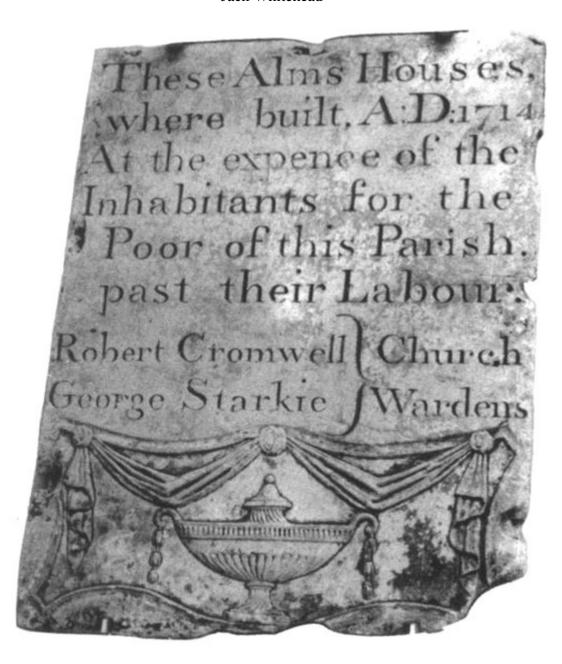
## THE ALMSHOUSE STONE AND PADDINGTON GREEN:

### THE OLDEST ENGRAVED STONE IN PADDINGTON

by Jack Whitehead



Written in 1980 for North Westminster Community School Library: revised 2011 for locallocalhistory.co.uk web site

#### Preface

Local history is a booming subject, and 'The Almshouse Stone' by Jack Whitehead is rightly described as a Local History Resource. Yet, as the author points out, the date of the stone has national as well as local significance. For anyone who is interested in Paddington, the record presented by Mr. Whitehead is fascinating. Yet, again, there is a far wider interest in the 'Explanation of Signs' and, indeed, in the story of how 'The Almshouse Stone' was discovered. North Westminster Community School, at the centre of the life of the twentieth-century community, has opened a new window on the past.

Lord Asa Briggs Master of Worcester College Oxford

North Westminster Community School would like to thank the following for assistance in the presentation, researching, and reerecting of the Almshouse Stone:

Trafalgar House plc for a major contribution to the building of the Reception Office and Waiting Room; and for sponsoring this historic booklet.

Travis Perkins plc for contributing the cost of re-erecting the stone. Travis Perkins now occupy the site marked 'Samuel Putney, Saw Mills, Baltic Wharf, on the Goad Map, p.15.

Jack Whitehead for his research into the history of Paddington Green, the school site, and the stone itself, and for the text and design of this book.

Cullum and Nightingale, architects, for the design of the new offices and the setting of the stone.

Ethnographica for the final design and printing of this booklet.

Professor Michael Marland CBE MA Headteacher Upper School of North Westminster School North Wharf Road, London W2 1LF

We are grateful to **Trafalgar House PLC for a generous contribution to the cost of publishing this** pamphlet.

Published by North Westminster Community School, 1990.

### The Almshouse Stone

In 1980, an inscribed stone was found lying in the grounds of the then Sarah Siddons School, in North Wharf Road, Paddington. At that time Sarah Siddons was becoming part of North Westminster Community School, and the new Headteacher, Michael Marland, found the stone when looking round the site. The Schoolkeepers had washed it down regularly, but its history was lost. It appeared to have dropped out of the skies.

The stone measured about 4ft 3 ins by 3ft 4 ins and from 2 ins to 3 ins in thickness (1. 28m by 1,02m by 50-80mm). It was elegantly carved with the following inscription:-

These Alms Houses where (sic) built AD 1714 at the expence (sic) of the Inhabitants for the Poor of this Parish past their labour Robert Cromwell) Church George Starkie ) Wardens

Below was a vase carved in bas relief

It turned out that this may be the oldest engraved stone in Paddington, but it had been lost to view. This pamphlet tells the story of the stone and describes a very different Paddington from the one we know today.

Research showed that the Paddington Almshouses were built in 1713-14 on a patch of land on the south side of the Harrow Road, between what became Church Place and Hermitage Street. The site is now on the north-west corner of North Westminster Community School grounds, near Dudley House. The only surviving buildings in Paddington as old as the almshouses are the Black Lion, near Queensway, and the Swan, near Lancaster Gate, both in the Bayswater Road. They have been extensively altered over the years, of course, while the Almshouse had been demolished in 1869. Only the stone and a watercolour seem to remain as a record of this building erected over 250 years ago.

