



# St. Margaret's Church

I P S W I C H

## The Care of the Poor in Tudor Ipswich St Margaret's Parish

The economic problems of people living in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were exacerbated by the ending of the poor relief offered by the Church, whose wealth had been confiscated by Henry VIII in 1536. In some towns and cities generous individuals established charities and almshouses to give further assistance.



In Ipswich, it was Henry Tooley who, at his death in 1551, was the wealthiest merchant in the town. He left the greater part of his money and estate for the relief of the town's poor. The Almshouses which still bear his name were built near St Mary at Quay where he was buried. A further almshouse based on the remains of the Black Friars house was built from 1569 and became known as Christ's Hospital.

However, there remained another category of poor who, with some financial help, could remain in their own homes.

Various Acts of Parliament culminating in the Poor Law of 1601 set up a system whereby parishes were instructed to undertake poor relief.

In 1572 local officials were given the power to raise taxes so that all residents make

*“such weekely charge as they and everye of them shal weekely contribute towards the relief of the said poore people”*



Six sets of assessments for Ipswich survive for the reign of Elizabeth I. From this, one can see who contributed what amount in the parish of St Margaret's and to whom it went.

For 1574 the records state:-

*“The rate of taxed of inhabitants the xxv daye of August in the xvj yere of thereigne of our Sovereyn the Quene for the wekelye chardge toward tge relief of the poore by Robert Cutler and Rauff Scryvener, bayliffes, John Moore, William Smarte and Robert Sparrowe, justices.”*

Edmonde Wythepoll, esquire	Xvjd.	16d
Dame Margaret Jermye	iiijd	4d
Robert Ball,gent.	ijd	2d
John Brenne	iiijd	4d
William Lymfeld	iiijd	4d
John Cole	vjd	6d
John Gardner	iiijd	4d
Robert Hall	iiijd	4d
Thomas Cock	jd	1d
Laurence Bodnam	ijd	2d
Richard Bennett	jd	1d
Thomas Hoodles	jd	1d
William Johnson	ijd	2d
Edward Ballard	ijd	2d
Robert Bennes	jd	1d
John Withe	jd	1d
John Ropkyn*	jd	1d
Thomas Whitman	jd	1d
John Cocoke	jd	1d
Jasper Meremounte	jd	1d
Thomas Kenyngton	jd	1d
Jasper Bayley	jd	1d
Roger Barnye	iiijd	3d
Mr Leche	iiijd	4d
Jeames Thomson	jd	1d
Nicholas Norton and John Dauson	jd	1d
Peter Cole	ijd	2d
Michael Lytleburie	jd	1d
Robert Dawes	jd	1d
Humfrye Harman,gent	iiijd	4d
Robert Hynes	jd	1d
John Pretyman	iiijd	4d
William Medowe	jd	1d
Alce Ryvett,wedowe	ijd	2d
John Gibbon,gent.	iiijd	3d
Mrs Rysbye	vjd	6d

The appointed Collectors were John Gardner, tanner and Thomas Cocke and the Overseer was Thomas Kenington.

\* In the current Lady Chapel in St Margaret's is a tomb chest dated 1512 of William Ropkyn who died that year leaving money for his son William, a priest, to say masses for him. It would seem the family continued to live in the parish.

The monies collected were paid out weekly to the following:

Margaret Estall, widow	iiijd	4d
Mother Orgon	iiijd	4d
Ricjard Kyrke	iijd	3d
Mother Collen	vjd	6d
Wedowe Butler, mason	iijd	3d
William Deye	iiijd	4d
Alice Thunder, wedowe	iiijd	4d
Robert Jade	iiijd	4d
Wedowe Skynner	iiijd	4d
Cockeshedge, wedowe	iiijd	4d
Robert Dameron	iijd	3d
Wedowe Tompson	ijd	2d
William Stiver	ijd	2d
Edward Newman	iiijd	4d
Henrye Ponyard	ijd	2d
William Thornelles	iiijd	4d
Robert Clarke	iiijd	4d
Wedow Sudberye	iiijd	4d
Wedow Barker	viijd	8d
Thomas Harpam	iiijd	4d
Wedow Byet	iiijd	4d
Wedow Saunder	iijd	3d
Wedow Butler, thresher	iijd	4d
A lame wench at Orgon's	ijd	2d
Tyse's wife, for a child kepinge	ixd	9d
To Feld, for kepinge of Austen	iiijd	4d
To Water's wife, for kepinge of Bettes	vjd	6d

The weekly amount collected from St Margaret's was 93 pence (d).  
The distributed amount was 107 pence (d) – a shortfall of some 14 pence (d).  
In Ipswich, the ten parishes (there are no records for St Mary, Stoke) together collected £3.6s.1d. weekly, of which £1.12s 1d was dispersed.  
St Margaret's collected the most thanks to the wealth of Edmund Wythepoll.

Overall, 312 men and women in Ipswich contributed regularly to the Town's Poor Rate.

**How generous were the handouts?**

It was estimated that one could exist on £2-3 per year; the 4 pence weekly hand out that many received would meet this.

“For a child keeping” which we see above and in other parishes, this would seem to be a fostering arrangement and better paid than the basic rate.

The Parish seems to have carried out its statutory responsibilities seriously and one suspects that, as it was done within an intimate local community, it was carried out with a speed and efficacy not seen in later national systems.

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