

Poverty in Cumbria The Poor and the Parish

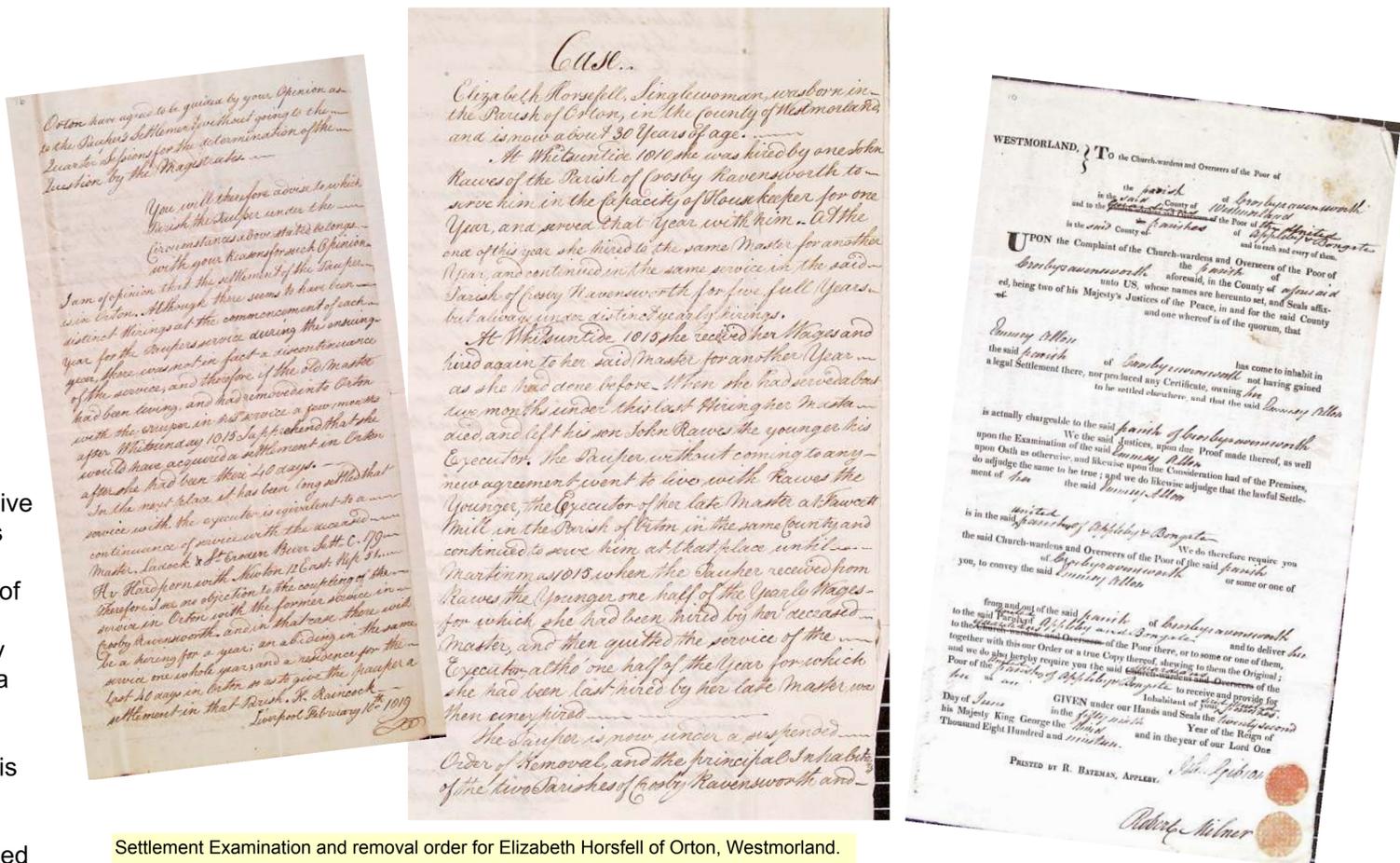
A historical perspective

This display looks at how poverty in Cumbria was addressed before the advent of the Welfare State in 1948. Three themes are highlighted, namely, the Poor Laws which date back to the 16th century and remained in force up to the passing of the National Insurance Act of 1948, public health and the work of charities. The 19th century saw a period of radical change with the overhaul of poor laws as the Elizabethan Acts became increasingly expensive and discredited. The growth of urban populations led to over crowding and squalor and we look at the impact of this and efforts to address overcrowding in our two largest towns, Barrow and Carlisle. Finally we look at the work of two charities working in the Port of Whitehaven in the 19th century.

