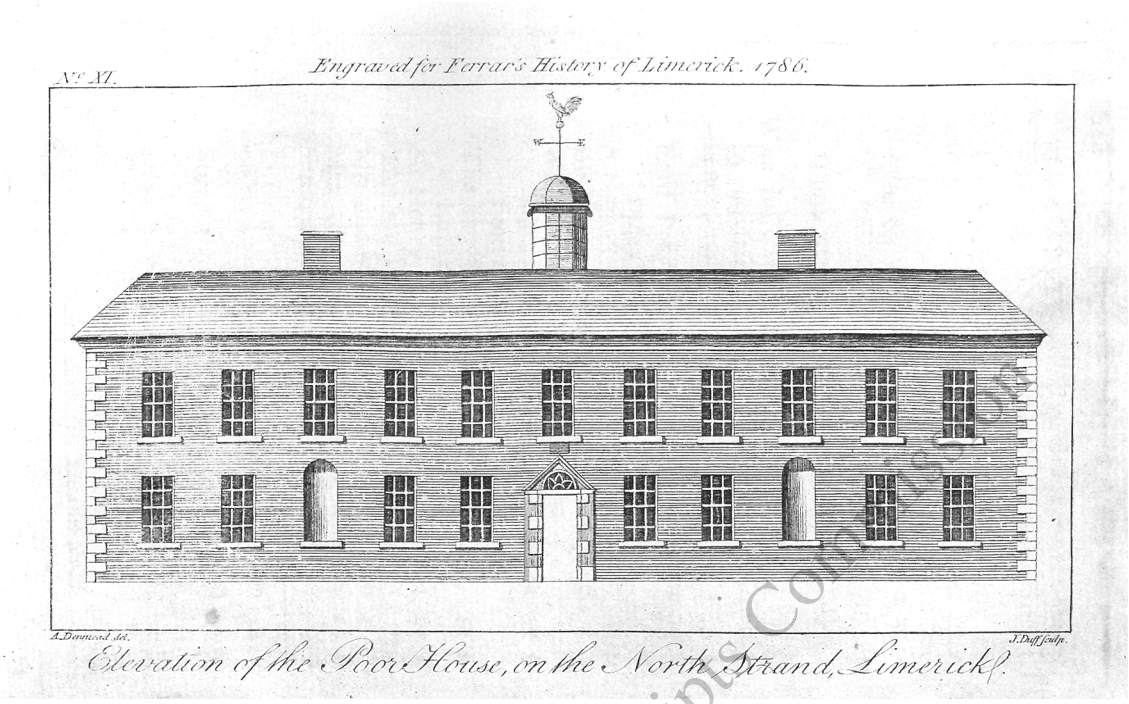
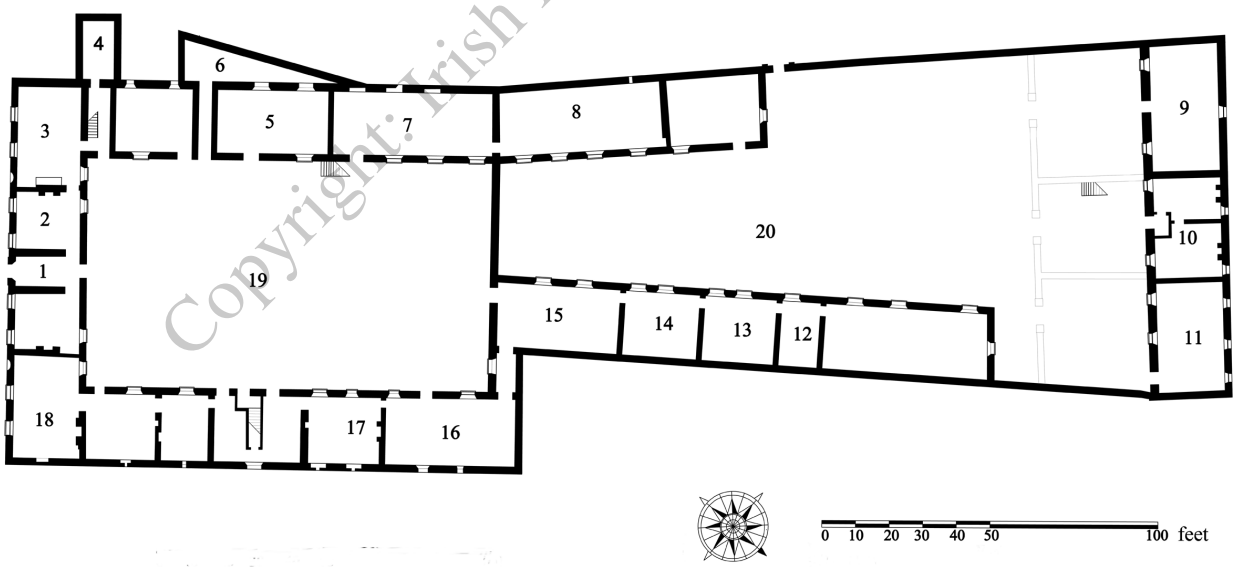


'Elevation of the Poor House, on the North Strand, Limerick' drawn by A. Drummond, engraved by J. Duff, in John Ferrar, *A history of Limerick, ecclesiastical, civil and military from the earliest records to the year 1787* (Limerick, 1787), plate 11.



