



Tickhill and District Local History Society

**Tickhill's 'Mizendew':
A History of the Maison Dieu Almshouses**

Hazel Moffat

Occasional Paper No. 2

© Hazel Moffat and Tickhill and District Local History Society 2007

Notes on the use of 'Maison Dieu'.

For several centuries Tickhill's almshouses have been known locally as the 'Mizendew', a Yorkshire version of 'Maison Dieu'. From 1856 the Trustees of the almshouses called them 'Maison de Dieu' in official records. Throughout this paper the almshouses are called 'Maison Dieu' the term now in general usage to describe 'God's House' almshouses.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr Cedric Hennis, Clerk to the Trustees of Tickhill United Charities, for access to the papers of the Maison Dieu Trustees. The following are also thanked for access to a range of useful papers: the Earl of Scarbrough and the Hon. Archivist of the Lumley Archive, Mrs Alice Rodgers, The Charity Commission, Doncaster Archives, Doncaster Local Studies Library, the National Monuments Record and Sheffield Archives. Several people have commented on a draft of this paper: Claire Brown, Lesley Nicholson and Jackie Thorns. Their help is appreciated, as is that of Steve Payne for scanning the illustrations into the text. Various organisations have given permission for their illustrations to be included in this publication and they are acknowledged beside the relevant material.

Tickhill's 'Mizendew': A History of the Maison Dieu Almshouses

Hazel Moffat

The first recorded almshouse was founded in York over 1,000 years ago by King Alfred's grandson, King Athelstan. In the Middle Ages many other almshouses were founded by members of the nobility, senior clergy and merchants, all committed to providing shelter for elderly and infirm people: 'the deserving poor' or 'God's poor'. The founders had another motive too, for the occupants of these early almshouses had an obligation to pray for the souls of the founders and their families at a time when the poor's prayers were believed to carry extra weight in helping the souls of the departed founders enter heaven. The obligation to say daily prayers was invariably written into foundation charters which usually stipulated that the almshouses should have priests in charge. Not surprisingly, almshouses were called House of Prayer (otherwise Bedehouse), God's House, or God's Love House, as well as being given the general name of hospital. Sometimes the name, as in the case of Tickhill, was Maison de Dieu or Maison Dieu reflecting Norman influence. In Yorkshire, the name's 'Mizendew' pronunciation has lasted to the present day.

The foundation Charter for Tickhill's Maison Dieu has not survived, leaving some uncertainty about exactly when it was founded. Suggestions range from 1199 to some 200 years later at the time of John of Gaunt. The later date may be more likely: many maisons dieu were founded in the decades following the Black Death in 1348-49 (Cullum, 1994, p 43-44). Whatever the precise date of its origin, Tickhill's Maison Dieu had an altar, a bell and almost certainly a priest officiating at the celebration of Mass.

Inevitably, at the time of the Reformation, almshouses came under scrutiny and, along with monasteries and chantry chapels, some almshouses were closed, the priests pensioned off and the poor evicted. Somehow Tickhill's Maison Dieu saw the old ways continue up to 1569. Other parishioners even preferred to worship at the Maison Dieu with the almspeople rather than attend St Mary's Parish Church. Tom Beastall writes that the Vicar and Churchwardens were summoned to York in June 1569 to the Court of High Commission set up by the Archbishop of York. The men were quizzed about the activities at the Maison Dieu, held overnight in York prison, then ordered to return and ensure that the Maison Dieu's inhabitants and fellow parishioners worshipped in church according to the new order. The Rural Dean and another vicar were sent to Tickhill to pull down and deface the Maison Dieu's altar, but the almspeople were allowed to remain (Beastall, 1995, p 86-87).

Almshouses were still founded after the Reformation, acknowledging the continuing need to provide shelter for 'the deserving poor'. At some stage, probably during Elizabeth I's reign, a further six almshouses were added to Tickhill's Maison Dieu and responsibility for these additional almshouses was to pass eventually to the Earls of Scarborough. The buildings were replaced in 1730 on land just to the south of St Mary's churchyard with two terraces arranged in an inverted L shape. Four of the Scarborough homes were on the shorter wing running west to east, while the long north to south wing contained two further Scarborough homes and eight homes funded by the original Maison Dieu Charity.