The Act of Settlement, 1662, set out the ways a poor person could legally claim settlement in a parish. Children obtained settlement in the place in their parish of birth, even if illegitimate. Overseers were often anxious to remove pregnant unmarried women before the birth of the child. In the 18th and 19th centuries the cost of poor relief rose steadily and the removal of paupers to their parish of origin was a common.

Documents relating to settlement survive in great quantities in parish collections and generally include settlement examinations where a person's place of settlement is established, certificates where a person has been accepted by the parish and removal orders where a person is deemed not to be legally settled in a parish and is ordered to be removed by the Parish Constable to his or her parish of origin.

A new settlement could also be obtained through apprenticeship for more than a year.



Settlement Examination and removal order for Elizabeth Horsfell of Orton, Westmorland.

Ref. WPR77 (Kendal Archives)

Register of Parish Apprentices, for the				Parish of Crosby Ravensworth According to Act of Parliament, Ch. 46, 7th May, 1802.									
No.	Date of Indenture	Name of the Apprentice	Sex	Age	His or her Parents Names	Their Residence	Name of Persons to whom bound or assigned.	His or her Trade.	His or her Residence.	Term of his Apprenticeship or Assignment.	Apprentice or Assignment Fee.	Overseers Parties to the Indenture or Assignment	Magistrates assenting, to be signed by themselves
1	1 st June 1803	Joh. Kendall	M	12	Thos. Kendall	Northampton	Joh. Kendall	Wooler	Crosby Ravensworth	1 st 21 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther
2	1 st June 1803	John Hogg	M	12	Thos. Hogg	Crosby	Thos. Hogg	Harbourman	Whitebait	1 st 20 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther
3	1 st June 1804	Joh. Kendall	M	10	Thos. Kendall	Northampton	Wm. Kendall	Black	Whitebait	1 st 18 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther
4	23 rd Feb. 1804	John Workman	M	12	Wm. Workman	London	Wm. Workman	Wooler	Whitebait	1 st 20 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther
5	15 th Dec. 1804	Edward Hogg	M	10	Thos. Hogg	Whitebait	Thos. Hogg	Harbourman	Whitebait	1 st 10 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther
6	1 st May 1809	Joseph Hogg	M	12	Thos. Hogg	Whitebait	Thos. Hogg	Harbourman	Whitebait	1 st 10 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther
7	20 th May 1809	James Hogg	M	12	Thos. Hogg	Whitebait	Thos. Hogg	Harbourman	Whitebait	1 st 18 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther
8	1 st June 1809	George Hogg	M	11	Thos. Hogg	Whitebait	Thos. Hogg	Harbourman	Whitebait	1 st 21 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther
9	1 st June 1810	John Hogg	M	11	Thos. Hogg	Whitebait	Thos. Hogg	Harbourman	Whitebait	1 st 17 years of age	—	Jos. Gibson & Wm. Brown	Wm. Lawther