George I succeeded to the throne on 1st August 1714. Therefore this stone, quite coincidentally, marks the opening of the Georgian Period and the development of government by parties, headed by the Prime Minister. Perhaps it was erected in the early part of the year, before Queen Anne died, making it a Queen Anne stone, but this would be to quibble. If it is Georgian, it must be one of the earliest Georgian stones in the world.



The Swan, Bayswater, by Charles Ginner.

These are some notes which may help to put the stone in its place in the history of Paddington, and of Great Britain, at about 1714. and help to sum up the political situation at that period.

In 1713, the Peace of Utrecht brought about a partition of the Spanish Empire. [Spain, had been the great power in Europe since soon after Columbus discovered America and with it the gold which would pay for mercenary soldiers. It allowed Spain to fight wars all over Europe and to challenge the Turks in the Mediterranean. Now Spain was defeated and the victors were dividing up the spoils]. Great Britain obtained Gibraltar, Minorca, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, the Hudson Bay territories, and the monopoly of the slave trade with Latin America.

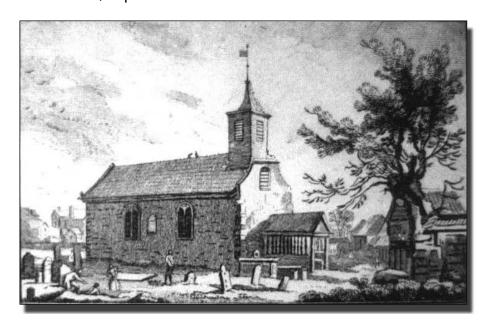
In 1714 came the Peace of Rastatt and Baden. Britain's balance of power policy had been successful and Great Britain became 'the arbiter of Europe, and the political power able to grant the largest subsidies as a result of this 'most businesslike of all our wars', (Seeley).

From Penguin 'Atlas of World History', p. 269.

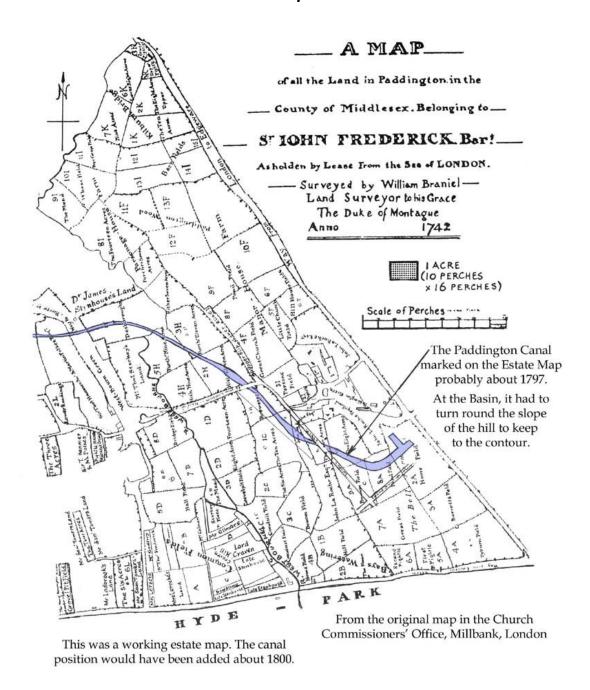
In Paddington, it was also completely different from today. The Bishop of London's Estate Map, which is dated 1742, a full generation later than the Almshouse Stone, shows an entirely rural Paddington. The estate was a triangle which stretched along the Bayswater Road, from Hyde Park Corner to Craven Hill, and along the Edgware Road to Kilburn Bridge. There were about ten farms and, near Craven Hill, there were Common Fields, presumably still farmed in strips, much as they had been from medieval times.

We have several drawings of the local Parish Church and, by examining them closely, we can imagine what Paddington Green was like in those days. It was not the present St Mary's Church, of course. This was built in 1791, when the earlier church had proved too small for the growing population. St Mary's was one of the first Greek Revival churches in the country. Our drawings are of the earlier church, built about a century before, far more modest than St Mary's. We are not quite certain of its name, but it was probably St James's. The drawings call it simply 'Paddington Church'.

The first view, taken from the north-west, shows that the church was correctly orientated, with the porch at the west end and the altar at the east. It was a small basilica church with a square east end and a short, square bell tower.



# The Bishop of London's Paddington Estate, 1742

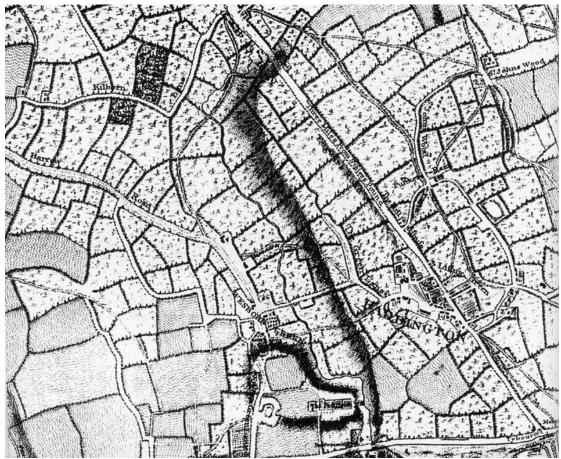


A greatly reduced copy of the Bishop of London's Estate Map.

