

3 New site, new Almshouses



First phase of building, Southampton Road



Indenture to buy land from Thompson



Henry Aste's house



Commemorative Stone, 1859



Protest meeting poster, 1859



Annual Report, 1859



Annual Report, 1859 showing donors

Land

The railway company allowed the residents to remain in the old Almshouses while new premises were found, and in 1858 a piece of land, historically part of a bluebell wood on Lord Southampton's estate, was chosen as the site for new buildings. Bordering Southampton Road, in Maitland Park, it was sold to the Charity by the owner William Thompson for £1,300.

Building problems

The construction of the new Almshouses seems to have suffered difficulty and delay. Within six months of the land being bought a protest against the Managing Committee of the St Pancras Almshouses was organised in the Vestry Hall. It appears that the Committee, for reasons we do not know, had accepted a tender by a Mr R Battenbury which was £426 above the lowest bid offered.

The new Almshouses were designed by Mr Henry Baker. They were for an entire block on the south side and two houses 'in the turn', to be constructed at a cost of £2,896. But before the building work could be finished, it was delayed by a labour strike; so although the plaque on the Almshouses wall records the completion date as 1859 the first residents were not able to move in until the following year.

Annual Report

The Annual Report of that year names the people whose support kept the St Pancras Almshouses going through this difficult period. Among the grander patrons were Lord and Lady Southampton, Lady Hall, the Reverend Thomas Dale, the Earl Talbot and Lord Ebury. But the list of donors and subscribers from the same report shows the extent to which ordinary members of

the local community were also ready to participate in the St Pancras Almshouses charitable scheme for safe housing. By 1861 the south and west blocks of the Almshouses had been completed. Two years later Mr Henry Aste, a corn merchant, set a challenge to the Managing Committee: he agreed to build one of the houses in the north side block provided the Committee raised sufficient funds – within six months – to build the rest. Donors again responded, and raised a total of £1,950. With Henry Aste's handsome contribution the Committee was finally able to complete the north wing in 1863.