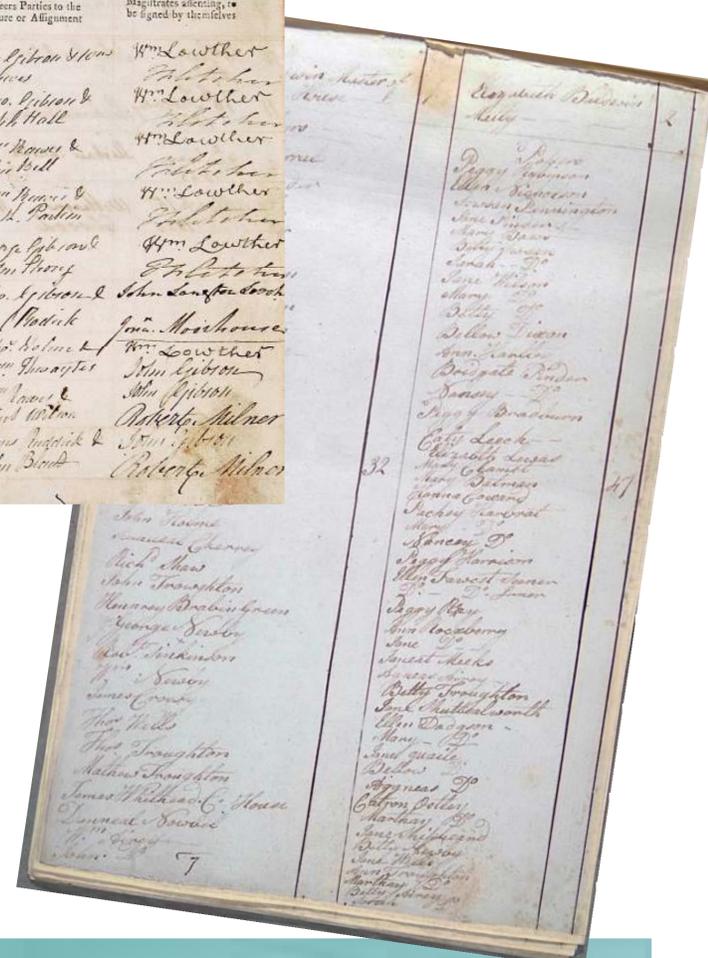
Register of apprentices for the parish of Crosby Ravensworth, Westmorland.

Ref. WPR7 (Kendal Archives)

Before 1834 the Poor Law was administered by the parish. The Acts of 1597 and 1601 provided for the annual election of Overseers of the Poor. In Cumbria there was a considerable variation in the way poor relief was provided at Parish level. In Kendal poor relief was provided through the Workhouse.

The volume to the right shows a list of overseers and inmates of Kendal Workhouse, taken from the 1787 Census of Westmorland.

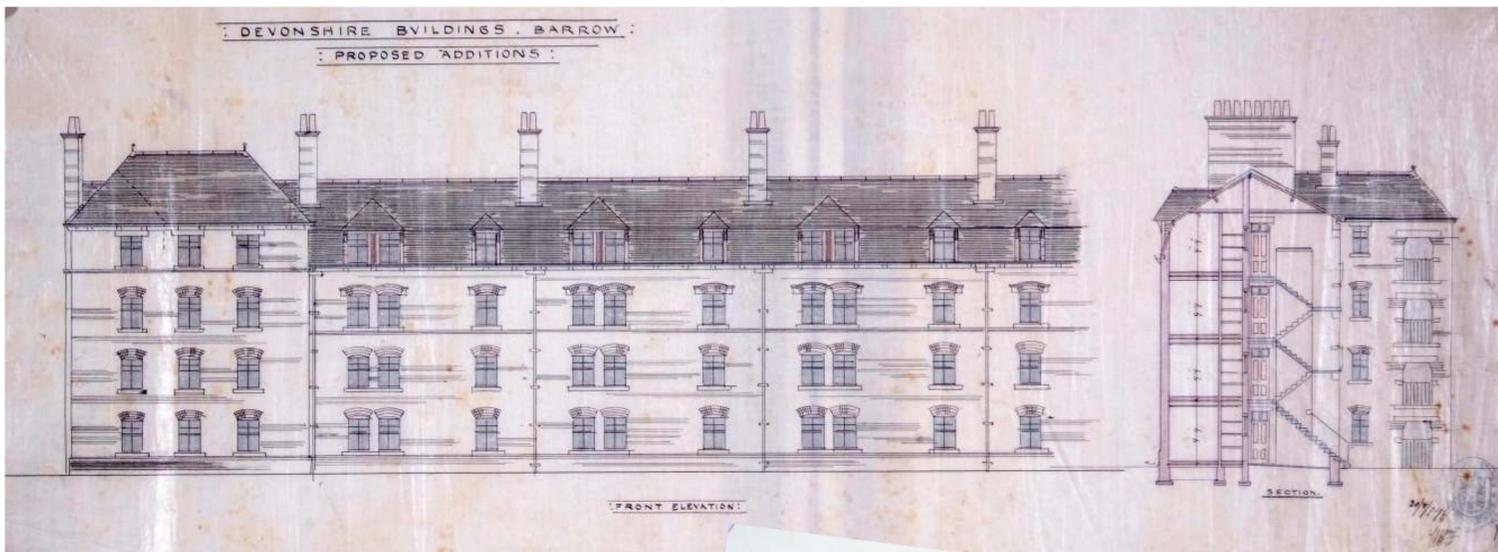
Ref. WQS/PC (Kendal Archives)