Plan of the House of Industry, *c.* 1837, by Shane Walsh (2010), based on a report by John Spence and James O'Dowd in *Royal commission for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland*, Appendix C, part 1, xxx, (1836), pp 6–7. The elevation above is of the front façade, which on this plan is to the left of the drawing.

Key: 1, Entrance; 2, Refectory; 3, Kitchen; 4, Pantry; 5, Nursery; 6, Necessary house; 7, Boys' schoolroom; 8, Boys' dormitory; 9, Men's cells;10, Superintendent's rooms; 11, Women's cells; 12, Mangling room; 13, Spinning room; 14, Weaving room; 15, Girls' schoolroom; 16, Girls' dormitory; 17, Schoolmistress' room; 18, Steward's rooms; 19, Yard; 20, Garden.

PAUPER LIMERICK

The Register of the Limerick House of Industry 1774–93

edited by
David Fleming and John Logan

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Front jacket: Detail from 'View of Baal's Bridge, looking west' by James Henry Brocas, *c*. 1790–1846 (by permission of the National Gallery of Ireland).

Back jacket detail: 'View of Limerick & Newtown Pery from the Watch House on the N: Strand' by Henry Pelham, 1786 (by permission of Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum). The House of Industry is the building numbered '2' on the far left.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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We are grateful to the chairman and members of the Irish Manuscripts Commission for their interest and for their decision to publish the manuscript and for the encouragement given at key points by Professor David Dickson, Professor James Kelly and Professor Mary O'Dowd. The Commission's administrator, Dr Cathy Hayes, has been most generous with her time and advice, for which we are very grateful.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The register of the Limerick House of Industry for the period 1774 to 1793, formerly in the Limerick family papers at Chiddingly in Sussex, is now part of Limerick City Archives where is has been given the serial number P18/1. The register consists of 198 pages of which 191 contain text. The register is bound in reverse calf and is inscribed on the front 'Work House, Limerick; General Registry. 1774'. A title page carries the text 'General Registry of the Poor Received into the House of INDUSTRY from the Institution thereof 1774.' Each page is ruled vertically and horizontally, the details on each person admitted usually taking up a single line, initially divided into twenty columns, as follows: (1) 'current number'; (2) 'names'; (3) 'age'; (4) 'religion' — 'roman catholic'; (5) 'religion' — 'protestant'; (6) 'occupation'; (7) 'late residence'; (8) date of admission; (9) if 'voluntary' admission; (10) if 'compulsory' admission; (11) 'number of bed'; (12) if 'healthy' when received; (13) if 'sickly' when received; (14) 'disease when received'; (15) date on which 'discharged'; (16) date on which 'died'; (17) date on which 'eloped'; (18) if 'healthy' when discharged; (19) if 'sickly' when discharged; (20) 'observations'. Shortly after the commencement of the register the recording of information on 'number of bed' was discontinued. Occasionally the column headings for religion (4, 5) and medical condition on entry (12, 13) were reversed. The transcript standardises column headings throughout. The register finishes in 1793 when there is no further space for additional entries. The location of later registers, if they existed, is unknown.[1]

The aim here has been to provide a faithful transcription of the register. Consequently the temptation to expand a date from its simplest and most common form — the day in the month — to the full form of 'day, month, year' by reference to adjacent dates, has been resisted, except where the 'Admitted' column breaks onto a new page; here the date is repeated for ease of reference. Similarly the spelling of personal names, place names, occupations and ailments are given as in the register. No attempt was made to expand an abbreviated word or to replace the frequently used abbreviations 'd', 'do', or 'ditto' with the word to which they referred. The inconsistent and irregular use of colons, dashes and dots to indicate an abbreviation has been removed except where the meaning might be unclear. On rare occasions the clerk repeats a word or numeral unnecessarily; such instances are noted in the transcription by the use of *sic*. Finally, superscripted letters have not been reproduced here and are rendered as normal text.

1 The one-time existence of other books belonging to the House is highlighted in two observations (459 and 463) in the register where a 'Remark Book' is mentioned.

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Frontispiece (bottom), Plan of the House of Industry, *c*. 1837, by Shane Walsh (2010), based on a report by John Spence and James O'Dowd in *Royal commission for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland*, Appendix C, part 1, xxx, (1836), pp 6–7.

