



LIVERPOOL ALMSHOUSES

TRANSACTIONS

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By Henry Peet, F.S.A.

Read 9th November 1911.

ALMSHOUSES in very small country towns, where the inmates are known to all the inhabitants, may be a desirable form of charity, but in large and populous cities benefactions of this character, as a rule, do far more harm than good. The alms-people, however deserving and cleanly on their first admission, invariably degenerate, and the houses become little better than a "slum," often in fact filthy and verminous to a degree which renders them dangerous to the health of the neighbourhood.

Experience has shown that people of the class who generally find a home in almshouses are much better provided for by a weekly allowance in money, sufficient to enable them to reside with relations or friends, who, in the case of very aged people, may be expected to look after them, and minister to their comfort.

The trustees of the local "Consolidated Charities" have for some considerable time been fully alive to the unsatisfactory condition of affairs in the almshouses under their control, but it was only recently that the patrons of the various houses could be approached with any certainty that the new scheme which had been formulated would meet with their approval. This has now been accomplished, with

the result that the almshouses on the north-east side of Cambridge Street, covering an area of 2880 square yards, were sold by public auction on 8th March 1911, and realised £2900. They are now untenanted, and will shortly be pulled down. It is understood that a Maternity Hospital is to be erected on the site.

These almshouses were built in 1787. At that time this district, which was known as "The top of Martindale's Hill," was a healthy, open situation, far removed from the heart of the town, and might be considered to have been almost in the country. The buildings occupy three sides of a quadrangle, and are arranged in two stories, with a covered gallery or arcade running round. There are forty-eight tenements, which give accommodation for ninety-six almswomen, each house being provided with two bedrooms and one living room. The superintendent's house on the right of the entrance gates was a more recent addition, being erected in 1866. The building on the left of the entrance has an incised stone let into the wall, about 12 feet from the ground, which is a copy of the cement tablet on the wall of the first tenement, next to the superintendent's house. The painted lettering on this tablet is much defaced, and in part almost illegible. It is hoped that the incised stone, which is in a good state of preservation, will be built into the wall of the new intended hospital near to its present position.

Previous to the year 1787 there were several blocks of almshouses in different parts of the town. The most ancient were built in "The Dale." The district known as "The Dale" extended, approximately, from the present Municipal Offices to the Brown Museum, and northward to Scotland Place. This is probably the lowest-lying land within the parish boundaries. This Dale must not be con-

founded with Dale Street. The street, of course, took its name from the fact that it led to The Dale, and eventually as it was continued through The Dale, over the Pool Bridge, and crept up the rising ground—now William Brown Street—the whole length, as far nearly as London Road, was known as Dale Street, and so it continued to be known until the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century (1725). About that time Samuel Shaw and his son Thomas established their pottery works on the site now occupied by the Brown Museum, from which circumstance that portion of Dale Street became known as Shaw's Brow, and at the bottom of Shaw's Brow the first almshouses of which we have any record were built. They are generally supposed to have been given by David Poole, but a curious entry in the town books states that it was a *friend* of Mr. Poole's to whom the Corporation in 1684 granted permission to build. The name of this friend is not known.

Eight years later (1692) another block of almshouses was erected in The Dale by Dr. Silvester Richmond. They formed a sort of annex to Poole's houses. In the *Parish Vestry Books*, under date 1758, these houses of Dr. Richmond's are described as being "at the bottom [end] of Dale Street, since called Shaw's Brow." About thirty years elapsed before any more almshouses were built. A bequest in 1724 by James Scasbrick resulted in another block being erected at the "east end of the almshouses at Dale Street End."

