

Poor Law

Introduction

Prior to the advent of the state pension or occupational pension schemes, the elderly had to look to their parish for support. The 1601 Poor Law made parishes responsible for the care of their aged and needy, and until 1834 assistance generally took the form of 'out-relief' (payments or support enabling recipients to stay in their home) or 'in-relief' in a local workhouse.

The reforms enacted by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 led to a much harsher regime aimed at deterring the 'undeserving' poor from relying on support from the parish. The Act grouped parishes together into Poor Law Unions, with Unions operating a central workhouse for groups of parishes. Inmates of the workhouse experienced harsh conditions, a plain diet and were expected to work, often at menial tasks, if capable of doing so.

This guide records details of archive material relating to the payment of pensions or the operation of workhouses by Poor Law Unions, parishes, vestries, civil parishes and extra parochial areas. It does not include details of all records relating to the poor law, only those specifically relating to pensions. For more information about records relating to the other aspects of poor law operation please see LMA's Information Leaflet on the Poor Law (number 4).¹

There are also records relating to the poor law in the following entries in other sections of this guide (sections given in brackets):

- Military Pensions: Royal Hospital (Occupational Schemes section)
- Middlesex Sessions of the Peace (Courts in Session) (Occupational Schemes section)

BOARD OF GUARDIANS (B)

The Boards of Guardians, elected by the Poor Law Unions, were responsible for operating the poor law within their area between 1834 and 1929. LMA has the records of Boards of Guardians for London or Middlesex (excepting Barnet and Kingston Unions, which are held at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies and Surrey History Centre respectively).

The following collections have material of relevance to the scope of this Guide.

Bermondsey Board of Guardians	1836-1934	BBG
Bethnal Green Board of Guardians	1836-1935	BEBG
Brentford Board of Guardians	1836-1930	BG/B
Edmonton Board of Guardians	1837-1940	BG/E
Camberwell Board of Guardians	1835-1939	CABG
City of London Board of Guardians	1763-1930	CBG
Chelsea Board of Guardians	1834-1931	CHBG
Fulham Board of Guardians	1842-1931	FBG
Greenwich Board of Guardians	1836-1946	GBG
Hackney Board of Guardians	1770-1939	HABG
Hammersmith Board of Guardians	1839-1932	HHBG
Hampstead Board of Guardians	1810-1958	HPBG
Islington Board of Guardians	1864-1933	ISBG
Kensington Board of Guardians	1837-1931	KBG

¹ <http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/visiting-the-city/archives-and-city-history/london-metropolitan-archives/Documents/visitor-information/04-poor-law-records-in-london-and-elsewhere.pdf>

BOARD OF GUARDIANS (continued)

Lambeth Board of Guardians	1834-1930	LABG
Lewisham Board of Guardians	1835-1932	LEBG
Paddington Board of Guardians	1845-1936	PABG
Poplar Board of Guardians	1813-1940	POBG
Shoreditch Board of Guardians	1848-1944	SHBG
Southwark Board of Guardians	1798-1933	SOBG
Staines Board of Guardians	1905-1930	BG/S
Stepney Board of Guardians	1836-1943	STBG
Saint Marylebone Board of Guardians	1834-1943	STMBG
Saint Pancras Board of Guardians	1804-1932	STPBG
Uxbridge Board of Guardians	1836-1930	BG/U
Wandsworth Board of Guardian	1836-1933	WABG
Westminster Board of Guardians	1802-1936	WEBG
Willesden Board of Guardians	1896-1930	BG/W
Woolwich Board of Guardians	1861-1932	WOBG

For more records relating to the Bermondsey, Edmonton, Hampstead, Islington and Woolwich Boards of Guardians, see the local government pensions entry in the Occupational Pensions section.

CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION (COL)

The Chamberlain's duties combined municipal finance with public banking. His main duty was as treasurer or banker of the City of London with custody of the monies of the Corporation, called the City's Cash, and other funds. The Chamberlain was also treasurer of any charitable funds organised by the City.

Petitions and orders for payment of gifts and pensions to poor people in distress by Court of Alderman and Common Court	1676 - c. 1800	COL/CHD/PR/03/005
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See also: Occupational schemes, Widows' and Orphans' Funds.

CITY OF LONDON WARDS

The City of London was divided into wards for the purpose of government as early as Norman times. The wards had responsibility to keep the peace, supervise trade and oversee sanitation, and each ward has the right to elect an Alderman and Commoners to sit in the Court of Common Council of the Corporation of London.