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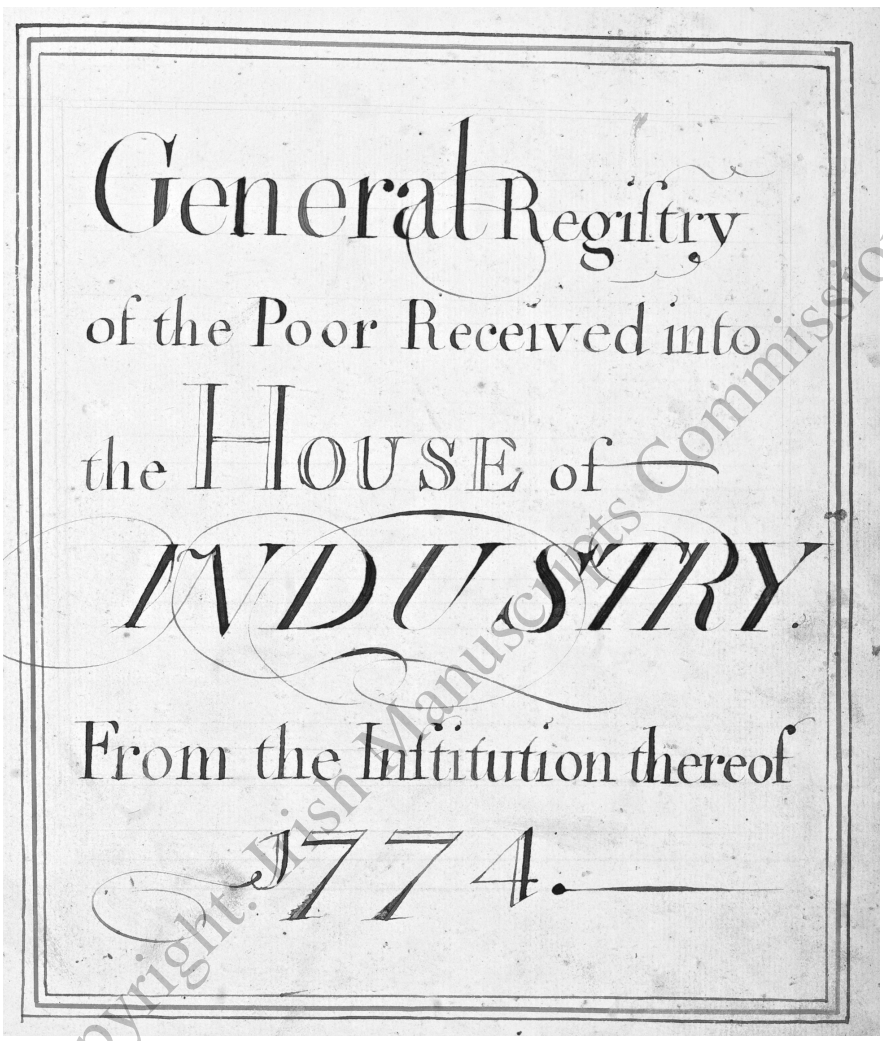

Title page of the Register of the Limerick House of Industry
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INTRODUCTION

The poor law in early modern Ireland

From the late medieval period European states increasingly grappled with perceived problems associated with poverty. Distinctions were made between the old and impotent poor who deserved relief and those who were able-bodied but unemployed and deserving of punishment rather than help, if found begging or troublesome. English initiatives provided an example from which the Irish drew. From 1542, Irish legislation copied from a 1532 English law, provided for the registration of the impotent poor and allowed them to beg within their parish and punished those who wandered from it. The able-bodied were to be confined to the stocks.[2] Yet the most significant English legislative measure, adopted in the sixteenth century and recast in 1598 and 1601, which provided for a national system of parochial relief, was never adopted in Ireland, partly because of fears that it would lead to increased taxation.[3] For the most part, relief for the poor in Ireland was *ad hoc* and left to private initiatives and to parishes.[4]

Vagrancy received far more attention. In 1576 and again in 1610 the English parliament agreed to establish 'houses of correction' for the able-bodied poor who refused to work and for other miscreants.[5] In 1635 the Irish parliament adopted a similar measure, stipulating that houses of correction should be built in every county.[6] Only a handful of places including Downpatrick, Kilkenny, Limerick and Mullingar, implemented the legislation.[7] In the eighteenth century there was renewed interest in poverty and its consequences, while a regular-sitting Irish parliament provided greater opportunities for tackling it.[8] In 1703 and 1735, parliament established workhouses in Dublin and Cork respectively in response to local initiatives.[9] Individuals planned and sometimes established institutions for poor relief. In 1749, Dean Charles Massy advocated the building of a Limerick workhouse, but nothing was done. Ten years later, the idea was adopted by the new bishop of the diocese, James Leslie, who subscribed fifty guineas to establish a workhouse, but his enthusiasm was not matched by others and the scheme failed.[10] A poorhouse operated by the Belfast Charitable Society was instituted in 1771.

2 33 Hen. VIII, c. 15: *Act directing how aged poor and impotent persons compelled to live by alms shall be ordered, and how vagabonds and beggars shall be punished* (1542).

3 P. Slack, *The English poor law, 1531–1782* (Cambridge, 1995), pp 3–26; D. Dickson, 'In search of the old Irish poor law' in R. Mitchinson and P. Roebuck (eds), *Economy and society in Scotland and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp 149–70.

4 17 & 18 Chas. II, c. 7 (1665); R. Dudley, 'The Dublin parish, 1660–1730' in E. FitzPatrick and R. Gillespie (eds), *The parish in medieval and early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 289–94; T. Barnard, 'The eighteenth-century parish' in ibid., pp 314–17; R. Lavelle and P. Huggard, 'The parish poor of St. Mark's' in D. Dickson (ed.), *The gorgeous mask: Dublin, 1700–1850* (Dublin, 1987), pp 86–97.

