

SMITHS CHARITY [GODSTONE UNITED CHARITIES]

Henry Smith was born in Wandsworth in May 1548. He was a salter by trade who grew rich and purchased estates in various parts of England. He had no children and during his lifetime he created a number of charitable trusts for the relief of the poor, one of which is for the relief of the poor of 202 specific parishes including the Parish of Godstone in Surrey.

He died in 1628 having bequeathed to his Trustees various sums of money, the come from which was to be used *'for the relief and ransom of poore captives being slaves under Turkish pirates'* and *'for the use and relief of the poorest of my kindred'*. *Claims under the first category have diminished over the years and that legacy is now used for other purposes.*

His Trustees purchased a small farm then comprising about 84 acres now known as Henry Smith's Kensington Estate covering a large part of the area which is bounded on the West by Evelyn Gardens and on the East by Lennox Gardens in London. The Estate has been developed and redeveloped over the years and belongs to Henry Smith's [Kensington Estate] Charity. While a part of the original purchase was subsequently sold, the Trustees have acquired additional land in the same neighbourhood and, in addition, have built up a large portfolio of stock market investments with premiums arising from the sale of long leases. The income of this estate is used to give grants to the 'poor kindred of Henry Smith, the relief and maintenance of Godly preachers' and to organisations and charities who apply under the following categories:

Medical disabled and social services moral welfare.

Some of the estates purchased by Henry Smith during his lifetime were put into another Charity now known as Henry Smith's [General Estates] Charity. Most of these were small farms which still belong to the Charity. Others have been added and a portfolio of stock market investments has been built up from the proceeds of the sale of land. The Parish of Godstone which includes South Godstone and Blindley Heath benefits from a share of the income of the Worth Estate, which is part of the General Estates Charity, along with 32 other parishes including Crowhurst, Oxted, Lingfield, Tandridge, Bletchingley, Nutfield.

The money received is distributed at the discretion of the Trustees within the terms of the Charity, that is, for the benefit of the poor, the sick or disabled and the elderly. It may be distributed to individuals in the form of cash or vouchers for goods at any time of the year.

Institutions and other charities which work on behalf of people in need [such as hospitals or schools] may also receive grants. However, it may not be spent on village halls, recreation areas etc for general communal use; this is on the grounds that while poor, infirm or elderly people may use these facilities, they are not primarily for the benefit of poor, infirm or elderly people. Therefore where Godstone Trustees make grants to facilities organisations they ask for confirmation that the monies will be spent on appropriate equipment or services such as improving access for disable people.

More information about the Henry Smith Charity is available on their website www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/index.html

Please note that people who have received awards in the past will not need to re apply each year, their names will automatically go forward for consideration.

Organisations will also need to make an application based on the provision of services for those in need. The size of the awards will vary from year to year depending on the amount of the grant received from the central charity, the number of awards made and the specific needs of the individual or organisation and will be determined by the Trustees.

Further information on eligibility and how to apply for a grant if you live in Godstone, South Godstone or Blindley Heath is available on request from Pat Bamforth, Clerk to the Trustees at thesource@btinternet.com

Smiths Charity

The following extract is from the Parish Records in 1800's

In 1845 the Parish of Godstone extended from Tillingdown and Marden Park in the North to the Sussex boundary at Felbridge in the South approximately 11 miles in length

Amongst a batch of Council documents being prepared for transmission to the County Records Office, was a well-preserved, handwritten Minutes Book recording Parish Meetings covering the period 1845-1894. These records reveal much of the village life of those days and throughout this period there are a number of extremely interesting items which, it was felt, were worthy of note prior to the book leaving Godstone for the archives at County Hall.

This Minute Book covering 130 years is, however, divided into two very distinct periods, namely 1845 - 1894 and from 1894-1994. This was because Parish Councils did not exist until late in the 19th Century when they were, in fact, created by the Local Government Act 1894. Prior to that date there was no democratically elected body dealing with village affairs as is the case today. It seems that Churchwardens, together with certain local tradesmen or dignitaries, formed a Committee, usually chaired by the Rector, and met three or four times a year. In Godstone these meetings were held in the local public houses alternating between the Hare & Hounds, the Clayton [now the White Hart] and the Rose & Crown [premises now occupied by Campton Insurance Brokers].

Today it is, of course, illegal for any local authority to hold meetings on licensed premises - one cannot help wondering whether there was any significance in making such a law!

These Village Committees were principally concerned with the valuation of properties, the levying and collection of rates, drainage problems, fire-fighting, school attendance, poor law administration and last, but by no means least, the annual distribution of the funds arising from the several local charities, the largest of which was, of course, the Smith's Charity. In this connection I quote an extract from the book:

'An Accurate Map of the County of Surrey by Emanuel Bowen - 1760'

'One Mr Smith, a London Silver Smith [called 'Dog' Smith from a dog which always followed him] having acquired a large estate, left his business and took to the trade of begging in which he continued for many years, travelling through the towns and villages of this County. At his death he left in charity to the poor of all the market towns of Surrey about £50.00 per annum each and to every parish in the County, except Mitcham, £6.00 or £8.00 yearly, more or less, at the discretion of his Trustees. The reason for his excluding Mitcham from a share in his bounty was because he was 'whipped as a common vagrant thro' their town'.