Poverty in Cumbria A historical perspective

Public health

Improving living conditions for all.



Devonshire Buildings

To accommodate a growing work force the Ship Building Company constructed the Devonshire Buildings on Barrow Island.

These flats were fashioned on the plans used to build the notorious Gorbals tenements in Glasgow.

They consisted mainly of 1 and 2 bedrooms and a living room and could house up to 264 families. There were also cellarage, a wash house and ground apportioned off as bleaching greens. According to a company press release the Devonshire Buildings were 'Fitted up with every convenience on the most approved modern principle'.



Kingstown No. 7a

A portion of four houses in California, Kingstown. This property is frequently flooded owing to the absence of gullies in the road; at the rear this road is about 3 feet higher than the house floors, and the only means of carrying away the surface water from this road is by a 4" gully situated under the water tap shown in this photograph.



Kingstown No. 8

A typical fringe modern at Kingstown. Note the refuse and excrement under the tree bands.

Sanitary inspection photographs

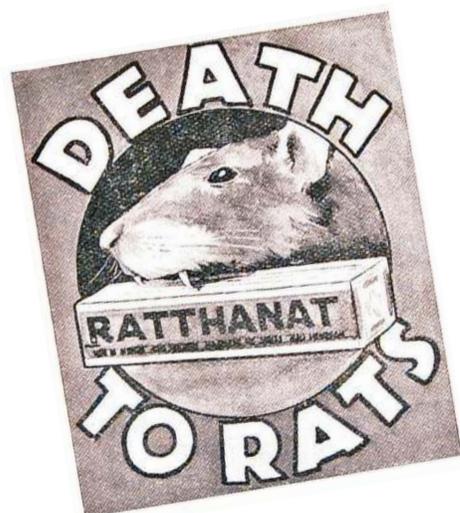
Many parts of the county were without basic sanitary facilities such as underground sewers, drains and water pipelines until well into the 20th century. These photographs show the situation that existed in the hamlet of Kingstown, just north of Carlisle, around 1905. The Sanitary Inspectors observed slop and refuse water being thrown into the streets and houses that were deemed unfit for human habitation.

Ref. CaH9, circa 1905 (Carlisle Archives)



Biggar Bank

The Housing Act of 1935 allowed greater subsidies for slum clearance and compelled local authorities to make a full survey of local housing conditions. In February 1938 an inquiry was held to decide upon the Council's intention of clearing away some 28 huts and caravans at Biggar Bank. These were built mainly of wood, corrugated iron and tarred felt. Rooms were less than 8 feet high, there were inadequate sanitary arrangements and lighting was mainly by oil lamps. As a result of the inquiry, and other action, some of the huts and caravans at Biggar Bank were removed. The remainder lasted until well after the Second World War. (Barrow Archives)