The original hangs in the offices of the Church Commissioners, in Millbank. A larger version, with the accompanying 'terrier' (the list of fields in each farm on the estate), is printed in 'The Growth of St Marylebone and Paddington'. There the terrier has been used to trace the ten original farms, and they have been laid out on the map like the pieces of a jigsaw. Hence the reference later to 'The Parsonage Farm'.

Estate maps have always been working documents, and this one, drawn fifty nine years before the Paddington Canal reached Paddington, has had the proposed path of the Canal drawn on it. There is no trace of the Regent's Canal, so it must have been added before about 1912, when this Regent's canal branch was planned. The Canal Basin is shown with the extension towards the north, which Mr Praed planned. This was never built, but a similar one will be built when Trafalgar House redevelop the Basin.

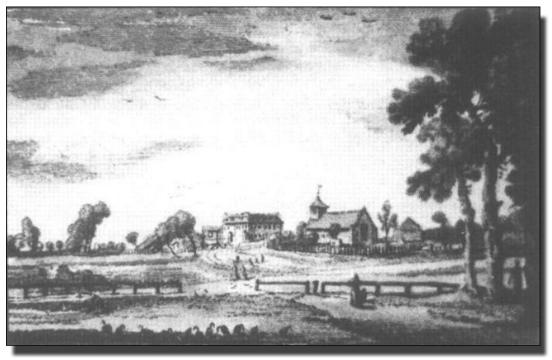
(In fact Trafalgar House did not develop the Basin, another developer did, but that is a different question).



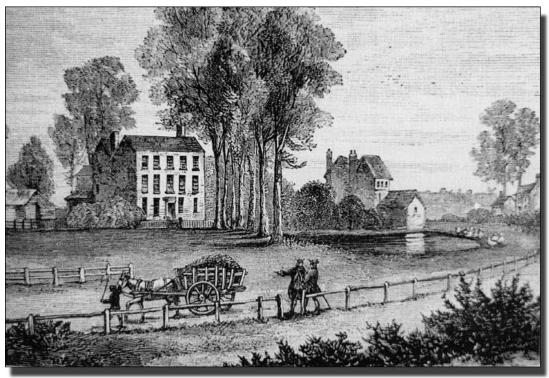
A part of John Rocque's famous map of 1741. It shows the tiny villages of Paddington and Lissing on opposite sides of the Edgware Road, at the junction with Harrow Road, and Westbourne further over. Now Westway thunders past them all.

Chatelain's second drawing, a watercolour dated 20th October, 1750, shows 'A View Of Paddington Church from the Green'. This drawing was made from the common near what is now Praed Street. This means that the present school site is in the foreground, just in front of the fenced Harrow Road. By my reckoning, everyone in the north-east corner of the present school playground is up to

the knees in the duckpond. Several ponds are mentioned in local accounts and we shall locate several of them.



A View of Paddington Church from the Green, by Chatelain.

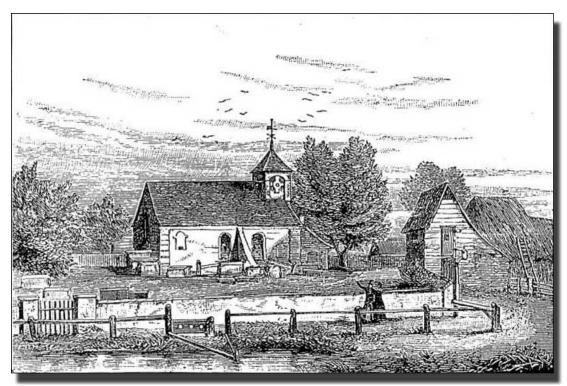


Chatelain's Picture of Paddington Green. The Bayswater Annual 1885

A third view, published in the Bayswater Annual of 1885, but drawn much earlier, shows the view .looking across Paddington Green from what is now North Wharf Road. The paper says:-