These three blocks of houses—Poole's, Richmond's, and Scasbrick's—were in 1748 found to be in a dilapidated condition, and were pulled down, and in their stead new ones were erected near the Fall-Well. Possibly the desire to open out the street had something to do with their removal, as thirteen years earlier one of the houses in the centre

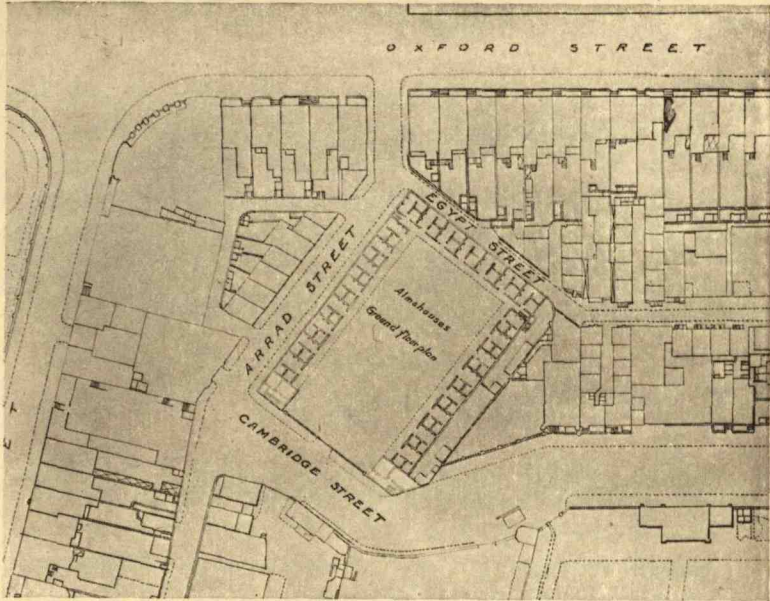
of the block had been demolished so that a passage-way could be made. Greater facilities were required for the increasing traffic northward, and at the date of removal (1748) we see the first beginning of the street we now know as the Old Haymarket.

This same year (1748), when the houses were all rebuilt near the Fall-Well—the exact position is immediately opposite the Lime Street entrance of the railway station—Edward Tatlock, another charitably disposed townsman, built a range of almshouses in front of them.

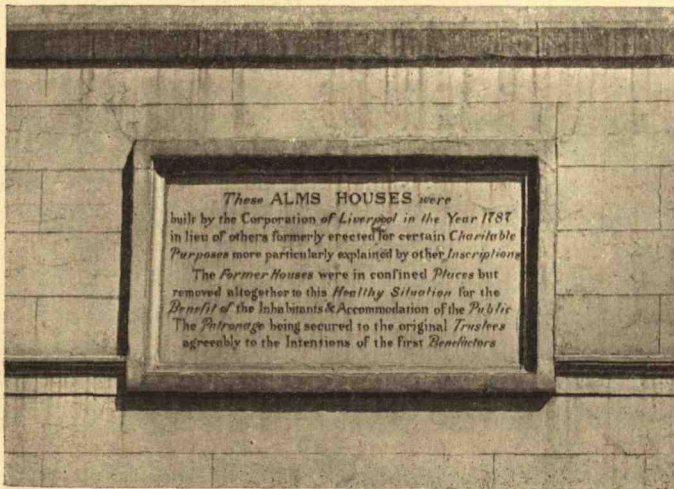
Forty years before this (1706) Richard Warbrick, mariner, gave £160 to erect almshouses for sailors' widows, which were subsequently endowed by his nephew, another Richard Warbrick. These were built at the east end of Hanover Street. The exact site is now the pavement immediately opposite the entrance to the Mersey Railway Station under the Lyceum News Room.

In 1787 the Corporation acquired the various buildings and sites, and concentrated them all in Cambridge Street. A full account of the origin and development of the various charitable bequests for the use of the poor of the parish will be found in the forthcoming volumes of *Parish Vestry Books* which are being published by the University of Liverpool School of Local History and Records.

The ground-plan, with a general view of the almshouses, and a photograph of the incised stone, are now reproduced. My thanks are due to Mr. Myles Dixon for the carefully drawn ground-plan; and to Mr. Waite for the photographs.



PLAN OF ALMSHOUSES



TABLET ON ALMSHOUSES