Bridge Within Ward poor relief account (by the ward inquest)	1817 - 1832	CLC/W/GE/008/MS05780
Walbrook Ward assessments made for the maintenance of the poor of the parish of St Stephen Walbrook	1748, 1750-2, 1768, 1770, 1785	CLC/W/PA/006A/MS00472

EALING VESTRY (ACC/2208)

Pensions account, Brentford side		ACC/2208/E/112
Brentford Union overseers receipt and payments book	1894-1917	ACC/2208/H/073

See also: Almshouses, Widows' and Orphans' Funds.

HARROW BOROUGH PREDECESSORS (LA/HW)

Harrow Parish overseer of the poor's accounts	1684-1831	LA/HW/047- LA/HW/056
Harrow Parish overseers' receipts and disbursements	1837-1848, 1848-1858, 1868-1884, 1874-1893	LA/HW/275- LA/HW/278
Rules and orders for Harrow Parish Workhouse	18--	LA/HW/297

See also: Charity Pensions.

LONDON CIVIL PARISHES

Barnard's Inn: Poor rate assessment book and overseer's book of receipts and payments	1882 - 1907	CLC/157
Serjeants' Inn: Poor rate assessment book and overseer's book of receipts and payments	1873 - 1908	CLC/160
Thavie's Inn: Minutes of parish meetings; overseers' book of receipts and payments; valuation lists and poor rate books	1875 - 1908	CLC/161

PARISH POOR RELIEF

Most of the records relate the Vestry and Parish officers execution of their responsibilities as overseers of the poor prior to 1834.

<i>Collection reference</i>	<i>Collection Title</i>	<i>Description of relevant pension material within collection</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>References of pension material</i>
P69/ANA	Saint Anne and Saint Agnes: City of London	Overseers' accounts of pensioners' weekly allowances and other disbursements	1819-1838	P69/ANA/B/027/ MS01606
P69/AND4	Saint Andrew Undershaft: City of London	Churchwardens' sundry accounts, chiefly relating to weekly pensioners, out poor and rate arrears	1799-1810	P69/AND4/B/016 (2 items)
P69/BAT3	Saint Bartholomew The Great: City of London	Register of weekly pensioners, with record of payments	1812 - 1838	P69/BAT3/B/084/ MS04012
P69/BOT2	Saint Botolph Aldgate: City of London	Alphabetical lists of weekly pensioners	1818-1833	P69/BOT2/B/049/ MS02641
P69/BOT2	Saint Botolph Aldgate: City of London	Record of weekly payments to pensioners	1776-1812	P69/BOT2/B/050/ MS02628
P69/GIS	Saint Giles Cripplegate: City of London	Receipt books of women pensioners	1847 - 1850	P69/GIS/B/052 (2 items)
P69/GIS	Saint Giles Cripplegate: City of London	Lists of pensioners	1710 - 1711, 1714	P69/GIS/B/050 (3 items)

PARISH POOR RELIEF (continued)

P69/GIS	Saint Giles Cripplegate: City of London	Lists of names of pensioners elected annually	1846 - 1870	P69/GIS/B/051/M S06081
P69/JS2	Saint James, Garlickhithe: City of London	Overseers' account in respect of casual poor relief (i.e. small sums paid out by the overseer), with list of weekly pensioners, including militiamen's wives	1808 - 10	P69/JS2/B/025/M S05093
P69/JS2	Saint James, Garlickhithe: City of London	Payment book to weekly pensioners	1878 - 88	P69/JS2/B/027/M S05095
P69/KAT1	Saint Katherine Coleman: City of London	Payment of weekly pensioners	1753 - 1826	P69/KAT1/B/031
P69/LAW2	Saint Lawrence Pountney: City of London	Churchwardens' distribution (poor and pensioners) and petty disbursement books	1748 - 1820	P69/LAW2/B/013
P69/MGT1	Saint Margaret Lothbury: City of London	Pay lists for weekly poor and pensioners	1776 - 1838	P69/MGT1/B/042
DRO/058	Saint Laurence, New Brentford: Hounslow	Overseers' rate and account book, with note of payments to pensioners and casual poor	Jul 1722- Dec 1728	DRO/058/250
DRO/019	Saint Martin, Ruislip	'Pensions book'	1692-1734	DRO/019/E/04
P69/PET1	Saint Peter Cornhill: City of London	Overseers' register of weekly pensioners	1817 - 1818	P69/PET1/B/026/ MS07827
P69/PET1	Saint Peter Cornhill: City of London	Alphabetical register of paupers receiving weekly pensions, recording payments made	1836 - 1837	P69/PET1/B/028/ MS04204
P69/SEP	Saint Sepulchre, Holborn: City of London	List of annuitants	1800 - 1839	P69/SEP/B/064/ MS03246/001- 002 (2 items)
P69/SEP	Saint Sepulchre, Holborn: City of London	Overseers' weekly payments to pensioners and casuals	1833 - 1838	P69/SEP/B/066/ MS03272
P69/SEP	Saint Sepulchre, Holborn: City of London	Registers of weekly pensioners	1791 - 1845	P69/SEP/B/142/ MS09097/001- 006 (6 items)
P69/SWI	Saint Swithin, London Stone: City of London	Record of payments to the weekly poor, 1805-6 and weekly pensioners 1809	1805 - 1806, 1809	P69/SWI/B/015/ MS00571
P71/TMS	Saint Thomas, Southwark	49 Pension Lists	1762 - 1835	P71/TMS/0129 to P71/TMS/0178
P74/LUK	Saint Luke, Chelsea	21 Pensioned Poor Books, recording names of those receiving regular weekly relief, with amount (indexed)	1823-1835 (with gaps)	P74/LUK/039 to P74/LUK/059