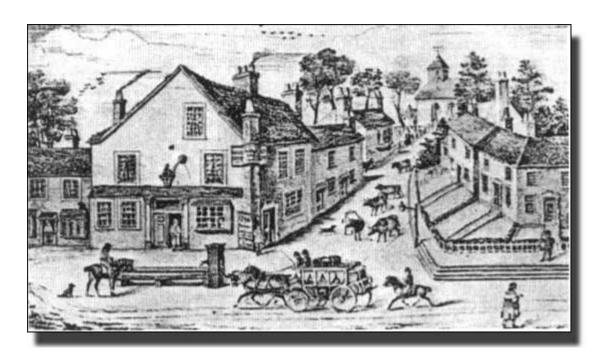
'The picture represents Paddington green as it appeared between 1750 and 1790. The main feature of this pretty rural view will easily help us to identify the site and its surroundings, in spite of the transformations which have taken place during the past hundred years. The larger extent of the village green at this date will at once strike the observer. The common or 'waste' then lay on both sides of the highway, and the strip of 'the common field' on the south side (now covered with shops) was railed off continuously from the high road, the green itself being partially open. The Harrow Road is seen running then as now on the south side of the green. It has in later days lost somewhat of the bold curve towards the pond, owing to the more rigid lines adopted. by the builders of the present century. A little extension of the view to the left would show the row of Paddington Almshouses, erected in 1714 and taken down in the last twenty years. From an area of of some five or six acres, Paddington green is now reduced to less than an acre and a half.

The picture shows the largest of the ponds on the village green, where the village geese, the commoner's cattle, and the passing team from Harrow and yet more distant parts, could disport themselves, or slake their thirst. The last of the ponds was situate on the south side of the road (beyond the limit of our picture) close to the site of the present parish schools. It has been filled up within living memory.'



Paddington Old Church, also published in the Bayswater Annual, 1885, and presumably by Chatelain.

A fourth view is drawn from the north, with the village stocks just outside the churchyard wall and beside yet another pond. The north wall of the church has been buttressed as if the flank wall had bulged at some time. The first drawing, 'The View from the North West', does not show a buttress. Either the wall bulged between the times when the two drawings were made, or the 'buttress' is some temporary construction. The barn with a catslide roof would have been in the Parsonage Farm on the 1742 map. By my reckoning the pond would have been in what is now the City of Westminster College grounds.



Yet a fifth picture shows the view looking down Church St from the old Wheatsheaf public house, 138, Edgware Road, to Paddington Church. On the left is the Wheatsheaf. It is taken from an oil painting by an anonymous artist. Every building in the picture has been demolished, but The Wheatsheaf has been rebuilt on the same site.

Clearly Paddington was entirely rural at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was a mere hamlet at the junction of two major roads, with a number of ponds for ducks and grazing animals, public houses serving the passing trade and most people working on the local farms.

Parishes were organised in Vestries based on the local church so the Vestry Minutes will be of help in understanding the society of the time. Each parish was responsible for looking after those too old to work. The Stone reads 'These Almshouses were erected at the expense of the Inhabitants for the Poor of this Parish past their labours'. The parishioners had paid for the almshouses and 'of this Parish', meant exactly what it said. The Parish was responsible for those born within its borders, but not for those born outside, even if they had moved in at an early age and had worked there all their lives. Parish accounts and diaries contain descriptions of poor people being sent back to their own parishes when too old to work, and even of a pregnant women being kept outside the parish border until the baby was born, in case the child became a charge on the parish in later years.

The Church Wardens' Accounts, 1656-1730, give many interesting details

The 1713 sheet starts: -

'An Account of what Mr Nathaniel King and Mr George Starkey has dispersed for the use of the poor of the Parish of Paddington from 16 of April 1713. '

May was a typical month. The accounts list sums paid out to eight people, varying from 6 to 16 shillings and also for two coffins and shrouds, one for £1-1s-6d and the other for 17s-3d. This came to a total of £5-18s-9d for the month. Most months were like this. Charitable payments and burials, but in 1714 Mr Starkey paid out money for a contract.

Paid to Bricklayer £15 - 12 - 00Paid for ye Bricks £18 - 00 - 00Paid for Lime £7 - 15 - 00

This seems to be the only time the churchwardens paid for building materials, so this must have been for the Almshouses. Thus we know that it was a brick building laid in lime - no Portland cement then of course. The actual cost was £41 - 07 - 0 pence, plus the cost of carpentry and joinery, tiling, plastering, decoration and fitting out. Presumably the whole total was about £100. Perhaps the other expenses were listed on the 1714 sheet but unfortunately this is missing.

A separate set of accounts, in a different book, show: -

'The Accounts of Mr Nathanell King and Mr George Sharkey, churchwardens for the year 1713'. It is interesting to see what was spent.