5 Slack, *The English poor law*, pp 9–13.

6 10 & 11 Chas. I, c. 4 (1634–5).

7 R. H. Buchanan and A. Wilson, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas: Downpatrick* (Dublin, 1997), p. 10; J. H. Andrews and K. Davies, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas: Mullingar* (Dublin, 1992), p. 10; E. O'Flaherty, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas: Limerick* (Dublin, 2010), p. 28; 'Power O'Shee papers', *Analecta Hibernica*, No. 20 (1958), pp 256–7.

8 *Some few letters selected, from an account of work-houses and charity-schools for employment of the poor in England, with a preface to excite some such application of our charity in Ireland* (Dublin, 1728), p. ii.

9 2 Anne c. 19: *Act for erecting a workhouse in the city of Dublin for imploying and maintaining the poor thereof* (1703); 9 Geo. II, c. 25: *Act … for erecting a work-house in the city of Cork for employing and maintaining the poor, punishing of vagabonds and providing for and educating foundling children* (1735); 11 & 12 Geo. III, c. 11: *Act for better regulating the Foundling Hospital and Workhouse in the city of Dublin and increasing the fund for the support thereof* (1771–2).

10 *A collection of resolutions, queries, &c. wrote on occasion of the present dispute in the city of Limerick* (Limerick, 1749), p. 13; *Public Gazetteer*, 17 Apr. 1759.

A new poor law, 1772

A proposal for a national system of county workhouses funded by subscription and local taxation was first proposed in 1729 by Arthur Dobbs.[11] In the decades that followed a number of similar schemes, based on the English and Dutch poor laws, were promoted, but with little affect.[12] It was not until 1766 that any serious attention was given to the subject again. In that year Richard Woodward, dean of Clogher, proposed a network of county poorhouses, supported through taxation and donations, to maintain the aged and infirm and ensure that vagrants were put to work.[13]

The 1771–2 parliamentary session initiated two uncoordinated measures to reform the existing arrangements of poor relief. The first regulated the Dublin workhouse and foundling hospital.[14] The second, more substantial measure repealed the earlier Tudor and Stuart laws, and permitted a system of licensed begging for the 'helpless poor' who had been resident within a specific city, town, barony or parish for at least one year. Those licensed were to display badges giving their name, place of birth, character, and cause of poverty. Licensed beggars were permitted to have one child with them; any other child would be sent to the nearest charity school or be apprenticed. Unlicensed beggars would be placed in the stocks for a specified number of hours. Significantly, the act provided for the establishment of houses of industry, divided into four departments to cater for poor helpless men, poor helpless women, 'vagabonds and sturdy beggars', and 'idle, strolling and disorderly women'. Where houses were established all unlicensed beggars should be admitted and set to work.[15]

Each county and the counties of cities and towns were to establish a poor-law corporation to grant licenses to beggars and build, maintain and regulate houses of industry. These corporations were to be presided over by the archbishop or bishop in whose diocese the corporation operated, and were to have the county's members of parliament, justices of the peace, mayor and sheriffs as *ex-officio* members, together with all those who subscribed a single payment of £20 or £3 annually for its support. Bishops were permitted to provide land from their sees for houses, while the grand juries were to raise not less than £100 and not more than £4,000 annually to support them. Moreover, the legislation provided for an annual church collection and charity sermons.[16] In the years that followed, further legislation refined the requirements, but the system broadly remained until reforms in the 1830s established a 'new' poor law.[17]

The 1772 legislation was largely unsuccessful. Besides the earlier foundations at Dublin,[18] Cork, Belfast, Lisburn and Coleraine, on which the system was largely based, only seven new houses were built: in Limerick (1774), Ennis (1775), Maryborough (1775), Waterford (1779), Clonmel (1811), Kilkenny (1814), and Wexford (1816). As there was no compulsion on grand juries to fund a house of industry and as the scheme would have increased local taxes, most opted not to establish one.

11 A. Dobbs, *An essay on the trade and improvement of Ireland* (Dublin, 1729), pp 49–54.

12 'Publicola', *A dissertation on the inlargement of tillage, the erecting of public granaries, and the regulating, employing, and supporting the poor* (Dublin, 1741), pp 54–67.

13 Richard Woodward, *A scheme for establishing county poor-houses in the kingdom of Ireland* (Dublin, 1766); Woodward, *An argument in support of the right of the poor in the Kingdom of Ireland* (Dublin, 1768, reprinted 1772, 1775).

14 11 & 12 Geo. III, c. 11: *Act for better regulating the Foundling hospital and work-house in the city of Dublin* (1771–2).

15 11 & 12 Geo. III, c. 30: *Act for badging such poor as shall be found unable to support themselves by labour and otherwise providing for them; and for restraining such as shall be found able to support themselves by labour or industry from begging* (1771–2).

16 Ibid.

17 21 & 22 Geo III, c. 45; 23 & 24 Geo III c. 58; 27 Geo. III, c. 44; 27 Geo. III, c. 52; 27 Geo. III, c. 57; 46 Geo. III., c. 95; 58 Geo. III., c. 47.

