¹⁸⁰ Children as old as 9 were starting school having never attended before. Absenteeism was still a serious problem as children were expected to pick and sell flowers and berries. There were also several bouts of infectious disease.¹⁸¹

During and after the First World War children came from London and the Midlands for short periods.¹⁸² Schoolchildren knitted socks for soldiers and collected chestnuts and on one occasion a former pupil, a lieutenant in the RFC, flew his plane over the school. After the war there was concern at how few children went on to secondary school and the backwardness of the pupils despite good teaching in the infants where a babies' class took children from age 3. Those concerns were again expressed in the early 1930s when half the teachers were not 'certificated' and accommodation was inadequate. Delays in providing secondary school places meant that it was only in April 1933 that 81 children were moved to Priory boys' and North Town girls' schools in Taunton.¹⁸³

Further housing development resulted in 193 children being registered in 1935 with six teachers despite the loss of senior pupils and the under-fives. Numbers fell during the war but rose immediately afterwards to over 200 and children had to be turned away. However, the council insisted that a teacher be made redundant to save money and was reluctant to provide electricity, the school was lit by gas. The Territorial Army hall was used for temporary classrooms by 1955 when there were 287 children and nine teachers, rising to 364 in 1958 when some pupils were bussed to schools in Taunton.¹⁸⁴ During the 1960s the ground

¹⁷⁹ SHC, C/E/4/64; A/BEU/3/2.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, RG 14/14246.

¹⁸¹ SHC, C/E/4/64; A/BEU/3/2.

¹⁸² SHC, A/BEU/4/2.

¹⁸³ SHC, A/BEU/3/2.

¹⁸⁴ SHC, C/E/4/64; A/BEU/1/1, 3/2.

floor of the house was converted to classrooms, as numbers regularly exceeded 300, and a playing field and wooden classrooms were acquired. In 1969 50 infants were admitted but in 1974 the new Galmington school opened and numbers at Bishops Hull began to fall from 295 in 1975 to 254 in 1978.¹⁸⁵ The bell turret was removed as dangerous in 1966 and the chimneys for the same reason in 1973 but otherwise the buildings were externally little changed. By the late 20th century many extra buildings had been erected in the grounds and the garden had become car parking.¹⁸⁶

In 1978 the new Bishops Hull primary school opened south of the church with four junior classes and the infants remained at Gipsy Lane until 1979 when they moved into temporary classrooms and the old school became for many years an annexe to Somerset College of Arts and Technology in Wellington Road and in 2016 the school was a church and pre-school. During the 1980s further phases were completed including a school hall, which doubled as the village hall, a unique arrangement at the time.¹⁸⁷ By 1989 the school had seven permanent classrooms, library and practical areas besides the shared hall.¹⁸⁸ Numbers fell from 245 in 1985 to 214 in 1995.¹⁸⁹ In 1998 there were seven teachers, seven teaching assistants, special needs teachers as required and various support staff including a caretaker and lunch supervisors. The children learnt music and swimming and other sports.¹⁹⁰ In 2014 there were 235 children on the books and c. 16 staff.¹⁹¹

St John's school

¹⁸⁵ SHC, C/E/4/64; A/BEU/1/1—2.

¹⁸⁶ SHC, A/BEU/1/2.

¹⁸⁷ SHC, A/BEU/1/2, 2/1; D/PC/b.hl/2/19; below, this section.

¹⁸⁸ SHC, C/EPM/4/4.

¹⁸⁹ SHC, C/E/4/64.

¹⁹⁰ SHC, C/E/4/409/11.

¹⁹¹ Ofsted report, Bishops Hull School 2014: accessed 20 Feb 2017

Also called Tangier school it was paid for by the Revd Smith and opened in by 1863 for girls and infants only in an iron schoolroom in part of the Tangier foundry. It was known as the ‘Old Schoolroom’ when it belonged to Starkeys brewery in 1897 and was replaced by an infant classroom c. 1901.¹⁹² The school was intended to educate some of the 1,000 local children said to be on the streets in the 1870s.¹⁹³

A new brick and stone school for 120 children of both sexes was built north of the old schoolroom in 1872 at the expense of the Revd Frederick Jeremiah Smith, and later St John’s church contributed large sums to the school c. 1880.¹⁹⁴ The stone and red-tiled building was designed by J. Houghton Spencer and was fitted out with encaustic tiles with religious quotations. Children paid 3d. a week in the 1880s and had outings to Blue Anchor. The school was plagued by flooding until 1960.¹⁹⁵ The children had wooden dumbbells and a rocking horse as well educational equipment, often donated.¹⁹⁶

By 1903 there was a separate infant room and an evening continuation school was held. The average attendance was 160 and there were three teachers and a sewing mistress in 1904. Average attendance had risen to 150 in 1905. Headteachers usually stayed for some time, William Dyer ran the school from 1896 to 1930. The church school was plagued by financial difficulties, although in 1905 its deficit was lower than in neighbouring schools, and in the 1930s there was a reluctance to spend money because secondary education and slum clearance in Tangier had reduced the number of children from c. 150 in 1910 to 47 in 1931.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² PO Dir. Som. (1866); SHC, A/BUG/1/26/2; D/B/ta/24/1/27/1755; OS Map 1:2500, SOM. LXX.12 (1890 edn, surv. 1887); TNA, ED 2/391/2.

