

During the time of the Civil War, 1641, a Shrivenham resident, Sir Henry Marten, established the Almshouses Charity. Its aim was to provide a home for any older person in Shrivenham who had been overtaken by misfortune and needed somewhere to live. The conditions were that the person had lived in the parish for at least three years prior to application and that he or she was of good character. The original eight Almshouses were built in Claypits Lane. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Archdeacon Berens, then Vicar of Shrivenham, built another two Almshouses at his own expense and one of these houses was made available rent-free to the village nurse provided that she took care of any ailing occupants of the other houses.

Just before the last War, however, the picturesque cottages were condemned by the local doctor as being hazardous to health. Lady Barrington gave the Trustees a parcel of land for the specific purpose of building replacement Almshouses. The original houses were sold but War intervened when there was an embargo on building. The value of money also dropped and the then Trustees were only able to build four Almshouses in 1955. The present Trustees undertook as a Millennium project to build another two dwellings and these were finished in 2001.

Shrivenham United Charities also embraces the Garrards Trust which was set up in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and this seeks to assist any young person of straitened means who is undertaking an apprenticeship. The Trust offers, on application, a contribution towards the cost of essential tools. Today the United Charities maintains the Almshouses to a very high standard – they are for independent living. In recent years requests for assistance by deserving apprentices, living in the parish, have generally been met.

## **Shrivenham United Charities**

*Part 2*

In addition to providing accommodation in the Almshouses in Martens Road Shrivenham United Charities has a small fund under the name of Garrards Charity or Poors Charity. It is recorded on the Benefactions Board in the Church that in 1758 the churchwardens and the overseers purchased a meadow of 3 acres, the profits of which from renting it out were to be applied from time to time in apprenticing poor children of Shrivenham. Records show that in 1827 John Ackrill was helped with his Indenture, in 1831 Jonathan Reason was also helped and likewise in 1834 William Skinner. Garrards of Swindon later contributed to this charity. These earlier benefactors provided a grant for the purpose of helping Shrivenham apprentices towards the cost of providing any necessary tools of their trade. This small fund is open to requests. Recently the Trustees have extended this to include grants for younger, disabled persons under 21 who are going on to further or higher education.

If you would like to apply either to the Vicar, Chairman of the Trust or to the new Secretary, David Pratt, then your application will be considered at the next Trust Meeting.

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### A short history of Shrivenham United Charities    part 3

There have been several benefactors from Shrivenham who in the past have enabled persons in need to benefit from their money. Among them was a gentleman by the name of Thomas Stratton who in 1703 gave certain land in Shrivenham, in trust, to permit the Vicar of Shrivenham and his successors to enjoy the land as long as they gave £4 each year for the purpose of educating children of poor parents residing in the tithing of Shrivenham. Accordingly, a school-house was set up in what became known as the Forresters' Hall in Hazell's Lane and £4 was paid to a schoolmaster, appointed at a Vestry Meeting, for teaching 10 boys to read, write and cypher". The boys were selected by the Vicar.

#### **A short history of Shrivenham United Charities - part 4**

Thomas Stratton's school in Shrivenham, dating from 1703, was successful but it was over 100 years later before Watchfield had a similar school. This came about when an old ruined chapel in Watchfield was sold in 1788 and the sum realised from the sale was invested. A Deed of Trust was created in 1817 whereby the dividend was to be paid to the Vicar of Shrivenham for the sole purpose of educating 6 Watchfield children. That year it was recorded that the dividend amounted to £7 – 16 shillings. The teaching costs of the Day School were £3 – 12shillings and £3 -18 shillings was for the provision of a Sunday School for all children in Watchfield who would attend. The remaining sum of 6 shillings was to buy books for the children who were all taught to read and say the Catechism.



## A short history of Shrivenham United Charities part 5

Viscount Barrington's Charity was set up by the Right Honourable William Wildman who charged Caleb Colton, then Vicar of Shrivenham, together with the churchwardens and the Overseers of the parish with the responsibility for running this Charity for the poor of the parish. The building was divided into four tenements adjoining the field called Barnacles. Later they were removed and re-built by Lord Barrington into the lane we know as Manor Lane. They were four stone cottages, each having a small piece of ground, for four poor families who were put in by the Overseers. The lease of 1753 made no financial provision for future maintenance, sadly and limited the annual amount of total rent to come from these cottages to just 20 shillings. At first the cost of repairs and upkeep was taken from the Poor rate. Later in 1889 the Charity Commissioners established a scheme whereby the cottages were let at a more commercial rent and any profits made were directed towards the upkeep of the Martens Trust Almshouses. It was not long before the cottages came under the management of the Almshouses. Later still, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Trustees decided to sell the cottages.

## Secretary's responsibilities

To take the Minutes of the Meetings

To respond to queries and to implement the decisions of the Trustees

To update the local records and any Charity Commission records

To pay the window cleaner each month

CATS system

Christmas parcels

To advertise vacancies

To inform about the apprentices' fund

To organise cleaning and re-decoration of vacated bungalows

To expedite any MAINTENANCE:

Quinquennial inspections

Gas annual check for landlord's certificate

Electricity inspection for landlord's certificate – every 3 years

To attend to any mal-functions of water, gas , electricity or other

Drains

Letting residents know of any work to be done and being around at the time

## Notes on Appointments

1. Advertise the vacancy in "the News", in various shops and on notice boards but only in the village.
2. Selection – Vicar is the only Trustee to know about the financial circumstances. We still use the criteria in the 1641 charter.
3. Invite new person to view the Almshouse. After 2 character references received.
4. Applicant must sign 2 copies of appointment.
4. Applicant sets up standing Order and pays 1 month's contribution in advance. Note this a Contribution not rent. Different legal standing from rent.
5. Applicant pays Council Tax, gas and water and electricity.
6. Trust pays for TV licence for under 75's if not working more than 15 hours a week.
7. Trust pays for window cleaning – outside, once a month. £5 per dwelling. Michael collects 1<sup>st</sup> Friday each month from Secretary who claims quarterly from Treasurer ie £90.
8. Keys only handed over when SO set up.
8. Give a copy of Handbook to be read straightaway as it tells what you have told them.
9. Both the Vicar and the Secretary hold a spare set of keys..