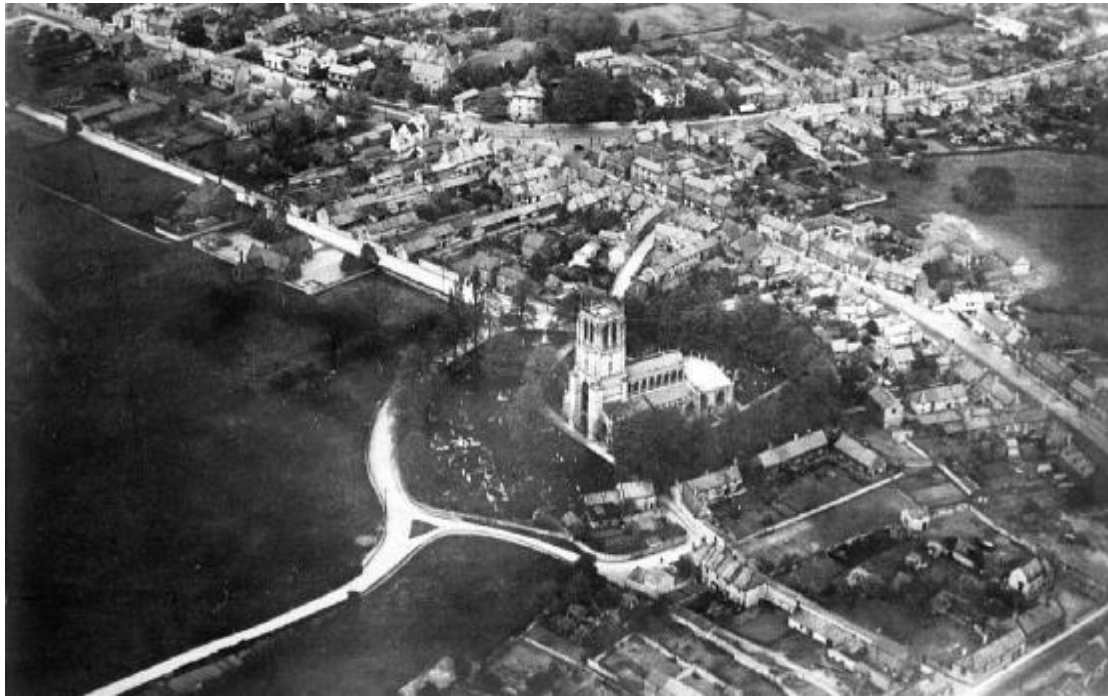
By the mid 19th Century the physical condition of the Maison Dieu almshouses was causing concern. Minutes of the Maison Dieu Trustees for the 4 August 1859 recorded that the almshouses were 'not in such a state as to be fit for the habitation of infirm females or to withstand the tempest of one or two more winters'. Among the problems was dry rot in the roof timbers and attics. Elderly women (by the 19th Century Tickhill's almshouses were primarily for women) must have found access to the attics, that is the first floor rooms, a trial when they could only be reached by ladders. Even going in and out of the houses was far from easy with internal floors one foot below the level of the outside ground. The Trustees' comment that there was 'no sewage whatever' showed some concern. The conclusion was that the whole of the Maison Dieu and the Earl of Scarbrough's six almshouses should be rebuilt.

As will be seen, the Maison Dieu operated on very modest funding and little money had been saved for rebuilding. Instead a building fund was established to allow local people to make donations. The eight Maison Dieu homes were replaced in three phases. By 27 Jan 1862 the first three new almshouses were completed. Two more almshouses were ready for occupation by 14 July 1863 with the final three properties completed and occupied by 11 Jan 1866. These new single storey almshouses were in two blocks to the east of the Scarbrough almshouses, one block of five cottages running east to west, the other block of three cottages running north to south. Two new privies with ashpit were built in the north-east corner. Two pumps provided the water supply and the garden was divided into eight strips for the almshouses to cultivate. Occupants of the earlier Maison Dieu terrace each had a 'short slip of garden' and so the new garden allocation continued a previous arrangement. Photographs of the Maison Dieu garden in the 1960s show an overgrown plot, but in earlier times the almshouses must have taken some pride in tending their strips of ground and, probably, in growing vegetables, fruit and herbs as well as flowers.

The terrace of eight old Maison Dieu almshouses was demolished but the adjoining Scarbrough almshouses were not rebuilt. Instead the exposed gable end was repaired and pebble-dashed, six new coal houses and two privies with ashpit were built on the site of the old almshouses and the old coal houses were demolished. The Maison Dieu Trustees' Minutes of 12 July 1866 expressed satisfaction with all the changes:

'New almshouse gardens have been laid out and the improvements on Lord Scarbrough's property having been completed, the Maison Dieu almshouse and premises have assumed the appearance of neatness and sanitary comfort which it is hoped will be conducive to the health of the occupiers generally.'

A Report from the Charity Commissioners in 1895 noted that the Maison Dieu cottages were well-built and faced with brick, except on the back and sides which were rough cast, and they had tiled roofs. In keeping with local custom, the roofs had two rows of stone slates along the bottom of the tiles to assist in the run-off of rainwater. Each of the single storey almshouses consisted of one room and a scullery with a coal hole. The main feature of the room was a cast iron range providing warmth from the open fire - and the means to heat water and food. At the side of the fire was an oven for baking and roasting. The room had one window looking over the garden. Divided in half vertically, the window could be opened by sliding one half in front of the other. A smaller, single-light, window in the scullery of each cottage in the row of five looked onto Bride Church Lane.