¹⁹³ Murless, *St John’s School*, 6.

¹⁹⁴ SHC, D/P/ta.jo/4/1/4; TNA, ED 2/391/2.

¹⁹⁵ Murless, *St John’s School*, 3.

¹⁹⁶ Murless, *St John’s School*, 7.

¹⁹⁷ SHC, D/P/ta.jo/18/7/1; A/DSG/1; Murless, *St John’s School*, 6.

It was threatened with closure in 1946 after most of the houses at Tangier had been demolished but it was reprieved and in 1952 was granted voluntary-aided status.¹⁹⁸ In 1955 there were 113 children with four teachers in three classes and only four children went on to grammar school. By the 1960s the church hall was used for classroom space until a portable classroom was installed in 1971. In 1972 there were six teachers, four school meal staff and a caretaker¹⁹⁹ but in 1975 there were only 70 children falling to 38 in 1985 and the school faced increasing threats of closure. In 1991 there were three teachers for 47 children including children from a refuge, victims of bullying and children with special needs but despite a fight to keep it open the school closed.²⁰⁰ It was demolished in 2003 for an office block called St John's House.

Preschools and nurseries

Bishops Hull morning pre-school for children aged 2 to 5 opened in 1992 on the primary school site in succession to a community playgroup and in 2014 it had 24 children and five staff. In 1992 42 children attended morning playgroups at the United Reform Church and at Northfields.²⁰¹ The Living Light Church opened a pre-school for children aged 2 to 5 in 2012 in the old Board School in Gipsy Lane.²⁰² In 2013 there were ten children and three staff and the school opened three days a week.²⁰³ However, the school closed in 2016 and was replaced by the Little Owls, formerly St John's preschool, from Taunton, which was open five days a week.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ SHC, D/P/ta.jo/9/3/2; Murless, *St John's School*, 8.

¹⁹⁹ SHC, DD/X/WBB 185; Murless, *St John's School*, 7—8.

²⁰⁰ SHC, C/E/4/64; *The Independent*, 1 Aug. 1991.

²⁰¹ SHC, D/P/tau.a/9/4/11; C/E/4/409/11; Ofsted report, Bishops Hull Preschool 2014: accessed 20 Feb 2017.

²⁰² Taunton.livinglightchurch.com: accessed 23 Nov. 2015.

²⁰³ Ofsted report, Shining Lights Christian Preschool 2013: accessed 20 Feb 2017

²⁰⁴ Taunton, soc. hist.

Checkmates council nursery opened c. 1989²⁰⁵ and became part of the Wyvern Nursery Group in 2102. Known as Wyvern Nursery at Bishops Hull School, in 2017 it had 43 children and nine staff in temporary classrooms.²⁰⁶ A private nursery, the Beehive, opened at Roughmoor in 2011 and in 2013 had 120 children and 26 staff.²⁰⁷

Private Schools

Matthew Gourd kept a school in the village by 1831²⁰⁸ and in 1841 he had six boys aged 5 to 10 boarding at a house off Bishops Hull Road north of the Congregational chapel, possibly the present Cranford.²⁰⁹ Gourd continued his boys' day and boarding school in the 1850s and 1860s and served as parish clerk but by 1871 described himself as a teacher of languages and had retired by 1891.²¹⁰ Two dame schools were recorded in 1830.²¹¹

The 'mansion house', now Manor House, was the home of Mary and Ann Passmore's girls school by 1839. In 1841 assisted by French and music teachers they taught 20 boarders aged 7 to 15 and had three parlour boarders.²¹² The school moved out after 1842.²¹³

Bishops Hull classical school for boys at Milligan Hall was said to have been founded in 1842, probably by Dr Everard, later incumbent of Bishops Hull.²¹⁴ Revd William Routledge kept the school in 1851 when he taught his son and 28 other boys aged 7 to 16 assisted by two masters, one a French master.²¹⁵ Several boys won scholarships at Eton for which Routledge wrote the *Eton Greek Grammar* (1854).²¹⁶ He gave up the school to return

²⁰⁵ SHC, C/E/4/409/11.

²⁰⁶ SHC, C/E/4/409/11; Ofsted report, Wyvern Nursery@ Bishops Hull School 2017: accessed 20 Feb 2017.

²⁰⁷ Ofsted report, Beehive Day Nursery Ltd 2013: accessed 20 Feb 2017.