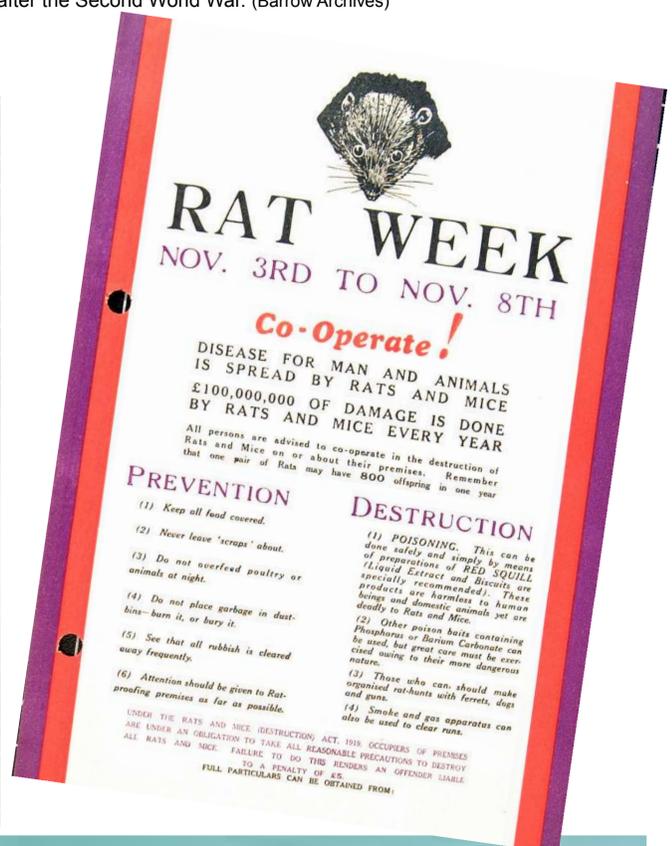
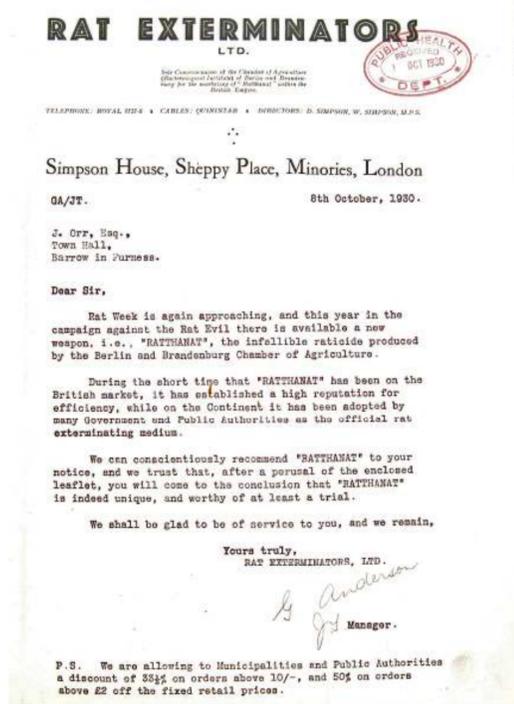
Rat week

The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act, 1949, encouraged all local authorities to ensure that their districts were kept free from rodent infestation.

Two Rodent Control Operatives were employed by Barrow Borough Council to carry out periodic inspections and exterminations. The work was carried out free of charge with the exception that owners of business premises paid for the cost of materials and labour.

The national rat week campaign served to highlight the risks of rodent infestation to general public health.