Paid Coleman's man for a polecat [This was still wild country, with	1 shilling
polecats about].	
Paid 12 poor sailors upon their travels.	2 shilling
[Presumably they had been discharged	_
after the wars and were making their	
way home].	
<u>-</u>	
Paid for a proclamation and prayer book	2s 0d
Bread and wine for Whitsuntide	5s 0d
Mending of bell wheel	6s 6d

5s 1d

Bread and wine

Another polecat		1s 0d
Bread and wine for Michaelmas		5s 0d
Paid for 45 dozen of bread	£2	5s 0d
cheese	£1	14s 9d
a 'barrill' of ale	£1	2s 6d
Bread and wine for Christmas		5s 2d
Another polecat		1s 0d
Bread and wine for Easter	£10	4s 0d
Polecat		1s 0d
Paid for putting up the bell for work		10s 0d
and stuff		
Paid for brooms, washing the church	£7	9s 0d
linen and dressing the church at		
Christmas and Easter		
Paid for three funerals		4s 6d

The 1714 accounts are missing (folio 81).

The 1715 accounts (folio 82) show that they are still paying for polecats (four in the year). They paid 5s 6d for a new bell rope and  $\pounds$  1 - 05 - Od for a new bell wheel and hanging the bell, but there is no mention of the Almshouse, or building materials.

Various pieces of land had been given for the benefit of the Poor by different people, often in their wills. The records and details of these different charities are hard to disentangle, partly because pieces of land have been absorbed into other hands. The Bishop 'established his right' to one piece. 'A benefaction of five pounds per annum, given by Mrs Margaret Robinson, for the purpose of apprenticing poor children, had been lost'. Small gifts of land had been incorporated in other estates and, when W. Robbins was trying to unravel the history in 1853, he found people curiously unwilling to speak. We have no hope of clarifying the position now. However, one story is worth retelling. It concerns the 'Bread and Cheese Lands'. The London Magazine for December 1737 wrote:-

'Sunday, 18th, this day, according to annual custom, bread and cheese were thrown from Paddington Steeple to the populace, agreeably to the will of two women who were relieved there with bread and cheese when they were almost starved, and Providence after wards favouring them, they left an estate in the parish to continue the custom for ever on that day.

This custom was continued down to about 1838; a single slice of cheese and a penny loaf at last, all that was thrown; the old method of dispensing alms having been found to be anything but charitable alms-giving.

The Sunday before Christmas was, in fact, in the last century and beginning of this, a sort of fair-day, for the sturdy vagabonds of London, who came to Paddington to scramble over dead men's bones for bread and cheese.'

In 'Paddington As It Was', by 'Cantab', 1887, the writer says: -

'This rather Bartholowmew Fair system has for some years discontinued, and a more sensible distribution adopted. Bread and coals are now given by the parish officers and ministers to the poor residents of the parish, a list of whom is annually drawn up by the churchwardens, giving their age, residence, and employment, and the number of their children under 10 years of age. I believe the recipients are duly selected from the most worthy and deserving. From one to two 4 lb loaves and one or two hundreds of coal are thus delivered to each family, according to its numbers. In this distribution there is no distinction between parishioners and unsettled resident poor, nor in those receiving parochial relief.

### **Building a School**

The Victoria County History of Paddington summarizes the story of other local charities and they need not concern us here, except for one thing. In 1818, it had been decided to build a school for the poor children of the parish. It was calculated that a school for 300 could be built for £650 and would cost £175 per annum to maintain. The sale of pieces of common land for building was to be devoted to this project, but it was not enough and the scheme hung fire.

However, in 1822 the new school rooms were built on Paddington Green, or rather on a part of the site of the 'Town Pool'. This would have been the pond in the Chatelain watercolour dated 20th October, 1750. The school is shown on the corner of Margaret Terrace and Church Street of the 1847 Lucas map. In 1980 it became the site of the North Westminster Upper School Gymns and was later developed for housing.

This school was for the poor children of the Parish. There were fee paying schools as well of course.

'In January 1822, when Emma Wedgewood (who later married Charles Darwin) was fourteen and her sister Fanny nearly sixteen, they went to a small boarding school on Paddington Green, then a semi-rural village

on the western outskirts of London, where they stayed one year'.

'Charles Darwin', by John Bowlby, 1990, p. 231.

To return to the Parish School. In 1838 an Act of Parliament was obtained which allowed the funds from the remaining charity estates to be rearranged. Three fifths of the whole estates, freehold as well as leasehold, were devoted towards the support of the Paddington Parochial National and Infant Schools.

The school appears to have flourished. On April 5th and 6th 1845, there was a school inspection. 200 boys out of a possible 210; 115 girls out of 131; and 180 infants out of 190, were present. The report said that the 'boys and girls were instructed in 2 rooms, well built, warmed and ventilated. The buildings handsome and well arranged.' Unfortunately no picture of the school has been found, but one may surface.

