

Old Marston Charities Trust

Old Marston Charities Trust is a small local charity for the benefit of the poor within the parish. It began during the Civil War and derives its income from the rent of a field outside the parish boundary. You can find out more about the charity below. Just click on the title below to expand the text box.

Contact Details

Charity Secretary: Tim Cann – 01865-203139, clerk@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk

Chairman: Duncan Hatfield 07706998224, chairman@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk

Trustee: Reverend Skye Denno

Trustee: City Councillor Mary Clarkson

Trustee: City Councillor Mick Haines

Trustee: Parish Councillor Mick Cadd

Trustee: Vacancy

History of The Charity

Relief of the poor has been ongoing for centuries and was largely administered by the Vestry, the Church “office” although there were others in the form of Tithes. Originally 10% of crops was claimed and stored in the Tithe Barn of which many still exist in more rural areas. These were under the control of the Monasteries who used the food for their own use and for the poor. These were largely lost in the dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII. The landlords created some tithes for specific purposes. There was one on a previous clerks property for the upkeep of the Chancel but it was annulled on the clerks purchase of the land. Recently a landowner was faced with a massive bill for the purpose, he being unaware of the Tithe.

Due to large numbers of vagrants Government action in the Poor Relief Act of 1603 followed. That placed the responsibility on the vestries in each parish. They were charged to collect from the inhabitants a rate assessed according to the value of their property sufficient to relieve the poor – the start of the Local Government, as we now know it. There were provisions for parishes to amalgamate for the purpose.

This worked, perhaps with varying success while the parishes were isolated and knew whom to assist because they were largely born in the parish. The movement of population following the Industrial Revolution confused the issue that was formalised by Boards of Guardians being appointed to serve groups of parishes with powers to collect the Poor Rate; it meant that the poor had to qualify by residence. The result was court cases galore to determine who was entitled to relief in that area. Unqualified persons were accompanied to the Parish boundary and told not to come back. That led to the creation of the workhouses where those without means were institutionalised often in harsh conditions men, women and children separated and given work to do. Eventually the workhouses were abolished and money given to the poor instead. That is the background under which some property occasionally

remained with the Church for the relief of the poor; bequests were made to the Church for that purpose.

In Old Marston a rent charge of ten shillings per year was attached to the land at what is now 38 Oxford Road, by Mary Brett, in May 1671.

It is still paid today. In the voluntary enclosure award in 1650 Marston Common, of 20 acres, was fenced and given to the parish for twelve persons, of whom the Parish Clerk was to be one, who were elected to allow each to graze one cow diminished, the field let and one twelfth of the rent received paid to the surviving commoners until they died, the remainder added to the Trust's income. An area of land previously used for woodcutting was enclosed in exchange for an annual payment. A Trust was appointed to use the income for the poor. Ann Simms Rippington left a charity for Church expenses and one for the purchase of coal for the poor in 1932. Rosa Simms in 1936 left money for Church expenses, the poor and the Church bells. These were overseen by the Charity Commission that made a new scheme of administering the Charity that put all the income into one pot in 1974 with Trustees, the Vicar, two appointed each by the Parish Council and Oxford City Council (in recognition of the fact that a large part of the Parish, that extended to St Clements was transferred to the City in 1926) and two co-opted. In living memory coal was brought and delivered to those in need but now vouchers distribute the income. Some local traders accept the vouchers as cash, subject to reimbursement by the Trust.

There are powers to use Trust money for a whole list of purposes related to the well-being of parishioners but the Charity is small for the options to be used.

Forest Money

There is annually given to the poor of this parish a sum of money, called Forest Money, of the origin of which we could obtain no information.

It accrues from the rent of an estate of about an hundred acres, being extra-parochial, adjoining the liberty of Elsfield. This land is let from time to time for the benefit of the proprietors of Marston and the poor, by a committee, who are appointed for the purpose, and by whom a certain portion of the rent is assigned to the poor, according to an ancient scale of division, which appears to have been long acted upon.

The estate was let, till lately, at 155l. a year, upon lease. At Lady-day 1832, a new agreement was made with Daniel Chapman, for a term of seven years at the rent of 115l.

When the rent was at 155l., 18l. 18s. 2d. was the share appropriated to the poor. The churchwardens and the overseers make out a list of all the poor inhabiting within or belonging to the parish, and the amount is distributed amongst them according to the number in the family. No distinction is made whether the person receives relief or not. The distribution generally takes place about Christmas, and the whole is disposed of every year, within a week after the rent is received.

Cow Commons

There is in this parish a piece of bushy land, containing about 26 acres, on which 12 of the poor have right of common for a cow.

We could not discover the origin of this right, and it is doubtful whether it could be referred to any charitable foundation; these 12 cow commons are, however, always enjoyed by 12 poor persons, of whom the Parish Clerk is one. If a man having a cow common dies, his

widow continues to enjoy it for her life, but it does not descend to the children; and whenever a vacancy occurs, such poor person, whether a householder or not, who obtains the votes of the greatest number of land owners, is appointed by the vestry to the vacant common right. The poor are at liberty either to stock the common or to let their right; the latter course is always pursued, and they individually make the best bargain they can. Each common right lets for from 25s to 2l a year.

The Carter Estate was built upon the land known as Cow Common in the 1950s.

Brett's Charity

The particulars of this charity are given in our report of those in the Parish of Elsfield. The sum of 10s. is paid and distributed to the poor of Marston, together with the amount of forest Money before mentioned.