

Workhouse

Thame had a workhouse from 1726 and the Thame Poor Law Union was formed in 1835 and from 1897 it was joined by Chinnor from the High Wycombe workhouse union and contributed one guardian. In 1897 Chinnor came under the Thame workhouse having been transferred from Wycombe. A representative from Chinnor was appointed to its committee and, also attached to the work house was an apothecary who was responsible for the Thame Union workhouses which included the Chinnor workhouse, although there is no record of him visiting the village. The Thame workhouse was opened in 1834 with accommodation for up to 30 inmates. In addition to being a workhouse it was also a pest house for infectious diseases and its inmates were classified as patients, paupers and lunatics.

Chinnor itself had its own affiliated workhouse and pest house situated at the top of the High Street near Donkey Lane in an area referred to by the polite as The Avenue but known to all as the Workhouse Yard. The pest house was in use from the time of the plague for cases of infectious diseases. Any tramp coming to the workhouse who developed smallpox or typhus was sent to the pest house. The old workhouse was later demolished in the 1950s. By all accounts it does not seem to have been used very much. Lucy Lacey when asked in 1988 said that she could not remember anyone going into the work house but said, 'they all seemed to look after one another.' However, she did recall one elderly couple 'who used to go in for the winter and out for the summer and go to sleep in a shed along the Icknield Way every night.' Adjacent allotments were known to yield a vast number of old clay pipes which Nora Neighbour's father claimed must have belonged to the old gentleman inmates.