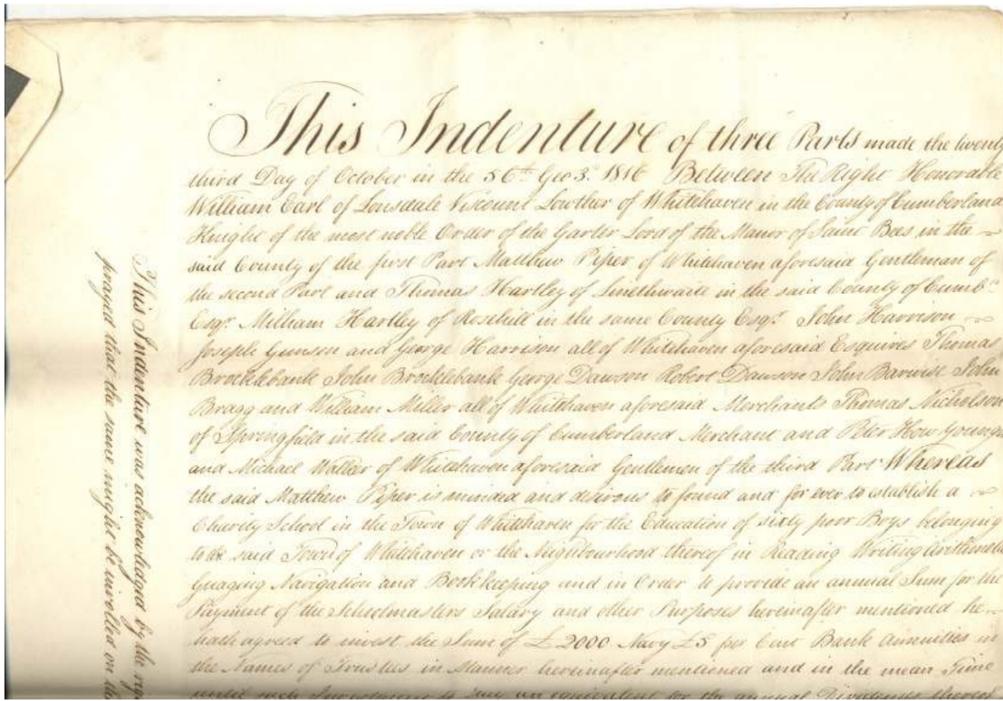
(Barrow Archives)



Poverty in Cumbria A historical perspective

Wilson and Piper's Charities Whitehaven

The county's Archive Centres contain records of many local charities which had striven to alleviate poverty in their localities in past centuries. Many were supported by wealthy people who had bequeathed money to support and sustain a charitable cause. The provision of relief often went hand in hand with a wish to assist the advancement of those in need.



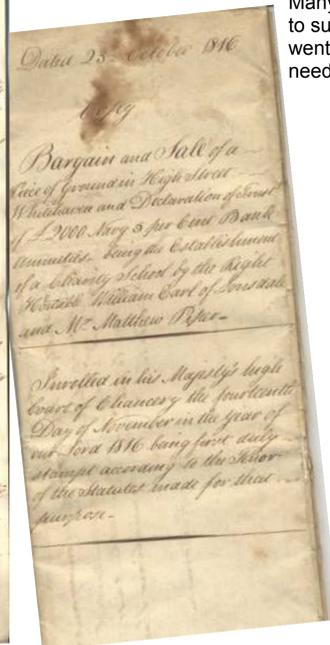
Piper's Charity, Whitehaven

The records of Piper's Charity form another fascinating record of charitable work, on this occasion of Mr Matthew Piper, as well as illuminating many aspects of Whitehaven life. Piper, a member of the Society of Friends, died on 24 October 1821 aged 91. His obituary (*Cumberland Packet* 22 October 1821) stated that he had 'amassed a considerable fortune by parsimonious economy' and with his money he founded and endowed a soup kitchen in Whitehaven, and also three schools in Whitehaven, Kendal and Lancaster.

Whitehaven's Marine School was the product of Piper's charitable endowments, with the stated aim of helping educate sixty poor boys from the town. The curriculum, as outlined in some of the surviving records seems to be in accord with the subjects studied in Whitehaven with a view to boys becoming seamen or apprentices on merchant ships and the trust deed talks about equipping the boys with 'Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Guaging, Navigation and Bookkeeping'.