18 For the Dublin House of Industry see J. H. Widdess, 'The Dublin House of Industry' in W. Doolin and O. Fitzgerald (eds), *What's past is prologue* (Dublin, 1952); Eoin O'Broin *et al.*, *The house of industry hospitals, 1772–1987* (Dublin, 1988). The minutes of the Dublin House of Industry are deposited in the National Archives of Ireland.

This classification suggests that of inmates whose condition was recorded, those afflicted by mental or behavioural disorders constituted the largest single category. They were followed by those whose degenerated muscles and limbs rendered them disabled and by an equal number of mostly aged inmates showing various symptoms of decline and infirmity. Together these three groups made up 61 per cent of diseased inmates.

Length of stay

Three columns recorded whether inmates were discharged, died, or escaped. Information of this type is available for 87.3 per cent of cases. No departure date was recorded for 342 cases. Many of these were still resident in the House when register entries end in May 1793.

The average length of stay for all inmates was 279 days (see table 4). Those aged between eighty and eighty-nine were more likely to stay longer (388 days) than others. The shortest average stay was 142 days reported for the twenty to twenty-nine age cohort, which suggests that they had or were considered to have had better opportunities than most for sustenance outside of the House.

Table 4. Number of inmates exiting and average length of stay (in days) by age cohort, 1774–93

Age at entry (years)	Discharged			Died			Escaped			All known outcomes	
	Number	Percentage	Days	Number	Percentage	Days	Number	Percentage	Days	Number	Days
0–9	266	79.2	268	42	12.5	393	28	8.3	397	336	353
10–19	216	64.5	195	13	3.9	797	106	31.6	94	335	362
20–29	173	66.0	135	16	6.1	217	73	27.9	73	262	142
30–39	161	71.6	132	17	7.6	417	47	20.8	73	225	207
40–49	172	71.0	133	19	7.9	420	51	21.1	89	242	214
50–59	162	65.9	145	40	16.2	506	44	17.9	200	246	284
60–69	205	58.6	148	87	24.9	696	58	16.5	144	350	329
70–79	157	59.9	157	82	31.3	410	23	8.8	273	262	280
80–89	55	53.4	97	38	36.9	740	10	9.7	327	103	388
90–99	6	46.2	124	6	46.2	330	1	7.6	20	13	158
100 +	3	60.0	25	2	40.0	904	0	0	0	5	310
Total	**1,576**	**66.2**	**168**	**362**	**15.2**	**530**	**441**	**18.5**	**140**	**2,379**	**279**

Inmates were more likely to be discharged from the House rather than to die there or escape. Even among the very young and the very old, discharge rather than death was the most likely form of exit, though death became an increasingly likely form of exit for those aged fifty and over (see table 4). Those discharged numbered 1,590 or 57.9 per cent of all admitted (see table 5). While a very small number (1.6 per cent) were discharged on the day of admission, most (12.3 per cent) were discharged between one day and a week of admission. A similar number (12 per cent) were discharged between a week and one month, while a slightly smaller percentage (11.4) left within two and three months of admission. A total of 196 (7.1 per cent) inmates were discharged more than one year after admission.

Table 5. Length of stay from admission to discharge, 1774–93

Discharged	Number	Percentage of all discharged	Percentage of all inmates
on day of admission	45	2.8	1.6
within two days and one week	339	21.3	12.3
within two weeks and a month	330	20.8	12.0
within two and three months	313	19.7	11.4
within four and six months	206	13.0	7.5
within seven months and one year	161	10.1	5.9
after more than one year	196	12.3	7.1
Total	**1,590**	**100**	**57.9**

The average stay of those discharged was 168 days, or just short of six months. Children up to the age of nine were more likely to be discharged (79.2 per cent) than any other cohort, but they tended to stay in the house for longer (268 days). For the most part, inmates across nearly all age cohorts could expect to be discharged sometime between 100 and 200 days after admission. This suggests that the governors sustained a regular policy of admission and discharge, one which provided temporary rather than long-term residence, thereby maximising the numbers obtaining relief.

Opportunities for employment, apprenticeship, or, in a small number of cases, education in a charity school, were offered to inmates. Peter Johnston (1950), a seventeen-year-old labourer secured his discharge on 11 March 1788 by becoming an indentured servant bound for America. He may well have encouraged two prostitutes, Norry Lynch (1918) and Catherine Creagh (1948), to do the same, as all three were discharged on the same day. Both Lynch and Creagh were admitted at different times in 1787 but seem to have emigrated together, which provides evidence of the interdependencies of inmates within the House. Likewise, in September 1789 three young boys who had escaped together from the House were, on their apprehension, discharged to the charity school at Shannongrove.[52]

Of all three ways to leave the House, death was the least likely and of those admitted, just 370 or 13.5 per cent died there (see table 6). The exact date of death was recorded in the case of 365 inmates. Of these, nearly two-thirds (239 or 66.0 per cent) died within a year of admission. The average length of stay for those who died in the House was 530 days (nearly 1½ years). The shortest period (217 days) between admission and death was for those aged between twenty and twenty-nine. Those aged between ten and nineteen were the least likely to die within the house. Those who did were likely to be long-term inmates. More inmates died in December than in any other month of the year (forty-seven or 12.8 per cent), though the next highest rate is for May (forty or 10.9 per cent), while September registered the fewest (fourteen or 3.8 per cent), suggesting that death struck indiscriminately. Those aged above fifty accounted for 70.2 per cent of all deaths, while children aged up to nine accounted for 12.5 per cent of deaths.