²⁰⁸ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/9.

²⁰⁹ TNA, HO 107/959; tithe award.

²¹⁰ PO Dir. Som. (1861—6); TNA, HO 107/1923; RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369; RG 12/1878.

²¹¹ Pigot Dir. (1830).

²¹² Pigot Dir. (1830); TNA, HO 107/959; SHC, tithe award.

²¹³ SHC, tithe award; Pigot Dir. (1842).

²¹⁴ Exeter Flying Post, 3 Aug. 1854: BNA accessed June 2016; Pigot Dir. (1842)..

²¹⁵ TNA, HO 107/1923.

²¹⁶ The Standard, 26 Sep. 1860: BNA accessed June 2016.

to parish ministry and it was taken over by Revd Frederick Bankes in partnership with his wife's brother Revd Richard Addison who taught mathematics. In 1861 they had eight boys aged 9 to 15 boarding with a drill sergeant, matron and four servants.²¹⁷ However, that year the partnership was dissolved, the school being already in debt, and by 1864 the school had failed.²¹⁸ In 1869 Christopher Bousfield moved his 'young gentlemen's boarding school' from Dorchester to Netherclay House and in 1871 had a resident assistant and eight boys aged 10 to 18 boarding. They learnt music and calisthenics as well as languages and mathematics. The school was given up after 1875.²¹⁹

The West of England Dissenters Proprietary School on Wellington Road opened c. 1847. It was in the care of a steward and matron and 12 servants in 1851 when there were 110 boys aged 9 to 16 boarding. Seven resident masters taught writing, English, French, classics, mathematics, geography and commercial subjects.²²⁰ In 1861 it was called Wellington Terrace School and 113 boys were boarding and the staff included a wardrobe manager.²²¹ By 1866 the school had moved to Fairwater House, Staplegrove and is now Taunton School.²²²

Castle House School, in the castle buildings, had been a ladies boarding school for many years before 1791.²²³ In 1782 it had a music room and the proprietor Mrs Symonds had a detached schoolroom in the castle yard over the coachhouse which was virtually rebuilt in 1803. In 1821 the school had three parlours, a kitchen, 11 very small bedrooms and a ½-a-garden.²²⁴ Mrs Symonds had strong opinions on the teaching of girls including not teaching them 'philosophy and deep reasoning', regarding their education as preparing them for

²¹⁷ TNA, RG 9/1619; The Standard, 26 Sep. 1860.

²¹⁸ SHC, A/CPT 7/30; DD/DP/60/25

²¹⁹ Taunton Courier, 18 Aug. 1869, 21 Dec. 1870; BNA accessed 16 June 2017; PO Dir. Som. (1861—75); Morris and Co. Dir. Som. (1872); TNA, RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369.

²²⁰ Kelly, Somerset [1875], 461; TNA, HO 107/1923.

²²¹ TNA, RG 9/1619.

²²² PO Dir. Som. (1866); SHC, A/DIF/116/229; Staplegrove and Taunton, soc. hist., educ.

²²³ J. Toulmin, History of Taunton (1791), 46.

²²⁴ Webster, Taunton Castle, 236; SHC, DD/CN/29/7; T/PH/dvs 1.

marriage. The school remained open in 1822 but after Mrs Symonds died in 1829 the school operated in reduced premises, land to the south passing to the proprietors of the Castle Hotel. That may have been in connection with Richard Carver's scheme for re-ordering the castle in the 1830s and pulling down the school outbuildings.²²⁵ The school changed hands several times and by 1842 had moved into premises in Taunton.²²⁶

It was succeeded by a Wesleyan school for boys, which moved out in 1846 to Trull Road to become Queens College.²²⁷ A new boys school had been begun in the same premises by 1861 kept by John Thorne with the help of his wife and stepson and there were 20 boys boarding.²²⁸ The school used the castle courtyard in front of the house as a garden and also had access to the garden to the east, now used by the Castle Hotel, as a playground. There was a library and in 1864 about two dozen boys were taught. By 1866 the school had been taken over by Thorne's partner Henry Veysey who was assisted by members of his family including his brother-in-law. In 1871 there were 14 boarders aged 9 to 14 but only six in 1871 when they were taught French and German. The school moved out when the castle was bought by the Somerset Archaeological Society. It was regarded as the predecessor of Queens College, Taunton.²²⁹

A girls school, formerly in Wilton, was kept at the Tower House in 1872 where a limited number were taught French and needlework as well as the usual subjects and moral and religious training was important.²³⁰ Miss Channing kept a school, possibly in Castle Lodge in the 1870s.²³¹ Between 1871 and 1891 Matilda Hardige kept a girls day school in

²²⁵ SHC, A/DIF/9, p. 29; Q/REI/35/3; Q/AC/1.

²²⁶ SHC, Q/REI/35/3; Pigot London and Prov. Dir. (1822); Pigot Dir. (1830, 1842).

