

# The Thomas Galon Charity

By John Shepperson, Chairman of the Trustees

In 1528 Thomas Galon of Wilburton died and in his Will he gave instructions that the income from land he owned in Swavesey should be distributed each year to :

*"Inhabitants of the town of Swavesey aforesaid, for the relief, ease and discharge of all persons, husband-labourers and poor craftsmen dwelling in the town and not having lands or tenements or goods to the value of £20 and receiving no relief from the Parish."*

To carry out his wishes, he stated that twelve Feoffees (trustees) be appointed. These were leading village elders and once appointed they were to serve for life. When their number had fallen by death to six, those remaining were to choose six more to return their number to twelve and comply with his wishes.

For over 200 years the income appears to have been distributed as Thomas Galon had instructed and by 1750 the rents received each year amounted to £20.

Shortly after that time, the Trustees began to spend some of the income in other ways and they decided there was a need to provide facilities for the education of the poor children in the village. In 1757 they built a School and for the first time started to pay a schoolmaster to teach the children of the poor – he was paid a salary of £6 per year. This continued for about ten years but by 1847 the School had been made into two cottages and these were given to the Trustees of the National School, to provide a home for their schoolmaster and schoolmistress.

In 1766 a hospital was founded in Cambridge, by a bequest of John Addenbrookes and in the following year a donation of £2 2s was made to the hospital by the Trustees. This amount was increased after a few years and was paid annually.

By 1800 rents had increased and the Trustees were then finding other ways in which they could distribute the income. Turf, and later coal for firing, blankets for the poor, plus payments in cash to those in need were made. Payments were also made to the local doctor to inoculate the poor when a smallpox outbreak occurred in the village. One such instance is recorded in 1819, which stated :

*"Jan 19<sup>th</sup>. Paid Robt Ellis of Willingham for inoculating 238 poor persons with the smallpox at the time that fatal disease was quite brief in the parish, £10 10s 0d."*

The distribution of the income of the Charity continued in this way until 1876 when a new Scheme was introduced to help guide the Trustees. In this new Scheme the net yearly income was divided into thirds. From one third, up to £5 5s could be given each year to support a hospital which was of benefit to the residents of Swavesey and up to £15 each year could be given to support a *"well conducted Public Elementary School in the Parish of Swavesey."* The remaining two thirds to be spent for the *"benefit of deserving and necessitous inhabitants of the Parish of Swavesey,"* on such things as clothes, bedding, fuel, medical aids in special cases, *"as shall be considered by the Trustees to be most advantageous to the recipients."*

For the next sixty years or so, the Trustees were able to follow this advice. Payments were made each year to Addenbrookes Hospital and these continued until the National Health Service was formed. Each year cash was given to the Trustees of the National School, to help with the education of village children but the largest part of the income was used to help those considered most in need – the elderly in the village. At that time every home in the village relied on coal to provide heating, so two and sometimes three allocations of coal were made each year to elderly couples, widows and widowers and when funds allowed tea and sugar were also given.

By the 1960's the 1876 Scheme had become outdated. Payments to the Hospitals and for education were not allowed as these were now State funded organisations. In an attempt to comply with the education clause, donations were made to the Church and Bethel Sunday Schools. Donations were also made to medical research provided they were charitable organisations.

By 1970 central heating was becoming the only heating source in many old peoples homes so requests were being made to the Trustees for cash payments instead of the allocation of coal.

The time had now come for the Trustees to apply to the Charity Commissioners for a revision of the guidance in the 1876 Scheme to meet today's needs. Today, the Trustees can consider a request from any organisation that provides a service to Swavesey residents in need and can also themselves offer help in a variety of ways to any person, young or old in the community.

The Trustees are aware of the original intentions Thomas Galon had in mind when the Charity was first started and are willing to consider any requests for help. Anyone wishing to do so can approach the Clerk, or any Trustee and it will be considered in strict confidence.

The Clerk is: Mrs Linda Miller, 21 Thistle Green, Swavesey, CB4 5RJ. Tel: 202982

5 May 2004