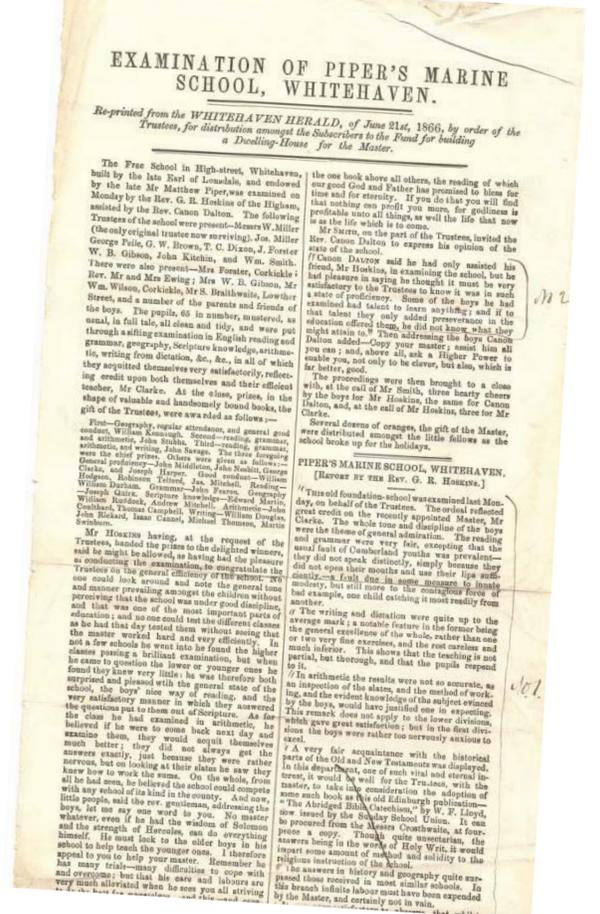
Whitehaven's Marine School continued 'turning out ... well educated lads, whose reading, writing and 'rithmetic at Piper's School never cost their poor parents one penny' until 1908 when the school was sold and the money realised was used to purchase the site of the grammar school which was built in the same year.

Ref. DBH 28 (Whitehaven Archives)



The Trust deed of Whitehaven Marine School was dated 1816 and the school established in 1822.

Ref. DBH 28/1/11 (Whitehaven Archives)



Examination of the Marine School, 1866

Ref. DBH 28/6 (Whitehaven Archives)



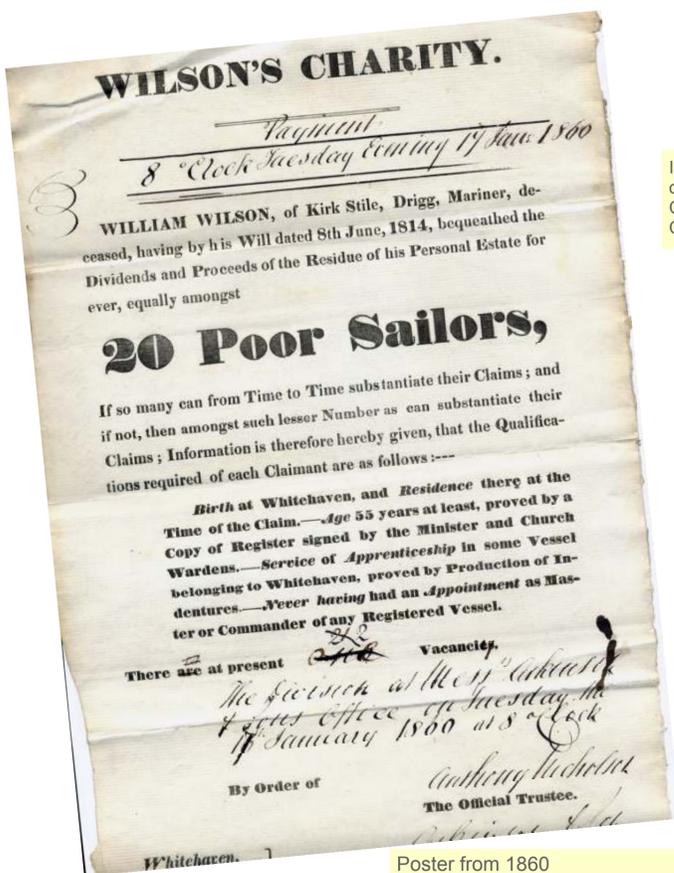
Individual membership cards survive for many of the poor sailors who applied to Wilson's Charity: this is from applicant no.17 John Crosby