²²⁷ queenscollege.org.uk: accessed 5 March 2018.

²²⁸ TNA, RG 9/1619.

²²⁹ SHC, T/PH/chn/1; DD/X/DNG/27; TNA, RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369

²³⁰ TNA, RG 10/2572; Morris and Co., Dir. Som. (1872).

²³¹ SHC, A/AHO/7.

Cann Street.²³² There were also several specialist teachers of music, especially the violin, and drawing in the late 19th century.²³³

The Beehive Preparatory School was opened in 1939 by Ethel Gange and her sister in Middleway, Wilton as a mixed day and boarding school. It was approved by the Board of Education in 1943 when it had 50 children aged 3 to 8. In 1947 it moved to Claremont on Wellington Road and numbers rose rapidly to 105 in 1952 when it ceased to accept boarders. The school declined to 47 boys and 18 girls by 1957 although older children were taken but none of the six teachers was qualified and the school was seen as very old-fashioned in methods and equipment. It was taken over by Mr and Mrs Garrett who kept it open until the 1990s. By 1977 numbers had risen to 130. The school had five classrooms and a playing field, now a housing development.²³⁴

Other educational establishments

The Taunton Technical Institute was built west of the former grammar school in 1898.²³⁵ Somerset Art College and the Technical Institute combined and moved to a site in Bishops Hull Parish next to the Wellington Road cemetery in the later 20th century with additional buildings at Stepwater. Castle Comprehensive School was built on an adjoining site.²³⁶

In 1993 the South West Association for Education and Training was incorporated and registered at Bishops Hull House to provide professional development for teachers and youth workers. Renamed Learning South West in 2004 it went into liquidation in 2016.²³⁷

²³² Morris and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369; RG 12/1878.

²³³ TNA, RG 11/2369; RG 12/1878; RG 13/2277.

²³⁴ SHC, A/CBG 47; A/APN 2/6; D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 84; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957); *Taunton Guide* (1959, 1969).

²³⁵ Taunton, soc. hist., educ.

²³⁶ Taunton, soc. hist., educ.

²³⁷ Char. Com. Reg.; *Som. Co. Gaz.* 12 Apr. 2016.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Poor relief

The inclusion of part of Taunton in the parish created problems with the settlement laws.²³⁸

There were also unusual cases like that of the child of a Bishops Hull woman born in prison in Ilchester, transferred to Taunton house of correction and declared the responsibility of the parish.²³⁹ In 1663 paupers received 1s. or 1s. 6d. each in weekly relief although keeping a poor child cost 2s. 6d. a week. Shrouds, indentures and payments the sick were also provided by the overseers.²⁴⁰ When Richard Buncombe and his wife Sarah died a few weeks apart in 1684 leaving eight young children, two of whom also died shortly after their parents, the parish paid for all the funerals and fostered out the surviving children, one in Stoke St Gregory, until they were 21 but recouped some of the costs of clothing and maintaining the children from the sale of their parents' goods.²⁴¹ By 1729 the cost of supporting the poor had trebled since the 1660s to over £90. Although there were years when it was much less in 1741 it was over £130 partly due to prosecuting offenders and the costs of coroners' inquests. Fines from offenders against the licensing laws were distributed among the poor. There were several cases of maternal and neonatal mortality such as the mother on parish relief in 1742 whose baby died despite the midwife provided by the parish, which also paid for the burial having earlier bought baby clothes and clouts.²⁴² In addition to paying for marriages and burials the parish paid for lodgings and secured money from fathers to maintain their illegitimate children.²⁴³ Removals of pauper families continued to preoccupy the parish until 1800 after which they were less common, probably it was no longer cost effective.²⁴⁴

²³⁸ Above, this section, migration.

²³⁹ SHC, Q/SR/92/7.

²⁴⁰ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/2, 5/2/2.

²⁴¹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/3, 13/2/10.

²⁴² SHC, D/P/b.hl/13/2/1.

²⁴³ SHC, D/P/b.hl/13/2/1—3.

²⁴⁴ SHC, Q/SR/337/4/42, 339/3/28, 346/1/24, 349/4/13, 141, 351/4/8, 354/3/25, 355/2/51, 53, 355/3/7, 358/4/36, 359/3/10, 361/3/21, 366/3/41, 557/106—10, 601/93; Devon HC, 4781A 99/PO17/41.

