

Haslingden Workhouse



**Edited from a article that appeared in the Bacup Times January 31st 1903.
Through The Workhouse
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By Hurdles Wood**

Sorting Fibres For Beds

Descending a short stairway we find ourselves in a square cellar where was stacked a large heap of fibres. Seated on forms were a number of men engaged in the picking of this fibre, which is used for making beds, our guide informing us that the fibre made very good beds in every way light and springy. This occupation was very suggestive of oakum picking in gaols, but was a much more easy and pleasant task. From the main bulk each man gets a small quantity, which he gently pulls apart letting it fall from his hands in a loose heap on the floor and it is so light and fleecy that small particles rise like a cloud of dust in the room. One would imagine it could hardly fail to affect the lungs of those who have to work with it.

The Great Hall

From the cellar we passed up a few steps and thereby came to the large dining hall. In this hall are held those concerts and parties which help so much to brighten the lives of the inmates. At one end of the hall stands the pulpit from which the spiritual advisor of the inmates utters each Sunday words of hope and comfort. Hung on the wall, to the left of the pulpit in broad frames, are three remarkably good original crayon drawings by Mr Brown, of past chairmen of the Board of Guardians. The names of these gentlemen portrayed so faithfully are Mr Joseph Crowther of Bacup, Mr James Kenyon, of Accrington and the late James Lambert vice chairman.

The Cook House

Passing through the great hall the main building crossed a small open space and went into the cook house. Here the principal meals of the inmates are prepared. There are at times over 300 inmates. With great bricked up ovens on one side and on the other, deep wide, well polished pans, heated by steam. Standing near to the ovens is a good sized potatoe steamer and opposite to this and packed neatly upon one another are the utensils in which potatie pies are cooked.

The inmates dinners

I give a few examples of dinners prepared here with quantities to each inmate for the week.

Sunday : Roast Beef and potatoes four and half ounces for men and and four ounces for women. twelve ounces of potatoes for men and eight ounces for women, also four ounce of bread each.

Tuesday : Boiled beef and potatoes and bread in same quantity.

Thursday : same dinner as Tuesday.

Saturday: Boiled bacon and peas three ounces of bacon each.

The Wash House

The wash house is divided into two compartments one for the officers clothing and the other for the clothes of the inmates. Several women are engaged herein the week through, Saturdays excepted. They have plenty of work too, in washing the wearing apparel and bedding for over 300 inmates. The various machines are driven by a steam engine situated mid way in the wash house. A place heated by steam for drying purposes is also provided.

The Infirmary

Leaving the outbuildings where so much needed work is done, we re-entered the main block and passed through the Masters Kitchen on our way tot he infirmary. Here beneath this roof the dreaded demon of pain holds his revels, thrusting and driving his arrows of torture with fiendish delight into his weak prostrate, and unresisting victims. Here weary heads toss through long, painful sleepless nights and pain fraught eyes look into yours with touching appeal for aid.

In the first ward we entered many of the patients were in bed and had been there a long time. Some of them were so far worn looking one would conclude a little boy or girl lay there rather than that of a aged person. Fixed to the wall and over the head of each bed was a card upon which was entered the age, and the ailment of the patient. In one ward we saw an old woman whose age was close to ninety. She seemed to be asleep as we drew near, but on getting closer up she opened her dim eyes and mumbled something in response to a question from the nurse we did not quite overhear

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A more detailed description of the workhouse can be found here

<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/index.html?Haslingden/Haslingden.shtml>