

'It's about time'

Poverty in Victorian Britain

The Record Office has a rich range of material relating to the poor, bringing the history taught in the National Curriculum to life at a local level. Each parish was responsible for its own poor: when a person needed poor relief he was examined by the officials to see which parish was his last place of settlement. These settlement examinations give details of a kind not usually recorded elsewhere – how many jobs the person had previously had, how much they had travelled, whether they had served in the army and navy, etc. A bundle of examinations can be used for various exercises, for example, to show how far people had travelled to a particular parish to find work there.

After 1834, those unable to look after themselves were supposed to be sent to Workhouses. Workhouse records contain an enormous amount of information about these people, who include those unable to support themselves through mental and physical disabilities, including sheer old age, orphans, deserted wives or widows and their families and other groups of people in need of support. The admission and discharge records are the main record, showing how some people might be in the Workhouse only a few days or weeks, while others, once in, never got out. There are all kinds of supporting records too, including birth and death registers, punishment books for the refractory inmates and diet sheets. The latter can be used to compare diet in the Workhouse with that outside and with that of later generations.

*Dietary Sheet for Blofield Poor Law Union,
c. 1837, from The Victorian Child Pack*

	Breakfast			Dinner			Supper		
	Wheat	Barley	Oats	Wheat	Barley	Oats	Wheat	Barley	Oats
Sunday	2	4	3	3	8	5	2	4	3
Monday	2	4	3	3	8	5	2	4	3
Tuesday	2	4	3	3	8	5	2	4	3
Wednesday	2	4	3	3	8	5	2	4	3
Thursday	2	4	3	3	8	5	2	4	3
Friday	2	4	3	3	8	5	2	4	3
Saturday	2	4	3	3	8	5	2	4	3

	Breakfast			Dinner			Supper		
	Wheat	Barley	Oats	Wheat	Barley	Oats	Wheat	Barley	Oats
Sunday	6	1	3	6	15	5	6	15	5
Monday	6	1	3	6	15	5	6	15	5
Tuesday	6	1	3	6	15	5	6	15	5
Wednesday	6	1	3	6	15	5	6	15	5
Thursday	6	1	3	6	15	5	6	15	5
Friday	6	1	3	6	15	5	6	15	5
Saturday	6	1	3	6	15	5	6	15	5

Health in 17th-century England

The basic source of information is the parish register. These can be used either to trace the lives of individual families – family reconstitution – or as a basis for numeracy exercises on mortality rates. Some parish registers specifically record which burials are victims of plague, especially for the plague of 1665-6. Where the cause of death is not given, the spread of plague and other virulent diseases can be deduced from sudden rises in the number of burials. All sorts of other questions can be answered from this source. To take just one example: did more people die in summer or in winter? Parish burial registers can be supplemented by 'Orders' issued by city, borough or county authorities to contain the outbreak. They might forbid people to travel to market, for example, or order the killing of all cats, dogs and doves. Provision might be made to pay people to keep a watch over the sick – and to bury the dead.



Don't forget! You can search our catalogues by typing <<http://nrocat.norfolk.gov.uk>> into the browser on the internet.

Health in Britain in the early 20th century.



The Record Office holds a great range of material on this theme. Some will be at a county level, and other material at a still more local level, the individual borough or district council.

Another very important and vivid source of information is the annual report of the local Medical Officer of Health. These record mortality rates, deaths from specific diseases and all kinds of facts relating to health matters including preventative health. They would be a key source, for example, for tracing the local impact of the world-wide influenza epidemic of 1918.

For Norwich itself there are also the returns kept by city authorities of births and deaths. The latter give ages and causes of deaths. One use to which they can be put is to show the effects of German bombs in the Second World War: a sample page is included in our Keystage 3 pack on the war. They can also be used to calculate the frequencies of infant mortality, family size and many other topics. The Record Office also holds the archives of many institutions such as the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, St Andrew's Hospital in Thorpe, Hellesdon Hospital and the Bethel Hospital.

If you are interested in looking at what the Norfolk Record Office can offer you on these or any other topics, ring the Education and Outreach Officer, Frank Meeres, on 01603-222677

A2A

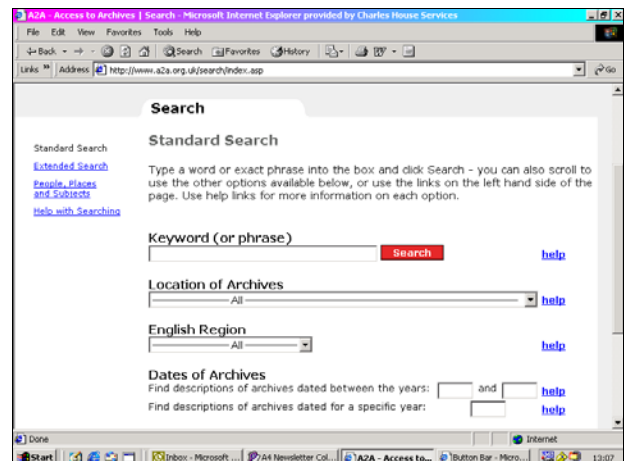
Access to Archives (A2A) is a website that contains 6.6 million catalogue entries from 348 record offices and repositories across the UK, including those of the Norfolk Record Office. It can be very useful for students who are carrying out their own research on a particular topic.

Using this site has two main advantages. Firstly, the catalogues that have been added to the A2A site will differ from the Record Office's own site: NROCAT. Therefore, until inputting work has finished, both sites, you may get different results on the different sites. Secondly, occasionally, documents end up at Record Offices outside their county of origin. By using A2A you will be able to find documents containing information on Norfolk, which are not held by the Norfolk Record Office.

Easy for your students to use, the site can be found at <http://www.a2a.org.uk/> and includes a help page for those who are having problems navigating the site.

The site enables you to type in a keyword and search catalogue entries for all 348 record offices or just the entries of a select record office. If you prefer, you can also narrow your search down to a single region or date.

So if your students want to know what else is out there for Norfolk, point them in the direction of this site!



The search page of Access to Archives



If you would like *'It's about time'* in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or

in a different language, please contact the County Archivist on telephone 01603 222599, fax 01603 761885, or e-mail <norfrec@norfolk.gov.uk>

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