
PAUPERS AND OFFICIALDOM

by John Bright

In the Town Papers relating to the Parish of Newnham there is a folder containing correspondence between the churchwarden T. Thatcher at Newnham and a J. Radcliffe, one of the officials acting on behalf of the paupers in the city of Worcester. The letters concern the family of John

Young and give an example of how the paupers were dealt with in the early nineteenth century at a time of fast rising poor law rates.

This correspondence reveals the harrowing circumstances in which they found themselves and

what appears to be a touching example of how the grandmother endeavoured to maintain the children left in her care. It also shows some compassion exhibited by the officials but at the same time a certain insensitivity by the churchwarden of Newnham when he receives news of the death of

business and be esteemed a favour by, Gentlemen

Your obedt servant. J. Radcliffe. Overseer.

The letter in reply to the above from Newnham dated March 18th 1806.

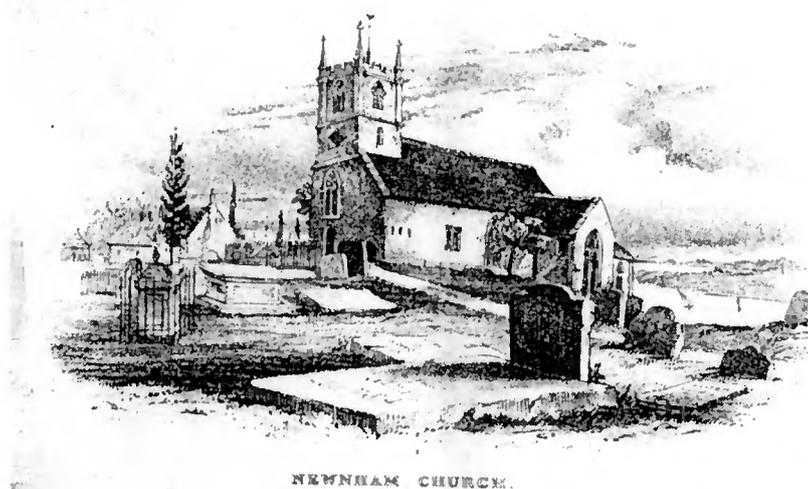
Mr. Radcliffe.

Your letter of the 15th Date came in due course respecting the wife of John Young and there is such a person belonging to our parish we have not the least doubt but it may be the same. But we never heard of his having a second wife till your letter informed us and in regard to the poor womans situation (as represented in your letter) we as officers can order nothing permanent for her till our next parish meeting which will be the 1st day of April being this day fortnight. In the meantime we feel ourselves at the liberty for and during the said fortnight (and until you hear further from us) to request that you will allow the poor woman the same as you would for one of your own paupers and as soon as she is able to be removed she must come home. Having paid dear for a Suspended Order we would by no means wish you to make use of so ungenerous a proceeding as it has ever been our wish to support our own poor and act in conjunction with every neighbouring parish.

I am Sir. Your humble servant. T. Thatcher. Churchwarden.

Mr. Radcliffe replied from Worcester on the 28 April 1806.

I take the opportunity of sending by my son an account of what relief has been given to the family of John Young. After receiving your kind letter I made report of the case to the Director of our House of Industry who agreed that under such circumstances they should allow to one of their paupers 2/6d (12½p) per week which has been paid six weeks. The case is this. The woman is so much indisposed that she cannot do anything. There are two children, one three years old and the other born last Christmas. She is the wife of a man attached to a Regiment under the Defence Act consequently his wife received 1/6d (7½p) for each of the



Newnham Church

Young's wife in that no sympathy is expressed although at the Newnham Vestry meeting the members show their disapproval at Young's subsequent behaviour.

The letters transcribed from their original are as follows:-

From. John Radcliffe. At St. Clements. Worcester. March 15th 1806.

Gentlemen.

John Young belonging to your parish enlisted in the 43rd Regiment of Light Infantry the 19th day of April last. His wife with two children remain in this parish. The younger of the children was born the 28th December last but she has not recovered from her lying-in and is now very ill. It is thought by her mother and others who attend her that she is in consumption. She has pawned many of her things such as wearing apparell etc. and is in great distress. If you will be kind enough to send her relief it may prevent the family from being removed or perhaps put under Suspense Orders of Removal as she is very ill in which case the expense will be very great. Your early answer is requested to St. Clements Worcester which will obviate this

Mr. Thatcher of Newnham replied as follows on the 2 May 1806.

W. Radcliffe
for

Newnham May 2^d 1806

I was duly favoured with your Letter of the 28th ultimo and have herewith sent you 17/6d being for 7 Weeks pay for John Youngs Wife & family to next Tuesday the 6th instant the reason I sent it up to that Day is, it being our Monthly Meeting, and we are in hopes the Woman will soon recover so as to be able (with her own Industry) her 4/6d per week not to be burthensome to us - I should esteem it a favour if you will have the goodness to ask the Woman where she was married in case our Parish should think proper to apply for a Certificate - the favour of a line will greatly oblige

for
Your humble servant
J. Thatcher

I was duly favoured with your letter of the 28th ultimo and have herewith sent you 17/6d (87½p) being seven weeks pay for John Young's wife and family to next Tuesday the 16th instant. The reason I sent it up to that day is, being our monthly meeting and we are in hopes the woman will soon be able to recover (by her own industry) and her 4/6d per week not to be burdensome to us. I should esteem it a favour if you will have the goodness to ask the woman where she was married in case our parish should think proper to apply for a certificate. The favour of a line will greatly oblige. Sir.