Aerial view of Tickhill showing the Maison Dieu almshouses and the Scarbrough almshouses to the south of St Mary's Church
Courtesy © Simmons Aerofilms Ref. 12882



Tickhill Maison Dieu almshouses in 1967
Courtesy © Crown Copyright. NMR Ref BB68/2064



Row of five Tickhill Maison Dieu almshouses
Courtesy © George Read Collection



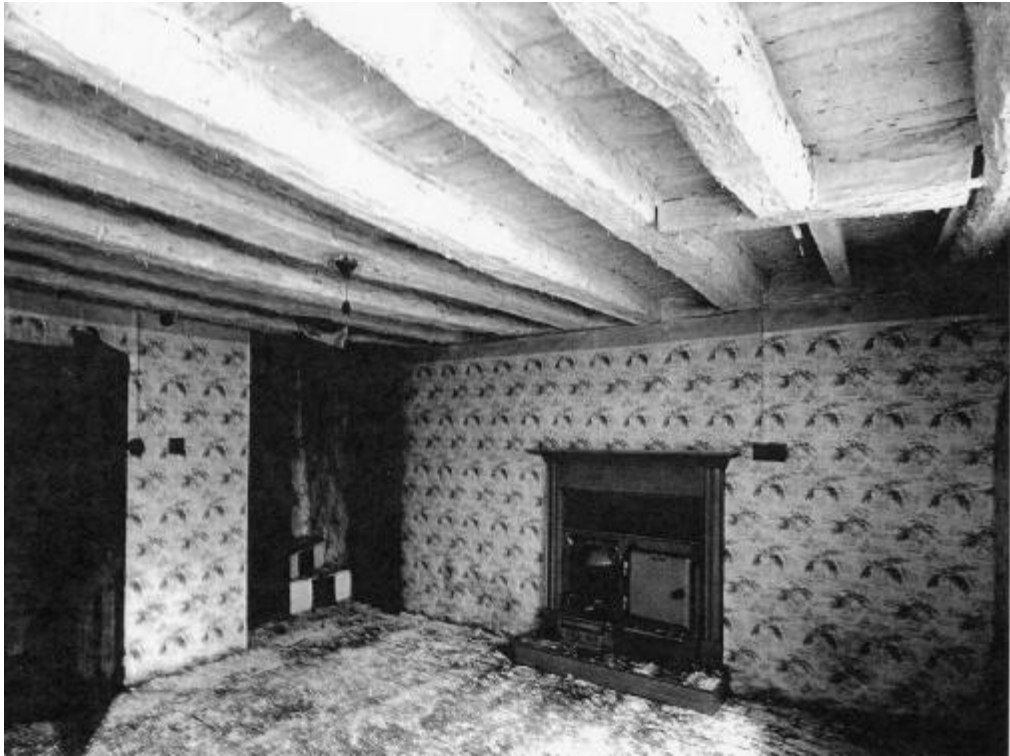
Range in one of the Tickhill Maison Dieu almshouses
Courtesy © Crown Copyright. NMR Ref BB68/2068



Lord Scarbrough's almshouses
Courtesy © Crown Copyright. NMR Ref BB68/2060



Lord Scarbrough's almshouses
Courtesy © Crown Copyright. NMR Ref BB68/2062



Interior of one of Lord Scarborough's almshouses
Courtesy © Crown Copyright. NMR Ref BB68/2070



Interior of the same room showing the step down at the entrance
Courtesy © Crown Copyright. NMR Ref BB68/2069

This living accommodation remained little changed for another seventy years. Some idea of how the main room in a Tickhill Maison Dieu almshouse was arranged in the 1940s is given in *Tuppney's Tales* (2002) by Joyce Annie Cooper, page 142:

‘As you opened the front door you were in a good-sized room and at the back was a door to the scullery, so it really didn't take much cleaning.

Mrs Crossland had her bed in the main room along with a table, chairs and a small chest of drawers with amongst other things a wireless on top – she still listened to Mrs Dale's Diary, there was an armchair by the open fireplace and a few rugs here and there.’

From the time when the eight new almshouses were completed in 1866 repairs were periodically undertaken, for example to the roofs, footpaths and fireplaces. In 1923 the Maison Dieu Trustees obtained estimates for, among other things, painting the almshouse doors green instead of red, (as was done, the houses still having light green-painted doors in the 1960s) but no major alterations were undertaken. Some consideration was given in 1936 to converting the privies to WCs and laying on water to the almshouses, but these changes did not materialise.

