



Source 1

Task

- 1a** Why did the Overseers make this report?
- 1b** What did the Overseers find was wrong with the Workhouse?
- 1c** Why do you think conditions like this existed?



Source 1

This is the report of the Overseers of Huddersfield in May 1847, after they received a letter from Thomas Tatham, the Medical Officer for the northern district of Huddersfield.

HUDDERSFIELD WORKHOUSE ABOMINATIONS.—ANDOVER IN THE SHADE.

Medical relief and general treatment of the sick poor.—To the ratepayers of the township of Huddersfield.—The undersigned, being overseers of the poor, having had it in charge by the ratepayers in vestry assembled, to institute a searching inquiry into the manner in which the sick poor are, and have been, treated in the Huddersfield workhouse, and having ascertained that charges have been duly made to the poor-law authorities, which in cruelty and disgrace surpass even the facts that earned for Andover such an unenviable notoriety; and having, moreover, learned the facts connected with the question of medical relief for the township, as exemplified in the extremely hard case of Mr. T. R. Tatham, who for the last four years has been fighting the battle of the poor against niggardliness and parsimony, and standing up for the true interest of the ratepayers against real extravagance and shortsightedness, deem it incumbent on them to call the ratepayers together, in open vestry, that the facts of the whole case may be made known, and such steps taken as may be deemed most fitting to wipe away the disgrace that will otherwise indelibly attach to the township.

OVERSEERS' REPORT.

The overseers of the poor of the township of Huddersfield, having received it in instruction from a vestry meeting of the township (assembled on the 23rd day of March last, to nominate fit and proper persons to fill the said office of overseers), to institute an inquiry into certain allegations then and there made, as to the general treatment the sick poor had received in the Huddersfield workhouse, beg to say that they have complied with the request contained in the resolution of the said vestry meeting, and have thereupon to report as follows:—

The overseers have had before them the medical officer of the northern division of the township, (in which district the workhouse is situate), and also several of the parties who have acted as nurses to the sick poor, both in the workhouse and in the temporary fever hospital. They have also made it their business to prosecute certain inquiries at the workhouse itself: and the result of all is, that they are forced to the conclusion that the sick poor have been most shamefully neglected; that they have been and still are devoid of the necessary articles of clothing and bedding; that they have been suffered to remain for weeks at a time in the most filthy and disgusting state; that patients have been allowed to remain *for nine weeks together* without a change of linen or of bed clothing; that beds in which patients suffering in typhus have died, one after another, have been again and again and repeatedly used for fresh patients, without any change or attempt at purification; that the said beds were only bags of straw and shavings, for the most part laid on the floor, and that the whole swarmed with lice; that two patients suffering in infectious fever, were almost constantly put together in one bed; that it not unfrequently happened that one would be ragingly delirious, when the other was dying; and that it is a fact that a living patient has occupied the same bed with a corpse for a considerable period after death; that the patients have been for months together without properly appointed nurses to attend to them; that there has been for a considerable time none but male paupers to attend on female patients; that when the **poor** sick creatures were laid in the most abject and helpless state—so debilitated as to pass their dejections as they lay, they have been suffered to remain in the most befouled state possible, besmeared in their own excrement, for days together, and not even washed; that the necessary stimulants ordered by the medical officer have been withheld; that when patients' lives even depended on the free administration of wine, the fever hospital has been left without for more than forty-eight hours at a time; that death occurred amongst the patients from which such stimulant was withheld, which the medical officer attributes to this very cause; that the party whose duty it was to have provided such wine, was repeatedly applied to for it, both by the nurses at the hospital and the medical officer,

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