Cause of mortality was not recorded in the register though in some cases might be inferred from information recorded in the 'disease' column. A glimpse at a more unfortunate death was provided by the city's newspaper in October 1785. In that month, the fourteen-year-old Thomas Galvin (1583) suffocated and died when he 'fell into one of the sewers' of the House.[53] He may have been trying to escape.

Table 6. Length of stay from admission to death, 1774–93

Died	Number	Percentage of all deaths	Percentage of all inmates
on day of admission	2	0.5	0.1
within two days and one week	20	5.5	0.7
within two weeks and a month	52	14.2	1.9
within two and three months	58	16.1	2.1
within four and six months	56	15.3	2.0
within seven months and one year	51	13.9	1.9
after more than one year	126	34.4	4.6
Total	**365**		**13.3**

52 *Waterford Chronicle*, 2 Oct. 1789. Two of the three can be identified from the register: John Hallaran (1929) and John Ringrose (1899).

53 *LC*, 31 Oct. 1785.

Table 7. Length of stay from admission to escape, 1774–93

Escaped	Number	Percentage of all escaped	Percentage of all inmates
on day of admission	12	2.7	0.4
within two days and one week	103	23.4	3.7
within two weeks and a month	97	22.0	3.5
within two and three months	99	22.4	3.6
within four and six months	50	11.3	1.8
within seven months and one year	43	9.8	1.6
after more than one year	37	8.4	1.3
Total	**441**		**16.1**

Escape was the only other way of leaving the House (see table 7). Of all those admitted, 441 or 16.1 per cent escaped. Over a quarter of these escaped within a week of admission. In all over 70 per cent escaped within three months. Those who escaped in the greatest proportions (between 21 and 32 per cent) were aged between ten and forty-nine and did so soon after admission (within 100 days) (see table 4). The exception was the ninety-two-year-old labourer, Denis Kelly (2045) who was the only individual within his age cohort to escape, having spent only twenty days in the House. Those aged between ten and nineteen were more likely to escape than any other age cohort, and in all cases proportionately more males than females escaped. Those least likely to escape were children under the age of nine and those aged over seventy.

Most escaped over the garden wall or through the street door. At least eleven made their escape 'through the necessary house'. If they sought to escape, those classified as insane had first to break free of their handcuffs, chains or locked cells. Others having been given permission to leave for a short period never came back. Patrick Sheehan (1649) a seventy-two-year-old butcher was given permission to attend mass but did not return. Neither did Pierce Kelly (1113), a nine-year-old who went down to the Shannon to wash himself. The register may not have recorded all those who escaped and who were subsequently found or returned. For example, in 1789 a lunatic whose escape was reported in the *Limerick Chronicle* was returned to the House having reached Kilmallock in the county, 'after doing a good deal of damage', but his escape is not recorded in the register.[54]

Observations

The final column in the register, 'observations', was mainly used to provide information on the terms or circumstances of discharge, death or escape. Information is provided in 1,743 cases (63.5 per cent). The most frequent observation (42.9 per cent) recorded the order from the committee, governor, or other official who discharged the inmate. In fifty-one instances inmates paid for their release, fifty-five gave 'security' not to beg, eleven were 'to quit the town', twelve were found employment or an apprenticeship, four enlisted in the army, and four went to a charter school.

In the absence of minute books, the observations provide details on those who engaged in the administration of the House. The most active were the *ex-officio* governors including the mayor and the city sheriffs whose duties dovetailed with their civic obligations. While the governors had overall responsibility for the House, much of the work was performed by a committee and the treasurer.[55] In 1783 women were encouraged to visit the House, to take an interest in its arrangements and to subscribe

54 *Waterford Chronicle*, 2 Oct. 1789.

55 *LC*, 2, Apr. 1800.

to its upkeep.[56] In 1803 the governors appointed official visitors to inspect the House and in 1806 they agreed to perform this function in rotation.[57] Predictably, those who filled the offices of secretary and treasurer were most active and they directed the steward, who may well have been responsible for keeping the register. When the positions of steward and housekeeper were advertised in May 1774, it was stated that a 'man and wife' would not be appointed.[58] Later in the same year, doctors and apothecaries were given honorary appointments to the House, which they fulfilled without salary.[59] A bailiff had been employed by 1791, who, like the steward and housekeeper, received a 'small salary'.[60] (See Appendix 4 for list of governors and other officers mentioned in the observations column).