Spending on the poor had soared to £290 in 1798 and to £352 in 1799.²⁴⁵ The population of the parish grew by 50 per cent between 1801 and 1821 and expenditure on the poor rose with it. By 1813 it had reached £523 and £531 in 1815 when 49 people were on permanent out-relief and ten were relieved occasionally. Expenditure fell to £452 in 1827 but rose again to £583 by 1831 when up to 70 people had regular relief including 18 able-bodied labourers.²⁴⁶

From 1821 a select vestry decided eligibility for relief.²⁴⁷ In 1832 they agreed to give the governor of Exeter gaol money for clothes for an illegitimate child from Bishops Hull who was going to Botany Bay with her mother. With up to 35 families on relief in the 1830s the vestry encouraged emigration to America, sought to get arrears of child maintenance from errant fathers and even considered buying stone to provide work for paupers in 1835. Over £22 was spent in 1836 supporting paupers in Wellington and Bristol and £95 4s. was transferred to the new Taunton Union.²⁴⁸

By 1767 the parish had a poor house, described as formerly Turner's,²⁴⁹ but later said to have been waste enclosed with the consent of the lord of the manor c. 1756.²⁵⁰ It was known as the Prioress House, the priest house in 1566, formerly a barn.²⁵¹ There was an adjoining parcel of waste and land at the west end on which a smithy had been built against the house before 1715.²⁵² The property appears to have passed to the parish for use as a poor house after 1747.²⁵³ The select vestry repaired the poor house windows in 1832 but decided that in future the inmates should pay.²⁵⁴ In the 1830s paupers were transferred to the poor

²⁴⁵ SHC, D/P/b.hl/13/2/5.

²⁴⁶ Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns ...so far as relates to the poor (HC 1818), 390—1; SHC, D/P/b.hl/5/3/13, 13/2/6—8; VCH Som. II, 327.

²⁴⁷ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/1; below, local govt.

²⁴⁸ SHC, D/P/b.hl/5/3/13, 13/2/9; VCH Som. II, 328.

²⁴⁹ SHC, Q/REI 35/3.

²⁵⁰ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/2.

²⁵¹ SHC, DD/SP/71; BL Add. Ch. 16333.

²⁵² SHC, DD/SP/87, 199, 201, 210, 214.

²⁵³ SHC, DD/SP/24c.

²⁵⁴ SHC, D/P/b.hl/13/2/9.

house and shrubs planted in the garden.²⁵⁵ Following the establishment of the workhouse in Taunton the vestry in 1836 considered an offer to demolish the poor houses, said to be three good cottages of brick with a continuous tiled roof, to provide additional burial ground but they were retained.²⁵⁶ In 1839–40 the poor house cottages and the land on the west were bought by maltster Isaac Bryant who built three houses on the Netherclay frontage, which he appears to have sold, and converted the block opposite the church into four cottages, which he kept and left to his son Isaac.²⁵⁷ They are now known as Church Row.

Charities

By his will John Burt, Byrt, Birt or Bird (d. 1596) granted copyhold land for the benefit of the poor. In 1597 the land was to be held by between two and six trustees. The two fields were known as Poors Land in 1730 when they were let to Edward Jarmin.²⁵⁸ Edward Jarmin the elder had given £5 to the poor in 1688 but the gift was lost.²⁵⁹ Birt's or Burt's charity land reverted to the manor before 1807 when the premises were granted to the heirs of 1686. The lands were let out as Burt's Close or Roughmoor Poor Meadow in Bishops Hull²⁶⁰ and Burt's Meadow in Staplegrove. In December the parish officers distributed the rents to those poor nor receiving relief.²⁶¹ In 1832 172 people received up to 4s. each.²⁶² Part of the land was sold to build the railway and the money invested. That money was used to enfranchise the lands in 1903.²⁶³ In 1929 the Staplegrove land was sold to a sugar beet company and the money invested.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁵ SHC, D/P/b.hl/5/3/13.

²⁵⁶ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/2.

²⁵⁷ SHC, DD/CH/77/5, 210.; D/G/ta/57/42

²⁵⁸ 5th Rep. Com. Char. 461; SHC, DD/SP/89; D/P/b.hl/2/1/1, 17/2/1.

²⁵⁹ M. Siraut, Som. Wills, 138.

²⁶⁰ Now part of the 'park and ride' carpark.

²⁶¹ 5th Rep. Com. Char. 461—2.

²⁶² SHC, D/PC/b.hl/5/3/13.

²⁶³ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/1.

²⁶⁴ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/5/3/1, 9.

In 1626 Sir George Farewell (d. 1647) surrendered copyhold land to his son George charged with charitable legacies including 10s. to the poor of Bishops Hull and 24s. to the church probably to fulfil his father George's will of 1609. However, it was still unpaid in 1654²⁶⁵ and the legacies later became confused with the poor getting a distribution of £1 4s. at Christmas. By the 19th century some land had been lost but £1 was distributed.²⁶⁶ In 1873 it was stated that half the rent charge was for the church and in 1905 that it was for the bells and by that date the poor received nothing.²⁶⁷ The rent charges were redeemed in 1962 and £25 was invested but the charity ceased to exist in 1996.²⁶⁸