Wilson's Charity for Poor Sailors

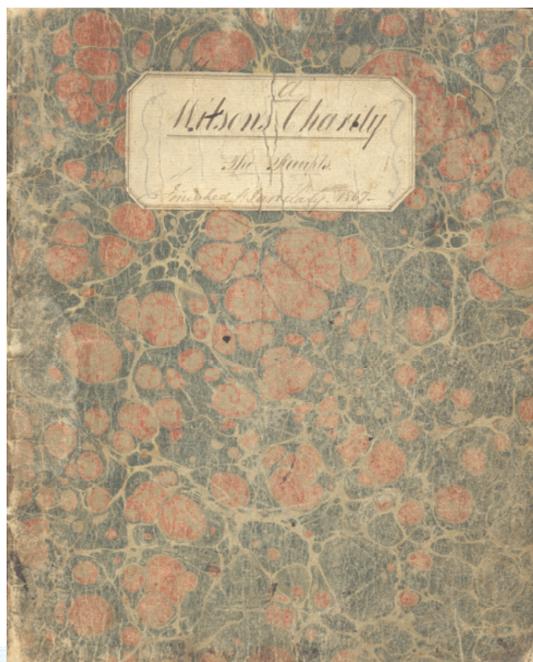
William Wilson's bequest provided for sailors in need in one of Cumbria's largest ports, Whitehaven. Through his will he provided that his money (stocks) be invested to provide funds for the upkeep of twenty poor sailors in the town. The conditions of this were: the sailors would be paid if they were 55 years old or over; if they had never been promoted; and had served as apprentices. All this information had to be proved by their indentures. The charity began in November 1839.

£500 of William Wilson's money had been put into the fund as an initial investment. If there were less than twenty sailors applying for help, then the money should be split accordingly. If there were more than twenty sailors applying for the money, it was up to the trustees to divide the payments. The charity also provided for the funeral expenses of the applicant sailors. Throughout the existence of the charity, approximately £1182 was put into the fund, and used for the support of sailors. Each sailor who received payments had a card with his details on to prove his identity. As some of the men were illiterate, they drew a 'mark' in place of their signature and a trustee would then indicate their name.

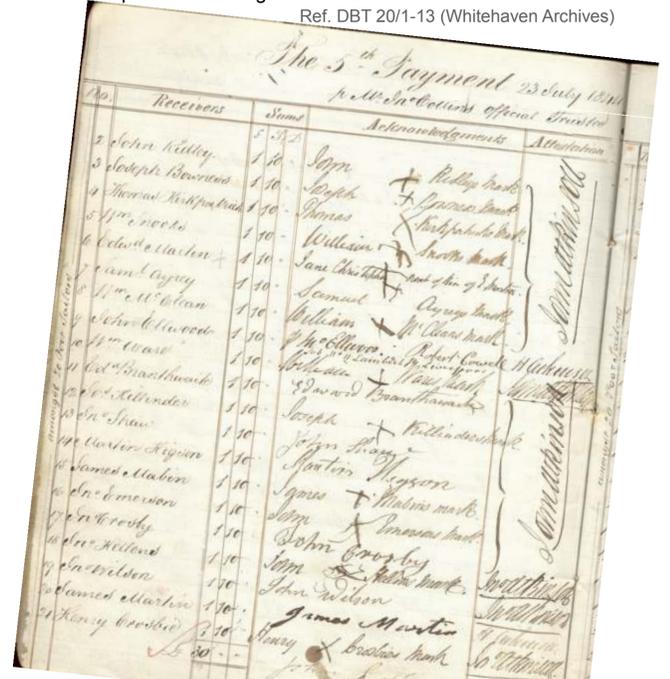
Ref. DBT 20/1-13 (Whitehaven Archives)



Poster from 1860
Ref. DBT 20/2 (Whitehaven Archives)



Payments Account Book
Ref. DBT 20/3 (Whitehaven Archives)



List of sailors who received payment in 1844. On receipt of the payment of £1 10s most placed a mark instead of their signature.
Ref. DBT 20/3 (Whitehaven Archives)