The activities recorded in the observations column reveal the outlook of these men and women. While attitudes varied with individual cases, in general they depended on whether an inmate was deemed 'helpless' and deserving of relief, or was a nuisance or menace and deserving of punishment and confinement. Thomas Kennedy (29), a fifty-one-year-old lunatic from Limerick was 'drove out of town' on 25 November 1774 after two days in the House. While no other information is given his case suggests that the authorities were incapable or unwilling to accommodate him further. Yet, in general, lunatics remained in the House for long periods. The unfortunate twelve-year-old 'insane' Thomas Galvin (1583), who had been admitted on 14 March 1784 and died while escaping on 30 October 1785 had spent over a year-and-a-half there. His mother bought his coffin and like other parents, she seems to have availed of the House to care for her helpless child.

The treatment of 'undesirables' reflected varying attitudes. Easther Condran (94), a forty-five-year-old ballad singer from Dublin was compelled to enter the House on 9 May 1775, but 'promised to leave the town' when discharged the same day. In this case the House acted as a mechanism through which the unwanted could be given a choice between incarceration or voluntary departure from the city. Prostitutes, especially those who had contracted venereal diseases, were feared for the perceived moral and physical contagion they brought. Elinor Hawksford (1155), a twenty-one-year old Dublin prostitute, voluntarily admitted herself on 24 September 1781, but was discharged after four days by the doctor 'she being rotten with the pox'. So too was another prostitute, Biddy Butler (1161), admitted two weeks later, whose condition was noted as 'poxed'. Although the House had been partly established as a means of removing prostitutes from the streets, there was a reluctance to confine women whose medical condition seemed incurable. In some cases the doctors were successful. Mary Hickey (1630), a nineteen-year-old prostitute, was 'cured of the bad disorder' and discharged in December 1785. A mortally-ill prostitute was not the only one who might be discharged. Francis Keeffe (1239), a thirty-six-year-old barber was 'turned out' in March 1782 because his cancer was 'incurable'.

If there was a sense of ill-fated inevitability there was also compassion. Michael Bourke (1246), a seventy-year-old comber from Limerick city, came to the House on 24 March 1782 because he 'was very ill' and he died there a week later. Eliza Headen (1502), a thirty-five-year-old seamstress from Tipperary and her two young children (1503, 1504), were allowed to stay in the House for a month when Sir Henry Hartstonge arranged to pay for them. There is no reason given for this, though it shows how charity could be extended by a governor. Children left orphaned or deserted by their parents could expect succour. John Industry (425), a two-year-old whose name evoked his foundling status, was 'left at the door' on 9 October

56 *LC*, 5 May 1783.

57 *LC*, 15 June 1803, 29 Feb. 1804, 10 Dec. 1806.

58 *LC*, 5 May 1774. The position was advertised again in 1782 — *LC*, 12 Dec. 1782.

59 *LC*, 21 November 1774.

60 *LC*, 25 Feb. 1791.

1777, and died in the House three months later. Compassion was also shown when an inmate died without anyone to arrange a funeral. In such instances — seventy-four of them recorded in the register — the governors agreed to buy a coffin. Among them was Thomas Geough (25), the twenty-fifth person admitted to the House in November 1774. He was then eighty years old and he remained there for eighteen years until his death in 1792.

Conclusion

Paupers in early modern Ireland took up a small part of the official record and rarely left their own personal accounts: there are now few traces of their individual experiences or of the specific conditions that they endured. However, the register of the Limerick House of Industy with its careful listing of name, age, religion, residence, health and occupation, provides an exceptional opportunity to identify and characterise a substantial number of the poor over two decades at the end of the eighteenth century. More particularly, it offers a great deal of information on how local functionaries and the charitably-minded attempted to implement the provisions of the 1772 poor law.

Those admitted to the House were drawn from every age group and they included almost as many men as women. While most were catholic, protestants were there in significant numbers. The majority came from Limerick and its hinterland but there were others from almost every part of Ireland and from England and Scotland and from places further away on the Atlantic edge. Thus in key respects they may have seemed like a cross-section of the population of a busy port city. They included several who in better times might have known a comfortable way of life, among them a priest, a lawyer, a gentlewoman and a gentleman. What the register does not reveal is the moment when their particular circumstances changed and they were forced to take a path that only a short time before might not have been anticipated. Many others had the knowledge and skills that had allowed them to earn a living in occupations as diverse as brewing, dressmaking, teaching, shopkeeping, shipbuilding, and milling. Against the background of increasing prosperity, such men and women might have expected a relatively good standard of living instead of having to seek admission to the House. Some were forced to go there because of a dramatic change in personal circumstances, such as failing sight or an illness that rendered them incapable of work. Others, having lost a parent or a spouse, were homeless and without access to the means of earning a living. The majority of those admitted, however, came from the ranks of the propertyless rural and urban poor whose livelihoods depended on a sustained capacity for manual work. At the best of times they had to work hard to attain the standards of shelter, diet and clothing that many took for granted. They could never be sure of securing a living and at times of crisis, such as when the cycle of the economy shifted downwards in the mid 1780s, their outlook became bleaker still. At such moments the House provided shelter and food and, if the numbers seeking help threatened to overwhelm its limited capacity, it was able to organise the distribution of food and clothes through the city.