The Scarbrough almshouses, as a private charity, were not included in the 1895 inspection by the Charity Commissioners. Surviving photographs of the interior of one house show that it was still necessary to step down into the main room from the outside but access to the first floor was by a narrow staircase. The original fireplace was replaced by a more modern range and electricity eventually installed.

Although by the 19th Century Tickhill's almshouses were intended to be occupied by women, even then men periodically lived there and in earlier burial records men were sometimes recorded as Maison Dieu occupants. Out of 14 burials recorded as of people from the 'mesen dieu' or 'messen de dieu' in St Mary's Churchyard in the 17th Century five were of males: Thomas Taylor and Richard Wheeton (1666), William Woode (1669) and Thomas Okes and Richard Primrose (1671).

The 1851 Census shows that the fourteen almshouses, intended for fourteen people, in fact, then housed twenty-one people, including one man, Thomas Grindle, the twenty-two year old son of almswoman Elizabeth Grindle. Two other Maison Dieu almswomen each had a relation staying with them, while in the Scarbrough almshouses three almswomen had relations with them. One of these households consisted of the eighty year-old Sarah Cupit, her unmarried granddaughter Elizabeth Thompson and her ten month-old baby Sarah. Perhaps the grandmother was the only person willing to give shelter to Elizabeth and Sarah. Provided the elderly women did not sublet their homes, there must have been a degree of latitude about having relations to stay. This flexibility continued into the 20th Century as the following two examples from the Maison Dieu Trustees' Minutes illustrate:

31 Oct 1919 Mrs Killick allowed to have her granddaughter to stay with her for school purposes only.

22 Oct 1925 Mrs Kendall allowed to have her granddaughter to live with her until she left school in April next.

In 1856, when the Maison Dieu was registered with the Charity Commission, a Scheme outlined the precise regulations governing the Maison Dieu's occupancy.

These regulations were based on what had previously been the custom for many years, as made clear in the Tickhill St Mary Vestry Minutes of 24 February 1854. (The Minutes said the Scheme should be the same as ‘now is and long has been’.) Of two things the regulations were adamant: the almswomen had to be of respectable character and not utterly destitute.

**Extract about the Almspeople from ‘Order of the Master of the Rolls
Scheme of the Charity called La Maison de Dieu’
29 January 1856**

The number of the inmates of the Hospital or Almshouse shall be eight. They shall all be females and on their appointment be not less than fifty years of age. In all cases preference shall be given to such as are widows provided they be in other respects eligible for election.

They shall be elected from the Poor of Tickhill not having within one year next preceding been in receipt of Parochial relief by the Trustees for the time being at one of their meetings...

They shall not absent themselves from the Almshouse for more than one day without the leave in writing of the Clerk or one of the Trustees.

They shall not let their rooms nor permit any stranger to occupy the same.

They shall be liable to removal by the Trustees at one of their meetings for drunkenness immorality quarrelsome behaviour insubordinate conduct or other sufficient cause.

The great majority of Maison Dieu and Scarbrough almshouse inhabitants lived to a good age. Two examples illustrate this point. One record survives showing the names of the Maison Dieu almswomen who lived in the new cottages in 1866. Most of them enjoyed at least four years in their new homes:

Maison Dieu occupants in 1866
and the dates of those buried in St Mary’s churchyard

Maria Stocks
Betty Grindle died 1870 age 82
Mary Pashley died 1871 age 84
Hannah Boys died 1875 age 85
Betty Ainley died 1875 age 84
Betty Watson died 1866 age 79
Mary Pearson
Ann Brailsford died 1881 age 80

A second example shows the longevity of those almswomen recorded in the 1881 Census and traces them to their burials in St Mary’s churchyard.

Longevity of Maison Dieu and Scarbrough Almshouse inhabitants
featuring those listed in the 1881 Census

	<u>Born</u>	<u>Buried</u>	<u>Age</u>
Elizabeth Cooper	1791	1883	92
Hannah Gleadall	1796	1886	91
Ann Newsome	1798	1884	85
Sarah Watson	1799	1887	88 (died at Wadsley Asylum)
Mary Glasby	1802	1895	93
Elizabeth Watkinson	1803	1885	82
Ann Bell	1806	1886	80
Ann Holmes	1809	1895	86
Martha Newbound	1815	1895	81
Sarah Hoyle	1821	1893	74

One other woman (Elizabeth Hammond) was listed aged 82

Almshouse living probably brought a degree of contentment not available otherwise. Apart from living rent free, the Maison Dieu almswomen had a free annual supply of coal. They were also given an allowance enabling them to be financially independent of their families, although sometimes Maison Dieu occupants accepted the offer of a home without an allowance. They did not, however, have clothing provided. (Intriguingly the Tickhill Parish Magazine for March 1902 has a photograph of almswomen from Trinity Hospital, Castle Rising, each wearing a pointed hat, shawl and badge with the crest of the Howard family, all items provided by the almshouse charity.) The Tickhill Maison Dieu almswomen also had decent living accommodation from the 1860s. It might now appear very inconvenient indeed to fetch water from an outdoor pump, use outdoor privies and clear out the ash from coal fires, but this was the norm for many people in the 19th Century.