Letter from Newnham - 2 May 1806

family viz: 4/6d (22½p) per week then with your 2/6d makes 7/- (35p) per week. She pays 1/- (5p) per week for rent, she has coal and candles also to provide so that the pay is scanty everything considered. I saw the woman this evening and she continues very ill. Please send by my son the money advanced and if you mean the family to continue here you may send some money in advance and also may consider whether in your parish you would not allow her something more.

I am etc.

John Radcliffe.

On the 13 May 1806 Mr. Thatcher received a letter from Mr. Radcliffe in which he wrote

I safely received yours with 17/6d (87½p) which is 2/6d less than has been paid to the family of Young. I have according to your desire enquired for and seen the certificate of their marriage which is dated at the parish church of St. Andrews in Worcester 18th April 1802 by the Revd. Faulkner. I have further to inform you that Hannah, the wife of John Young is exceedingly ill and not likely to recover. She is afflicted with a violent pain in her head, that one of her eyes has turned in its socket and she is blind and cannot help herself to and from her bed. The child has

been weaned some time because she has no milk and the child seems better since than it was before so that in all probability your parish will have in short time to take care of two helpless children. A few lines from you directing how we are to proceed and how much we are to have the advanced money remitted will oblige

Sir, Your humble servant. John Radcliffe.

The marriage certificate requested certified that John Young and Hannah Kilgore of the parish of St. Andrews in the city of Worcester were married on 18 April 1802. William Faulkner, Rector.

On 30 May 1806 Mr. Thatcher was informed by John Radcliffe from Worcester that

Hannah the wife of John Young died on the 19th May inst. This being the day we pay the poor makes eleven weeks at 2/6d being £1-7s-6d (£1.37½p) and we have allowed and paid to her husband eighteen shillings toward her funeral expenses. We imagine you will not think that too great a sum. The mother of the deceased viz. the grandmother to the two children proposes to keep the children if you will allow 3/- (15p) per week besides three shillings which they will receive as children of a militia man. If you will approve of her proposal you will please to find out the means of remitting the money advanced in some regular way. If you do not approve you will please to send for the children to their parish. Your account stands thus:

To 11 weeks paid at 2/6d per week.
£1-7s-6d

Money allowed for funeral expenses
18s-0d (90p)

Total £2-5s-6d (£2.27½p)

We beg you to write immediately that we may be at a certainty because we may be obliged to allow more than we do at present.

I remain etc. J. Radcliffe.

**The letter in reply to the above, from Newnham
6 June 1806**

Sir,

Your letter of the 30th ultimo came to hand and as our parish meeting was held last Tuesday an order was made to reimburse you £1-8/- (£1.40p) in arrears and also from and after that day to continue 3/- (15p) for Young's two children. We shall be glad to pay the money to

your order or when it amounts to an even sum we will remit you.

T. Thatcher.

It would seem that the allowances made to the children were settled for some time but in 1809 a letter was sent to Newnham from the House of Industry in Worcester to the effect that

Young was discharged from the Army of Reserve and the pay stopt (*sic*). The directors have allowed the grandmother 3/- extra for this one week. Please send a line whether you will allow that pay or have them removed home. He has married a woman that is big with child and has left her at St. Bedwardine near this city.

This news did not please the Vestry at Newnham and Mr. Thatcher replied to this on 3 May 1809

Sir,

Your letter without date was received with an account of 35 weeks pay for Young's children amounting to £3-5/- (£3.25p) and for which I have enclosed you a bill for the same. We had a Vestry meeting yesterday and with respect to Young our parishioners seem displeased with his conduct. It is therefore ordered that no more than the usual pay be allowed to his children.

T. Thatcher.

On the 31 August 1809 the Director of the House of Industry at Worcester wrote to the churchwardens at Newnham requesting that additional financial consideration be given to the plight of the children's grandmother in her attempts to maintain them at a time of rising prices during the Napoleonic wars.

Sir,

The bearer solicited a line from me stating her case which is a distressed one indeed having two small children to maintain on the small pittance of 3/-s per week. When she received 3/-s per week from the militia accountant you then allowed 3/-s per week. When that was stopt (*sic*) the Directors added 3/-s per week in lieu of it for your parish and thinking you would not object to it as it made up the usual sum giving you a letter informing you of it and to our surprise your answer allowed 1/6d (7½p) per head and ever since the grandmother, through affection for the children has debarred

herself of Necessaries to support them. Was (were) the children removed as we have advised what would be your expenses then. I hope you will consider the poor womans situation and add to the weekly pay as she has been saving the parish lately very much and it is impossible two children can be provided with meals, drink, clothes, washing and lodging for 3/- per week.

The above letter exhibits a degree of sympathy towards the grandmother in her difficult role of bringing up her two grandchildren.

Having considered this request the Newnham Vestry replied in September 1809 through Mr. Thatcher

Your letter of the 31st ultimo was duly received respecting Young's two children. We admit the present pay too little but yet it was the majority of our Meeting some time ago not to advance any more. However at a meeting held yesterday and as the poor grandmother seems unwilling to part with them it is agreed to allow her one shilling (5p) per week more making in the whole four shillings (20p) per week.

One can only hope that the grandmother's care and affection for the children was worthwhile. It is most likely that at the appropriate age they were put out to apprenticeships. Whether or not they received compassion from their masters is something we shall never know.

Reference : G. R. O. P228 OV 3/5/2