The Victoria County History says that the plot was extended to the east in 1779. An inscription in 1825 stated that the parish had built 13 dwellings in 1714, to which S. P. Cockerell had added two more as almshouses and two for the master and mistress of the charity school. The buildings formed a single-storeyed range, standing west of the school and separated from it by Church Place in 1842, by which date their land immediately to the south had been taken for a vestry room, watch house, and infants' school. 1t was at this stage that Thomas Hosmer Shepherd painted the picture of the Almshouses which is now in the British Museum.



The Paddington Green Alms houses by T. Hosmer Shephard

Thomas Hosmer Shepherd was the most famous of the three Shepherd artists, father and sons. George Shepherd and his wife were in France when Thomas was born, but came at once to England where the child was baptised at St Luke's, in the City Road, at the age of six weeks. George Sydney Shepherd, the second son, was born eight years later.

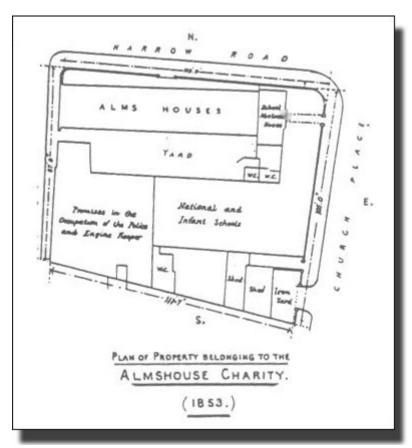
George Shepherd made topographical and architectural drawings of the expanding London and his sons Thomas and George Sydney, followed suit. Thus there were three Shepherd artists, but the most famous is Thomas. He produced set after set of water colours and aquatints which were later engraved and published in books. While some periods were prosperous, with the family moving to comfortable new houses, the life of artists was always precarious. Towards the end of his life, George Sydney was helped by small donations from the New Society of Painters in Water colours, while Thomas Hosmer's oldest son, Frederick Napoleon, died in the infirmary of St. Luke's Workhouse, in City Road.

Thomas Hosmer Shepherd and his family of seven children, might have starved but for the patronage of Frederick Crace. Crace was a celebrated interior decorator, most famous for the interior of Brighton Pavilion. His superb collection of maps and views of London, now in the British Museum, includes drawings and water colours from the whole of Shepherd's career. They were usually of streets and buildings which Crace, as Commissioner for Sewers, knew were to be swept away, although these particular Almshouses

were to survive until 1869, ten years after Crace had died. This watercolour of Paddington Almshouses was one of several almshouse drawings in different parts of London, which Shepherd made for Crace.

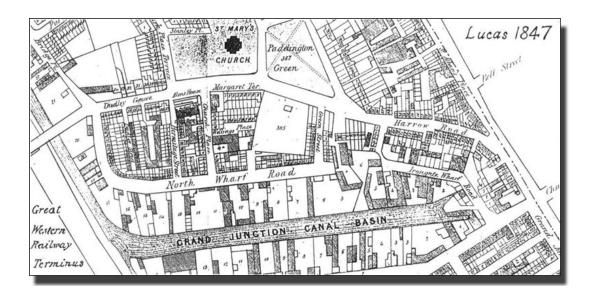
He must have drawn it while sitting on Paddington Green, directly below what is now Westway, and looking across a graveled Harrow Road to the north-west corner of what became North Westminster Community School site in 1980.

Adapted from 'Shepherd's London', by J. F. C. Phillips, Cassell, 1976, from which much of this information comes.

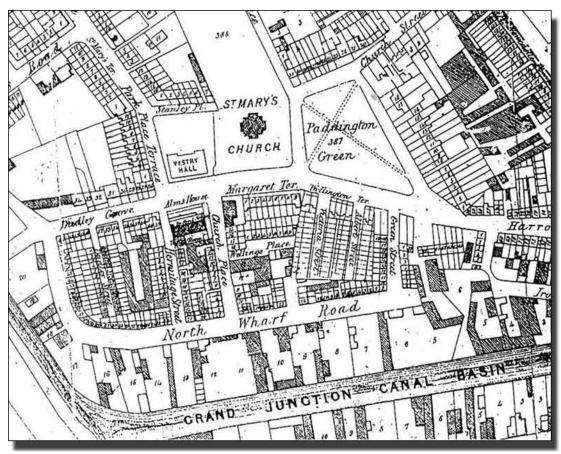


Plan of the Almshouses and Infant Schools.

This small plan, dated 1853, shows the Almshouses and Infants Schools. The school for older pupils was on the corner of Margaret Terrace.



The 1847 Lucas map shows the area after it had been built up, with the Almshouses facing an open space on the north side of Harrow Road where the Vestry Hall would be built within a few years.