When a Maison Dieu almswoman died, a notice about the vacancy which had occurred was posted on St Mary's Church door. The illustration shows how a vacancy was advertised following Hannah Boys' death in 1875 (she was buried on 7 March 1875). Within two or three weeks a would-be almswoman could be interviewed by the Trustees and move into a Maison Dieu cottage. The system was different for the Scarbrough almshouses, usually intended for elderly women who had served the Scarbrough/Lumley family or who were related to someone who had worked for the family or had been a tenant. Women would write to Lord Scarbrough's agent or ask someone to write on their behalf. The letters of application, now in the Lumley Archive, explain the women's links with the aristocratic family and stress the applicants' good characters.

Occasionally it was not possible for the Tickhill almswomen to remain in their homes if they became too physically or mentally frail. For example, Ann Vickers moved to the Doncaster Union Workhouse for the last few weeks of her life in 1890. She moved out of the Maison Dieu in June 1890 (see the poster advertising the vacancy arising from her move) and died in the Workhouse on 28 August, having been predeceased by her husband and son. Sarah Watson, who had first lived in the Maison Dieu with her mother Elizabeth (Betty) before becoming an almswoman in her own right, was transferred to Wadsley Asylum on the outskirts of Sheffield. The Asylum opened in

1872, before which time people with mental infirmities were taken to the Lunatic Asylum at Wakefield (opened in 1818). After Sarah's death at Wadsley, someone cared enough to bring her body back to Tickhill for burial. Usually the Asylum inmates were buried at Wadsley.

Apart from stipulating the type of women eligible for a place in the Maison Dieu, its Trustees were not unusual in laying down the law about the behaviour of their almspeople, as outlined in the 1856 Scheme. However, there are very few recorded incidents of any significant trouble arising in the small Maison Dieu community. One elderly woman, Mary Pearson, one of the few Maison Dieu inhabitants not buried in Tickhill churchyard, did cause offence after living there for more than twenty years. (She was earlier listed in the 1851 Census as a charwoman living in Sunderland Street.) The Trustees' Minutes of 9 January 1888 note:

'Mary Pearson was still very unruly [she had earlier annoyed her neighbour by walking on her garden] and caused much unpleasantness notwithstanding the caution given her by the Trustees at their meeting on 21 March 1887...she had used language unbecoming to the Trustees and had made certain accusations against the Clerk

Pearson had accused him and two others of looking in at her windows at a late hour of the evening on several occasions (which she could not fix) and that it was utterly untrue. Pearson denied having made the accusations repeated it together with other offensive things....proposed to give her 1 weeks notice to leave her house.'

The Trustees relented by 26 January 1888. Mary had not been evicted. She made 'a humble and ample apology' to the Clerk and the Trustees who emphasised she would be dismissed if ever brought before them again. One possible cause of Mary's unacceptable behaviour could have been the onset of some form of dementia.

Whereas the Scarborough almshouses were the responsibility of the agents of successive Earls, the management of the Maison Dieu changed significantly when the Charity was registered with the Charity Commission in 1856. Until then the Maison Dieu had for centuries been the responsibility of Churchwardens. Unusually, Tickhill's Parish Church of St Mary had three Churchwardens, each responsible for one part of the community: Sunderland Street, Northgate and Castlegate/Westgate. They took it in turns for one year at a time, as 'Mizendew Master', to oversee the running of the almshouses and their land, a fair share of the workload but perhaps not the most effective way of keeping tabs on all the Maison Dieu land holdings, although they certainly kept account books; one old account book had entries back to 1673 and another account book went back to 1795 according to a note with the Maison Dieu Minutes. Whoever founded the Maison Dieu had endowed the almshouses with land, the usual way of ensuring an income from rent for almshouses before the 19th Century.

Possibly the earliest surviving detailed record of the landholdings of the 'Poor of the Mizendew' is in Pagdin's Survey compiled 1803-7 on the orders of the Earl of Scarborough to list the ownership of all the land in Tickhill Parish. The Survey shows that the Maison Dieu's landholdings, amounting to 27 acres and 2 perches, were

TICKHILL.

MAISON DE DIEU CHARITY.