PARISH POOR RELIEF (continued)

P74/LUK	Saint Luke, Chelsea	Pensioned Poor Book. Includes reference numbers of pensioned poor relieved, with amount	1833-1834	P74/LUK/060
P74/LUK	Saint Luke, Chelsea	Poor Relief volume Reference numbers of pensioned and casual poor relieved, with amount and from Jun 1836 relief given in kind	1834-1837	P74/LUK/061
P74/LUK	Saint Luke, Chelsea	Index of names, addresses and relief given to pensioned poor and bastardy cases	1800-1899	P74/LUK/062 and P74/LUK/063
P74/LUK	Saint Luke, Chelsea	Pension ledger: accounts of pensions received by officer usually overseer and paid to dependent (indexed)	1822-1824, 1933-1837	P74/LUK/085, P74/LUK/086 and P74/LUK/087
P81/JN1	Saint John at Hampstead, Hampstead	Pension list, arranged under headings 'Pensioners', 'Nurse Children', 'Militia', 'Army Reserve' or 'Children'	1798-1824, 1826-1828	P81/JN1/052 to P81/JN1/058
P85/MRY1	Saint Mary at Lambeth	Workhouse Committee minute book: weekly meetings for orders for stores, pensions, settlement matters etc.	1791-1815 [with gaps]	P85/MRY1/116 to P85/MRY1/128.
P87/MRY	Saint Mary, Paddington Green: Westminster	Day Book of Payments to Pensioned and Casual Poor	1823-1828	P87/MRY/024, P87/MRY/025 and P87/MRY/026
P87/MRY	Saint Mary, Paddington Green	Pension and Casual Pay-Book (arranged alphabetically)	1828-1832	P87/MRY/027 to P87/MRY/030
P87/MRY	Saint Mary, Paddington Green	3 pension and casual pay books. Records name, residence, occupation, age, age of children, number of persons, remarks (reason for receiving money) and amount paid on a weekly basis	1834-1837 [with gaps]	P87/MRY/174, P87/MRY/176 and P87/MRY/177
P87/MRY	Saint Mary, Paddington Green	Summary of pensions and casual pay (does not record names of recipients)	Apr 1835-Mar 1836	P87/MRY/175
60.531(ST.N)	Saint Nicholas, Chiswick	Parish pensions	1825-1828	60.531(ST.N)/080

There are also entries for the parish of Saint Laurence, New Brentford, Hounslow in the Charities concerned with the care of the elderly section of the Guide, entries for the parish of Saint Sepulchre, Holborn, in the Charity Pensions and Widows' and Orphans' Funds sections of the Guide, and entries for the parish of Saint Andrew Undershaft in the Charity Pensions section of the Guide.

ROYAL HOSPITALS OF BRIDEWELL AND BETHLEM (CLC/275)

Bridewell Precinct was an extra-parochial area, absorbed into the parish of St Bride Fleet Street in 1864.

Register of poor in the poorhouse with, at back, a register of out-pensioners. Entries for out-pensioners give more details than the register of poor, particularly of residence from 1795	1827 - 1836	CLC/275/MS33412
Lists of out-pensioners, poor children and parish poor living in Stepney Green Farm House	1833 - 1835 and undated	CLC/275/MS33413

STAINES RURAL AND URBAN DISTRICTS (ACC/1524)

Staines Poor Law Union overseers' receipt and payment book, parish of Staines	1897-1921	ACC/1524/114
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See also: Almshouses.