William Gardner of Fideoak left £100 to provide clothing and shoes for the poor on 29 January, which was secured in 1744 on a copyhold field called Stone Close at Rumwell. This charity land had also been allowed to revert to the manor by 1807 when it was granted to new trustees and the £10 rent was used to buy worsted stockings.²⁶⁹ The land was used as allotments by the 1850s and some money, possibly arrears of rent, was used to buy land in Otterford, which was sold before 1895 and the proceeds used to enfranchise the Bishops Hull land in 1903.²⁷⁰ In 1832 263 pairs of stockings were distributed amongst the recipients of Burt's charity and in 1870 294 pairs were given out in February.²⁷¹ A charity called Hallet's produced 4s. for stockings in 1854 but was not recorded again.²⁷² Applicants for Gardner's charity had to prove poverty and some men were rejected as they received army pensions of 7s. a week.²⁷³ Part of the field was lost to road widening in 1926 and the rest was sold in 1932.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁵ SHC, DD/SP/24a.

²⁶⁶ 5th Rep. Com. Char. 463—4; SHC, DD/SP/91, 212; D/PC/b.hl/5/3/12a.

²⁶⁷ Gen. Digest Endowed Chars (1873), pp. 8—9; SHC, DD/C//4.

²⁶⁸ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/22; Char. Com. Reg.

²⁶⁹ 5th Rep. Com. Char. 462; SHC, tithe award.

²⁷⁰ SHC, Q/RSc/3/7; D/PC/b.hl/1/2/1.

²⁷¹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/5/3/13.

²⁷² SHC, Q/RSc/3/7.

²⁷³ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/5/3/13.

²⁷⁴ SHC, D/PC/b/hl 5/3/1, 7.

John Tyrwhitt of Netherclay (d. 1812) was said to have left £50 in stock to the poor but there is no later record of such a gift.²⁷⁵ John Buncombe in 1828 gave the parish officers the tithes of 3 a. of garden and orchard for the poor not on relief.²⁷⁶ By 1842 a house, later known as Greenleaves, had been built on the land.²⁷⁷ In 1838 77 households received 126 loaves and in 1870 loaves were given to 183 people on 21 December when Burt's money was distributed.²⁷⁸ In 1856 William Walter of Oldbury gave £60 to the trustees of Burt's and Gardner's charities to provide up to 2s. 6d. each to the over 60s of good character not in receipt of relief. The money was invested in the Taunton gas company. About 24 people aged up to 92 benefitted every year but by the 1890s it was difficult to find suitable recipients. In the 1920s more money was given to fewer people receiving, but in two distributions so as not to break the donor's rule and housebound recipients had the money taken to them.²⁷⁹

In 1895 the Bishops Hull Without parish meeting took over the Burt's, Gardner's, Buncombe's and Walter's charities, in 1903 the copyhold lands were enfranchised and in 1906 a new scheme replaced the traditional distributions with four cwt of coal to each of 62 people.²⁸⁰ People in Bishops Hull Within were excluded although most charities were established before the parish was split, because of the burden of poor in the Within parish who were also eligible for Taunton charity distributions.²⁸¹ The new scheme allowed for up to £10 to be distributed in cash, nursing, medical help, tools and prizes of up to £5 for charity allotment cultivation and nursing, medical help and tools. Burt's, Gardner's, and Buncombe's, became known as the Bishops Hull United Charity and further schemes in 1928 and 1932 allowed for land to be sold. In 1964 the allotment field at Roughmoor was sold.²⁸²

²⁷⁵ Taunton Courier, 27 June 1812: BNA accessed June 2017.

²⁷⁶ SHC, DD/CH/1098/11.

²⁷⁷ SHC, tithe award.

²⁷⁸ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/5/3/13.

²⁷⁹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/5/3/2; A/DEI/2/2; DD/CH/119/71.

²⁸⁰ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/1/1, 5/3/13; DD/CH/108/11.

²⁸¹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/1, 5/3/15.

²⁸² SHC, A/DEI/2/2/1.

By 1975 £359 was spent providing 12 cwt of coal to each of 72 recipients and £152 was given to 63 people in cash. Most people preferred coal and from 1976 money was only given to those in need.²⁸³

Sibylla Darch by her will dated 1860 gave £100 to the poor, which was invested in £97 of consols.²⁸⁴ It was paid out in cash and coal in 1905. The Bird Coal Charity consisted of £50 given by Mary Ann Bird under her will of 1899. Up to 3 cwt of coal was distributed to up to 69 recipients until the 1930s.²⁸⁵ Farewell's, Darch's and Bird's charities remained in the hands of the vicar and churchwardens in 1903 although the parish council wished to take over the last two.²⁸⁶ The Farrant Charity was founded by a conveyance of 1929 and Constance Emma Lythall by her will of 1963 left money to the poor, which after settling the estate c. 1970 amounted to £250.²⁸⁷ A new scheme of 1978 renamed the united charity the Bishops Hull Charity and added the charities of Mary Ann Bird, Sibylla Darch, William Walter, William Jillard for the poor,²⁸⁸ Constance Lythall and the Farrant Charity, giving a combined capital of c. £9,000. In 1980 amounts of up to £10 were given to 84 people.²⁸⁹