Notice is hereby given that an Election of an Inmate to the Almshouse vacant by the death of Hannah Boys, will take place at the Office of Mr. William Popplewell, in West-gate, on Thursday the 18th day of March, 1875, at three o'clock in the Afternoon.

Candidates are requested to send in their names and ages on or before Wednesday, the 17th day of March instant, and to be present at the hour and day of Election.

CANDIDATES MUST BE Females, from amongst the poor of Tickhill, not having within one year preceeding being in receipt of Parish Relief.

WILLIAM POPPLEWELL,

Clerk to the Trustees of the said Charity.

Poster advertising a vacancy at Tickhill Maison Dieu
Courtesy © Trustees of Tickhill United Charities

TICKHILL.

MAISON DE DIEU CHARITY.

Notice is Hereby Given,

That an ELECTION of an INMATE to the ALMSHOUSE vacant by the transfer of Ann Vickers to the Union, will take place at the Offices of Mr. Charles H. Moordaff, in Westgate on Thursday, the 26th day of June, 1890, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Candidates are requested to send in their names and ages on or before Wednesday, the 25th day of June instant, to me, the undersigned, and to be present at the hour and day of Election.

Candidates must be Females from amongst the poor of Tickhill, over the age of 50 years, no having within one year preceding been in receipt of Parish Relief, and preference will be given to such as are Widows.

CHARLES H. MOORDAFF,
SOLICITOR,

Clerk to the Trustees of the said Charity
Westgate, Tickhill, 16th June, 1890.

(J. BEE, PRINTER, TICKHILL)

Poster advertising a vacancy at Tickhill Maison Dieu
Courtesy © Trustees of Tickhill United Charities

scattered throughout Tickhill Parish in 12 lots. The largest lot was 16 acres, the smallest 22 perches. A Report of Tickhill Charities in 1827 (quoted in the 1895 Charity Commissioners' Report) found no ground of complaint about the management of the Maison Dieu requiring particular notice; but as several of the lands were intermixed with those of other persons, the Report said it would be expedient that boundary stones or marks should be affixed for distinguishing the charity lands and preventing confusion and disputes.

The Mizendew Masters did not act on this recommendation. They faced at least one consequence for not clarifying land holdings. The Hanson family, listed in Pagdin's Survey as tenants of two plots amounting to one acre and one rod, in 1831 claimed this land as their own and refused to pay rent. There were then no legally appointed Trustees to enforce payment, in the words of the 1895 Charity Commissioners' Report. The matter was only finally resolved after registration with the Charity Commission in 1856. Control of the Maison Dieu then passed to a small group of Trustees, who included the Vicars of Tickhill, Wadworth and Harworth and one trustee resident within 10 miles of Tickhill. From 1894 an extra trustee was appointed by Tickhill Urban District Council. As an example, here is a list of the Trustees in 1877/8: Rev Charles Bury, Vicar of Tickhill, Rev Arthur Luard, Vicar of Wadworth, Rev Edmund Huntsman, Vicar of Harworth, Richard Lumley, Earl of Scarbrough, and William Popplewell, Tickhill Vicar's Churchwarden. In 1878 the last two were replaced by Benjamin Brooksbank and Frederick Leather. In addition to the Trustees, a Clerk had to be appointed at an annual payment of not more than £5 per year.

One of the first acts of the Trustees was to try to resolve the dispute with the Hanson family by referring the matter to the Solicitor to the Attorney General. He ruled in favour of the Hansons as it was too late to reclaim ownership for the Charity. The Trustees had to pay nearly the equivalent of a year's income for the Maison Dieu for the privilege of receiving this ruling.

The headache of collecting rents and securing land ownership was partly resolved in 1882 when the Maison Dieu Trustees sold off most of the Charity's land by auction at Eastfield House on 28 March. A poster for the auction lists 21 lots offering 'unusual advantages to small capitalists, comprising some of the best land in the parish' and which are 'most valuable as accommodation land'. The whole sale raised £1641 15s (£1641 75p) for about 22 acres; of this £1563 12s 8d (£1563 63p) was remitted to the Official Trustees of Charitable Funds, the remainder went in costs of the sale. The Official Trustees invested the money on behalf of the Maison Dieu in Consols (government securities without maturity dates).

The 1895 Charity Commissioners' Report noted some other land had been lost to the Charity and even in the 20th Century some land was lost: Hallam Ings Close (last heard of in 1940), Northerton and Little Hallam Ings, Land in the Riddings and Rowland Bridge. This land had generated an annual income of £1/2/10 (£1 14p). Overall, the gross income of the Maison Dieu was £51 5s 8d (£51 28p) in 1895 and this level of income changed little over the succeeding decades. From this income the Trustees paid allowances to the almswomen amounting to 8/- (40p) a month until 1911, when the amount was reduced to 6/- (30p) a month, due to pressure on the Charity's finances. Already by 1901 the monthly income of 8/- was not likely to cover all the almswomen's needs. The 1901 Census shows how the Maison Dieu and

Scarborough almswomen took on paid employment to help their income, one as a nurse, three as charwomen, one as a seamstress, one as a laundress (aged 75) and one as a crochet worker (aged 76). Only two women in their eighties were not in employment. Three houses were listed as unoccupied.