Detail of the Lucas map showing the Vestry Hall with the Alms houses opposite.

'Notes and Queries', by Charles Mason, 13th November, 1869, says:-

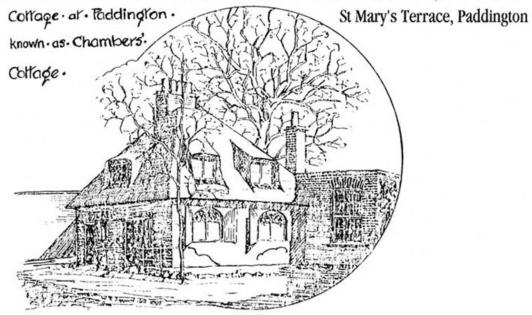
'It may be worth noting in the pages of 'Notes and Queries' for the use of future topographers, that these almshouses were commenced to be pulled down on July 4, 1869, to give place to five shops built on their site. They consisted of eighteen rooms, being intended originally for eighteen inhabitants. Latterly, however, each occupant had two rooms. The last occupants were Mrs Hannah Cordwell and Mrs Elizabeth Jones, Prior to July 4, each had an allowance of bread and three shillings each from the Almshouse Ground Committee, which sum is to be continued during the rest of their lives. On the front of the houses was a large stone. This stone is in the Vestry Hall, immediately opposite from where the almshouses stood.'

It seems that when the Almshouses were demolished, the stone tablet seen in the Shepherd painting was displayed in the Vestry Hall and must later have been moved from there to the Vestry Stone Yard near the Canal.

The 1868 Ordnance Survey map, not reproduced here, shows the 18 separate rooms and the two two-storey houses for the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. The Almshouses were demolished in 1869 to give place to five shops in Romilly Terrace. They were along the Harrow Road, between Church Place and Hermitage Street, near what is now Dudley House.

Paddington was filling up with new houses for those driven out of the Cites of Westminster and London by all the building of new streets, new sewers, and new railways. This period from 1860 to 1880 was a period of hectic building, full of noise and confusion. The railways allowed people to get away from the dust and upheaval. The Metropolitan Railway had reached Paddington in 1863, bringing in a horde of commuters from the new suburbs. Factories and offices were still in the centre but many of their workers had moved out. The builders were still busy in Paddington and no doubt these five shops were built to serve the new commuters on their journeys in and out..

THE BUILDER May 18, 1895

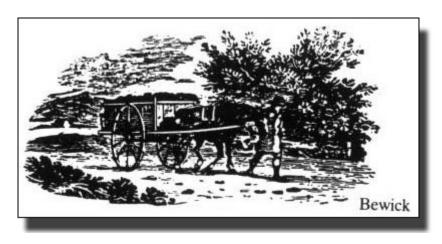


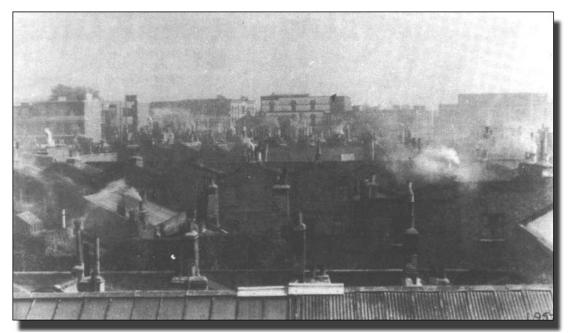
A old thatched cottage in London, only three miles and three furlongs distant in a straight line from St. Paul's --this, assuredly, ranks, after its kind, as one of the strangest survivals that can now be found. The cottage is in Paddington, standing on a plot of land behind St. St. Mary's terrace (east side), and is occupied by the caretaker of the adjacent 'Cenhadaeth Eglwvsig; Cym' or Welsh Church of St. David's. The church is but a temporary iron structure, to be, replaced shortly by a new one, together with schools and a vicarage, and to make room for these the cottage will be pulled down. It is approached by a pathway lined along

one side by trees; its ground-floor, having two doors with porches, is built of a flint and of pebble rubble, covered with rough-cast, the attic floor, gained by an iron staircase, has dormerwindows. There are eight rooms in all, much modernised; the large room in the first storey is fitted all round with cupboards, the porches even are similarly fitted. This singular relic of a bygone time when the village green, now considerably curtailed extended to its doors and westwards to Dudley Grove, and along the south side of Harrowroad opposite the church, is known in the neighbourhood as Chambers's Cottage and, it is said,

was inhabited by a banker so-named, in the early years of this century. It is, however, of a much earlier date than his day, The cottage and land, we gather, were given to the Welsh congregation, about live years ago, by the **Ecclesiastical** Commissioners. We notice, too, that from Dudley House, or Grove, at the foot of the bridge across the canal basin and the railways, have been removed the wooden outbuildings in which Matthew Coles Wyatt modeled and cast his statue of the Duke of Wellington, now at Aldershot. The statue was drawn from that foundry to Hyde Park Corner on September 29, 1846'

The casting is described and illustrated in *The Growth of St Marylebone & Paddington, by Jack Whitehead.* 





North Wharf Rd. Cottages before Sarah Siddons (Later North Westminster) School was built.