In 1982 Frank Bond left property for the elderly within 20 miles of Bishops Hull contributing to the building of the hospice and care home in Heron Drive and the parish playing fields. His house, Stoneybroke in Mountway Road was converted into the Frank Bond Community Centre with bowling green and car park. It was incorporated and registered as a charity in 1983 and continued to serve the needs of the elderly in the area in 2017.²⁹⁰ It was also the meeting place for the Local Action Team, set up in 2007 to enhance facilities and activities in Bishops Hull.²⁹¹

²⁸³ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/4.

²⁸⁴ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/1.

²⁸⁵ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/1, 5/3/7.

²⁸⁶ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/1.

²⁸⁷ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/22.

²⁸⁸ Below, rel. hist., nonconf.

²⁸⁹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/22; A/DEI/2/2/1.

²⁹⁰ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/6, 2/22; Char. Com. Reg.

²⁹¹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/22.

Friendly Society

An unnamed friendly society met at the Four Alls inn in 1812—14.²⁹² In 1815 the Friendly Society of Handicraftsmen was established, meeting at the Old Inn in Bishops Hull village. The members, who must be under 40 when they joined, were to meet for two hours on the fourth Monday of the month and pay 10d. and spend 2d. in the public house. There were fines for various breaches of the rules and restrictions on the illness for which a claim could be made. Sickness benefit was only available after a year, at 8s. a week, or 5s. if mobile, up to a maximum of £5. Between £2 and £8 would be spent on funerals with £6 given to a widow, provided death was not due to suicide.²⁹³

Health

Two men were accused of practicing surgery without licence in 1612,²⁹⁴ a surgeon's wife was buried in 1616,²⁹⁵ and a surgeon made his will in 1725.²⁹⁶ However, they were probably living in the Taunton area of the parish. At least two doctors from Taunton were buried in Bishops Hull in the 18th century.²⁹⁷ Simon Brimsmead, apothecary returned from London before his death in 1660 and may have practised in the parish.²⁹⁸ The overseers paid for medical attention and nursing for the poor and in 1740 the parish agreed to pay £12 12s. to cure a dislocated shoulder and a heel tendon for a poor man.²⁹⁹

An outbreak of plague in 1626 in Bishops Hull and Staplegrove seems to have been dealt with by making people stay at home and providing for them if sick or stopped from

²⁹² SHC, Q/RSf/1.

²⁹³ SHC, DD/BR/hc/1.

²⁹⁴ SHC, D/D/Ca/175.

²⁹⁵ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/1.

²⁹⁶ M. Siraut, *Som. Wills* (SRS 89), 136.

²⁹⁷ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/6.

²⁹⁸ SHC DD/SP/325/185; TNA, PROB 11/302/615.

²⁹⁹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/13/2/1.

going to work.³⁰⁰ The long river frontage and the many mills in the parish may account for several drownings.³⁰¹ Unusually from 1698 to 1700 stillborn burials were recorded in the parish register.³⁰² Infant mortality declined in the early 19th century and most deaths were of people over 60. However, in summer 1837 14 children, mostly under 5, died presumably from an epidemic disease, which seems to have continued into 1838, and nine children died in 1863.³⁰³ A few families still suffered from high infant mortality in the early 20th century.³⁰⁴ Shutewater Hill was regarded as insanitary in the later 19th century, which was a factor in moving the school where the privies were filthy and the stench invaded the infant class. In 1881 wells were condemned and following the outbreak of diphtheria there in 1883 in which at least three children died, an inspection found lack of drainage, unemptied cess pits and filthy privies but the school was the source of the spread of infection across the parish. The inquiry also highlighted the fact that affected families failed to seek medical advice, which might have checked the spread.³⁰⁵

There were usually three nurses in Bishops Hull Within in the later 19th century, one of whom fostered three infants in Tangier in 1861. A wet nurse and a midwife were also recorded and in 1911 several woman had lost more than one child.³⁰⁶ The Bishops Hull Nursing Association was in existence by 1926³⁰⁷ and was later the Bishops Hull and Norton Fitzwarren District Nursing Association. By 1944 it also covered Staplegrove and Hillfarrance. Members subscribed up to 5s. a year and paid reduced fees, normally 35s. The nurse also visited schools and assisted with maternity and surgical cases as well as carrying out nursing and infant welfare. Her workload was heavy; there were over 100 subscribers by

³⁰⁰ E. H. Bates-Harbin, Quarter Sessions Records, 1625—39 (SRS 24), 19.

³⁰¹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/1—2.

³⁰² SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/2.

³⁰³ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/18.

³⁰⁴ TNA, RG 14/14246.