Apart from the almswomen's allowances, they received periodic gifts from the Trustees, for example, at Christmas in 1931 each almswoman received a parcel of goods worth 2/6 (12½p) from Messrs Jarvis and Sons. The Trustees also noted in 1963 that the almswomen once received £2 shared amongst them at Tickhill Fair and £1 shared amongst them on Rent Day but these amounts do not feature in surviving accounts. The Maison Dieu Trustees also had to pay for regular outgoings. The following list shows the types of expenditure incurred each year by the Trustees.

- loads of coal (see the poster for inviting tenders to supply loads of coal)
- fire insurance
- clerk's salary (£5 p.a.)
- cheque book charges almost every year
- repairs
- occasional vacancy notices/advertisements
- Land Tax
- Poor Rate and District Rate

It is possible to look at the Maison Dieu Charity finances in some detail for the period 1901-1933 because the annual returns to the Charity Commissioners have been saved in Sheffield Archives (the Charity Commission no longer has such detailed records for the Maison Dieu). Total annual expenditure ranged from about £30 (1916) to £90 (1933), usually about £50. Repairs accounted for the high expenditure in 1933: to the roof, painting, new floor, and a new causeway.

One of the ways in which the Trustees tried to make ends meet was to sometimes leave one or more of the Maison Dieu cottages empty, thus not having to pay monthly allowances or pay for loads of coal. Alternatively they sometimes allowed a woman to occupy a property rent-free but without an allowance on the understanding she would give assistance to the other almswomen, rather like a caretaker. According to the 1895 Report, widows were often willing to become almswomen without allowances. Two of the eight cottages were then vacant, one designedly so, (to accumulate a sum for repairs) the other, it was alleged, because of a popular belief that it was haunted. This cottage had been vacant for 4 years. No doubt this suited the Trustees by saving a little money. For much of the period 1901-33 seven houses were occupied by almswomen receiving an allowance. However from November 1913 to November 1919 only between four and six occupants received an allowance.

To get an idea of how slender were Tickhill's Maison Dieu resources, it is worth comparing them with those of six almshouses on St Sepulchre Gate, Doncaster, known as The Hospital of St Thomas the Apostle, founded in 1558 by Thomas Ellis. Ellis endowed the Charity with 192 acres in and around Doncaster. Most of the land was sold in the late 19th Century and the proceeds invested carefully. From the outset there was a large group of some thirty Trustees chosen from Doncaster's 'great and good'. This well-managed Charity could afford to pay its almswomen 9/- (45p) a week for most of the 19th Century. The amount was increased to 10/- (50p) in 1919.

TICKHILL.

Maison de Dieu Charity.

CONTRACT for the SUPPLY of COALS.

THE TRUSTEES of the above Charity invite TENDERS for Supplying TWENTY TONS of COALS to the Almswomen, to be delivered and put in the coal place of each inmate without any fee or reward. The quantity to be delivered to each inmate is Two Tons and a Half, which is to be supplied during the month of November. The Coal to be the best Denaby Main House Coal.

Tenders to be in writing, and to be left at the Offices of the Clerk, West-gate, Tickhill, on or before Friday, the 15th day of September now next.

The Trustees do not pledge themselves to accept the lowest or any tender.

BY ORDER,

NORMAN H. MATTHEWS,

Solicitor, Clerk to the Trustees of the said Charity.

West-gate, Tickhill,
30th day of August, 1882.

Poster inviting tenders for the supply of coal to Tickhill Maison Dieu.
After Maltby Colliery opened in 1911 coal was brought from there; it was brought
from Harworth Colliery from the late 1920s

Courtesy © Trustees of Tickhill United Charities

The Charity also had enough money to give allowances to 'out-pensioners', people who received payment but stayed in their own homes. The success of this Charity is underlined by its continued existence. Although the original almshouses were rebuilt in 1737 then demolished in 1953, the Charity now owns a total of sixteen bungalows in Cantley and Bessacarr.