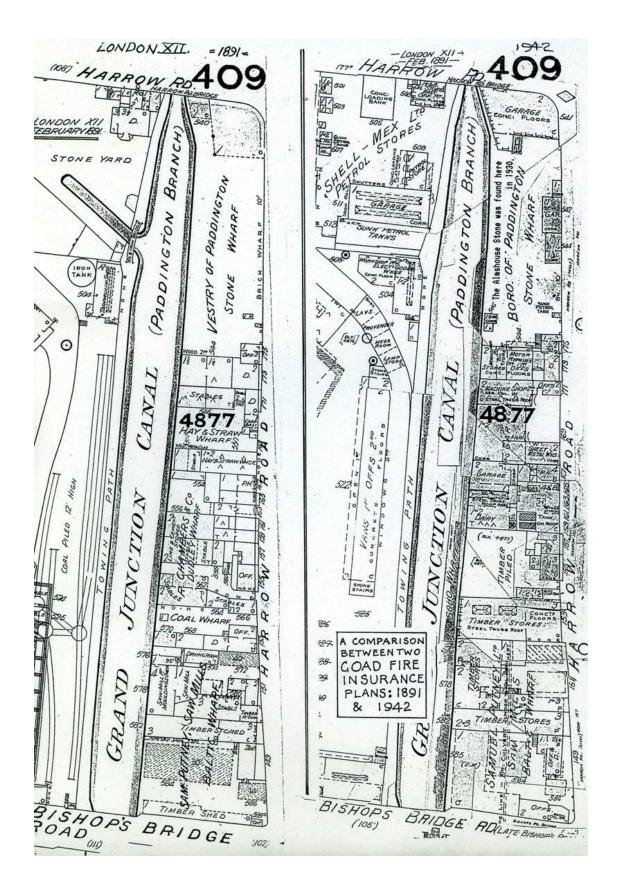


'Paddington Basin', by Algernon Newton. The Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

When the almshouses were demolished, the stone was saved, but presumably nobody knew what to do with it. It found its way to the Vestry Hall and from there to the Vestry Stone Yard, No 26 Wharf, 175 Harrow Road by 1930, when the Borough Engineer found it. There is a letter from the Borough Engineer asking what should be done with it, but no record of a reply, so presumably it stayed in No 26 Wharf, at 175 Harrow Road. Later it was moved to Sarah Siddons Girl's School playground. Eventually Michael Marland, the new Head teacher of North Westminster Upper School was exploring his new school site and tripped over it.



The Goad Fire Insurance Maps of Paddington Basin



The 1891 Goad Fire Insurance Plan shows that No 175 was the Vestry of Paddington Stone Wharf. The 1942 Goad Plan calls it the

Borough of Paddington Stone Wharf. The two Plans show the same layout, but with changes of use.

### The Explanations of Signs on the Goad Maps

The Goad Fire Insurance Plans were not sold to the public, but were hired out in atlases to interested organizations like insurance companies and local authorities.

The Goad plans were revised regularly. New buildings were resurveyed about every five years, the atlases were withdrawn and the corrections pasted on. The 1891 Plan appears to be a complete drawing, while the 1942 version is covered in irregularly shaped patches. If one could remove the patches there would be earlier plans below, but one cannot do this. The maps are too rare and delicate to be maltreated in this way. In any case, the individual patches are not dated so one would be little the wiser. However it may be possible for anyone to find other copies of a particular area with different dates, in other libraries, and so build up a sequence.

As an example, two similar stretches along the Paddington Wharves for 1891 and 1942, have been printed side by side for comparison.

These maps are a treasure trove of information to anyone interested in Industrial History anywhere in the old British Empire. They are as important in the History of India or Australia, as they are in Britain because Goad, who had his offices on Crouch End, made regular surveys of docks, canals, etc all over this quarter of the Globe.

### The Methods used

The 'Explanation of Signs', a most ingenious piece of cartography, allows us to learn the materials, height, etc. of the buildings and to spot the building changes made over the years. On our two maps, a hay and straw wharf has become a garage. Stables have become another garage. A wooden building with an attic in 1891, has been rebuilt by 1942 as a workshop for motor repairs, with concrete floors and an outside staircase.