³⁰⁵ Taunton Courier, 8 June 1881, 29 Aug. 1883: BNA accessed March 2017; SHC, Dr Blaxall's Report on Epidemics of Diphtheria in the Taunton Rural Sanitary District (1883).

³⁰⁶ TNA, RG 9/1619; RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369; RG 12/1878; RG 13/2277; RG 14/14241.

³⁰⁷ SHC, D/P/b.hl/5/3/1.

the 1940s and in 1944 a second nurse was briefly employed. In 1947—8 there were 4,617 visits. The association was affiliated to the Somerset County Nursing association in 1948 and in the 1950s the nurse, her cottage and car were paid for by Somerset County Council.³⁰⁸

There was a midwife in the village in 1939 and a dentist in 1979.³⁰⁹

In 1931 the Tower Lane clinic was built on the former Paul's House garden to the designs of Harold Sampson. It had sun permeable glass, non slip red asphalt floors, and rounded corners and provided a maternity and child clinic, an orthopaedic clinic, and dentist's clinic.³¹⁰ It was extended in 1949³¹¹ but was demolished in the late 20th century and replaced by flats for the elderly. Despite the increased population the parish had neither doctor nor dentist in 2017 although there was a specialist dental clinic at Rumwell.

St Saviours Boys' Home

St Saviours stood opposite St John's church on the north-west corner of Cann Street and Park Street occupying the site of a former public house and attached cottage with a large playground on the site of cottages to the rear.³¹² It was founded and built in 1871 by Revd Herbert Rogers, chaplain of Taunton workhouse, to care for orphaned, abandoned and destitute boys between 10 and 15 but in 1879 age of entry was reduced to 8. They attended school or worked at first in the home and later outside. They rose at six in the morning and went to bed at nine at night, washed and prayed twice a day and had recreation after dinner and tea unless they attended night school. They were encouraged to join the scouts and choirs and attended St John's church and Sunday school. Their meagre diet was supplemented by generous gifts of food, especially at Christmas. The home depended on subscriptions and

³⁰⁸ SHC, C/DNBH/1/5—7.

³⁰⁹ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1939); SHC, A/AGH/1/35.

³¹⁰ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/74/1514; Taunton Courier, 27 May 1931: BNA accessed 8 Aug. 2017.

³¹¹ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/112/4008.

³¹² SHC, DD/X/MOL/6.

gifts in kind.³¹³ In 1881 and 1891 there were 20 boys some working as errand boys or gardeners and they were expected to help the master and matron with the domestic duties as there were no servants. Many boys had no idea how old they were or where they were born.³¹⁴ In 1899 a garden between the Gaol and Galmington streams behind St John's church was given to the home and the boys learnt to grow vegetables. There was also a carpenter's shop where they were taught basic woodwork.³¹⁵

By 1911 there were only 14 boys drawn from a wide area.³¹⁶ They were well looked after and given treats, holidays, visits to the cinema and circus and many kept in touch with the home after leaving. Several went for naval and military training and a subscription was raised in the 1890s to send a boy to college in Exeter to train as a teacher. A few boys were dismissed or returned to their relatives but most went on to work in trades or professions. In the 1900s some emigrated to Canada and a fund was raised to support them. One later left all his possessions to the home. During the First World War many joined fellow scouts guarding the coast and bridges while others became assistants to Red Cross nurses. A few older ones joined the services, one as a band boy with the Somerset Light Infantry and became a sergeant before being killed in France.³¹⁷ In 1918 the house and land were vested in the Official Trustees of Charitable Funds.³¹⁸ By 1931 changing social circumstances had rendered it unnecessary and the home was sold to benefit children's charities.³¹⁹ In 1951 the premises, then known as 1 St John's Place were acquired by the Taunton Hospital Management Committee and in 1953 sold to St John's Ambulance Brigade.³²⁰ The site was taken later for road widening and the playground for housing.

³¹³ SHC, DD/X/MOL/7/1—3.

³¹⁴ TNA, RG 11/2369; RG 12/1878.

³¹⁵ SHC, DD/X/MOL/7/2—3; 8.

³¹⁶ SHC, DD/X/MOL/7/2—3; TNA, RG 14/14241.

³¹⁷ SHC, DD/X/MOL/7/1—3.

³¹⁸ SHC, DD/X/MOL/8.

³¹⁹ SHC, D/P/ta.jo/2/9/15; SHC, DD/X/MOL/8.

³²⁰ SHC, D/H/ta/4/1/3.

Nursing Homes

In 2017 there were several large residential nursing homes in the parish; Netherclay opened in 1972, Abbeyfield and Frethey c. 1985, and the Manor in 1987. In addition, the St Margaret's Somerset Hospice, opened in 1987, lies in the parish by the river Tone near Roughmoor. It has 16 beds but also cares for several hundred people in the community. Nearby Dairy House care home was on the site of Longrun farmstead.³²¹

³²¹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/1/2/6.