After the Second World War it became increasingly clear that the accommodation in the eight Maison Dieu cottages was no longer acceptable. Occasional improvements were made, such as the installation in 1962 of two exterior wall lights to illuminate the paths. The Trustees' Minutes of 13 January 1964 noted that the almshouses were so far below modern standards that without reconstruction their continued existence was extremely doubtful. In other areas where almshouses were of a similar design to Tickhill's Maison Dieu, two cottages were knocked into one as happened, for example, at the Tattershall Bedehouses in Lincolnshire (Crust, 2002, p 21). However, the Maison Dieu's income was insufficient for either modernising or completely rebuilding the almshouses. An example of how much pressure the finances were under is given in the Minutes of 1964 which noted that the Clerk's salary had not been paid since 1945. The Clerk accepted a settlement of £25 for the period 1945-1963. Plans received in January 1964 to reconstruct the almshouses were estimated to cost £8,390, at a time when the balance in hand was less than £400.

The Charity Commissioners agreed to the sale of the Maison Dieu in 1964. The Trustees' intention was to sell the site to Tickhill Urban District Council. At the same time, the Earl of Scarborough expressed a willingness to transfer his almshouses and land to the Council by Deed of Gift, if the Council acquired the Maison Dieu. Another offer to buy the Maison Dieu was made by a developer but the Earl would not sell or give his property to the developer and so this offer was withdrawn. The Council duly bought the Maison Dieu for £400 and was given the Earl of Scarborough's property on the understanding that the new building on the site was for housing aged people of the district, at rents reflecting the limited income of the intended occupants. The old almshouses were demolished at the end of 1967 and six new bungalows for pensioners were completed in 1973.

This, though, was not the end of the Maison Dieu Charity because the balance of funds, left after the sale of the site, became part of Tickhill United Charities, a body which incorporated several of the old 'doles' or charities listed on boards in St Mary's Church. A new Maison Dieu Scheme was approved by the Charity Commissioners in January 1974 which was to be managed by the Tickhill United Charities' Trustees. Their brief was, and still is, to provide a wide range of help to the community 'to relieve either generally or individually persons resident in the area of benefit [Tickhill Parish] who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress'. The end of the Maison Dieu component of the local Charity came in January 1996 when the Maison Dieu finally ceased to be a subsidiary of Tickhill United Charities. It is, perhaps, extraordinary that Tickhill's Maison Dieu Charity lasted so long on its limited means.



Rear of the almshouses next to the then narrow Bride Church Lane
Courtesy © Crown Copyright. NMR Ref BB68/2067



Modern view of Bride Church Lane
© Hazel Moffat



View after Tickhill Maison Dieu and Lord Scarbrough's almshouses were demolished
at the end of 1967

Courtesy © George Read Collection



Bungalows built for pensioners in 1973 on the site of the almshouse gardens

© Hazel Moffat

Further reading

For Tickhill's Maison Dieu

- Beastall, T., *Tickhill: Portrait of an English County Town*, The Waterdale Press, 1995.
- Betts MBE, R. T., *The End of an Era*, 1967.
- Charity Commissioners, *Return of Endowed Charities in the West Riding of Yorkshire*, Vol. 1, South Division (Parish of Tickhill, pages 847-859 in the collection of Tickhill Library).
- Census Returns 1851-1901.
- Maison de Dieu Charity Rents and Dividends 1867-1952* (Doncaster Archives Ref. UDTICK/8/1).
- National Monuments Record, *Monument Report* No. SK59SE10.
- Pagdin's Survey of Tickhill 1803-1807*, produced and annotated by Ian Dannatt and Mike Thomas, 1997 (Doncaster Archives Ref. DZMZ/79/1-3).
- Statement of the accounts of the charity called Maison de Dieu, Tickhill, 1901-1933* (Sheffield Archives Ref. SY614/K88/3).
- Tickhill St Mary Burial Registers* (Doncaster Archives series starts Ref. P56/1/A1).
- Tickhill St Mary Vestry Minutes* (Doncaster Archives Ref. P56/4/A1).

For other almshouses

- Crust, L., *Lincolnshire almshouses: Nine centuries of charitable housing*, Heritage Lincolnshire, 2002.
- Cullum, P. H., 'For Pore People Harberles': What was the function of the Maisonsdieu?' in Clayton, D. J., Davies, R. G., and McNiven, P., (eds) *Trade, devotion and governance: Papers in later medieval history*, Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1994, pages 36-54.
- Jackson, C. *Doncaster Charities*, 1881.
- James, H. J., *Chronicles of the Maison Dieu, Ospringe*, The Faversham Society, 1997.
- Porter, S., 'Order and disorder in the early modern almshouse' in *The London Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1998, pages 1-14.

Websites

For The Almshouse Association

<http://www.almshouses.org/>

For The Charity Commission

<http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/>

For Dover's Maison Dieu:

http://www.dover-kent.co.uk/places/maison_dieu_house.htm

For Faversham's Maison Dieu:

<http://www.faversham.org/visitors/dieu.asp>

For Hull's Charterhouse

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=36298>