Most of those admitted stayed but a short while. The sooner a pauper could leave, either to take up work or to go to another part of the country, the sooner another might be given a place. But there were some who never left the House, including the permanately disabled who lacked even the capacity to beg and the mentally ill who were perceived as being a threat to themselves and to others. For all, admission to the House meant disruption of a familiar routine and becoming subject to an impersonal rhythm that regulated each of the day's activities. This often meant the severing of personal ties and a loss of intimacy and many had to suffer criticism of a wayward life. On the other hand an inmate had the opportunity to avail of the sociability that living at close quarters brought and for as long as a pauper remained in the House, there was the guarantee of shelter, food, clothing and, when ill, the attention of a physician or

surgeon. Notwithstanding its benefits and the extent to which some seemed content to remain under its regime, others set escape as their goal and they pursued that even at the risk of injury or death.

The erection of the House of Industry provided another sphere of activity for the charitable and the civic-minded. Some served by virtue of their office or calling; others dug into their pockets to contribute to its funds, sometimes anonymously. Priests preached on its behalf and newspaper proprietors publicised its good work and it was widely perceived and welcomed as a worthwhile, even fashionable, cause. Among those who lent their weight was Deane Hoare. In 1774 when the project was mooted he was a senior clergyman, already active on behalf of many of the city's charities and he was glad to turn his skills to the design of the House. Another was Lancelot Hill, recently retired from the army and having supervised the building of the House he went on to serve as its secretary and treasurer for many years. His wife Jane, a sister of Edmund Sexten Pery, was a frequent visitor to the House, a contributor to its funds and a source of consolation to the afflicted. So too was her sister Lucy Hartstonge, who contributed generously and became a life governor. Dymphna, the third Pery sister, may have urged her husband William Monsell to do the same. The governance of the House provided an opportunity for association in a project that most believed brought great benefits. As the city grew in wealth and the plight of the poor became every day more visible, it was a valued refuge for the most afflicted and deserving.

Some might have hoped that the erection of a house of industry with a strict work regime would lessen, or remove entirely, the burden that the poor presented. Notwithstanding its designation, the Limerick House of Industry, like most others at the time, functioned primarily as a place of refuge and confinement. Thus it was as likely to contain the orphaned and abandoned, the old and incapacitated, the lunatic and the miscreant, as to house the able-bodied, who, had they been there in sufficient numbers, might have justified its reorganisation as a self-supporting institution. During the period dealt with here it discharged a wider array of functions and in time other more specialised carcarel institutions such as the lunatic and the magdalen asylum, the industrial school and the reformatory, would emerge to replace it.

David Fleming
John Logan
Limerick, 2011

APPENDIX 1
OCCUPATIONS OF INMATES, 1774–93

Agriculture, horticulture, fishing and mining

Farmer, poor farmer	34	Gardener	11	Miner	1
Fisherman	1	Husbandman	1		

Building and allied trades

Carpenter	12	Painter	2	Slater	6
Joiner	2	Paver	1	Sweep	1
Lime burner	1	Plummer	2	Wheelwright	3
Mason, stone cutter	10	Sawyer	6		
Nailor	9	Ship carpenter	1		

Manufacturing: textiles and ropes

Britches maker	2	Lace maker	12	Silk dier	1
Buttonmaker	4	Lawn maker	1	Silk weaver	4
Calico printer	2	Linen weaver	11	Silk winder	1
Card marker	2	Mantua maker	13	Spinner	28
Clothier	19	Mat maker	1	Stay-maker	3
Comber	10	Peruke maker	2	Stockingmaker	3
Cordwainer	8	Quilter	3	Tailor	23
Embroidrist	1	Quill winder	6	Threadmaker	7
Flax dresser	2	Ribbon weaver	3	Weaver	110
Hatter	2	Sail maker	1	Wigmaker	2
Hosier	3	Sempstress	22	Winder	1
Knitter	3	Serge weaver	4	Worsted spinner	3
		Shagg weaver	1		

Manufacturing: leather, bone and footwear trades

Blacker	1	Pattenmaker	3	Skinner	4
Combmaker	1	Saddler	5	Tanner	8
Cobbler	8	Shoe boy	4	Whipmaker	1
Glover	2	Broguemaker, shoemaker	34		

Manufacturing: metalworking and clayworking

Buckler maker	2	Gunsmith	1	Smith	9
Cutler	1	Pottermaker	1	Tinker	1
Founder	1	Sieve maker	1		

Manufacturing: food, drink and tobacco processing

Baker	14	Malster	6	Tobacco boy	1
Brewer, brewer's servant	4	Mealman	1	Tobacconist	6
Butcher	18	Mealwoman	1	Tripe woman	3
Cleeveboy	2	Miller	5		
Cook	3	Salt boiler	1		

Manufacturing: woodworking

Basketmaker	1	Cooper	6	Turner	1
Cabinetmaker	5	Corkcutter	1		

Transport

Boatman	5	Horse rider	1	Sailor, seaman,	
Chairman	13	Porter	16	poor seaman	32
Coachman	1			Turf porter	2

Distributive

Butter broker	1	Huckster, forestaller	4	Shopkeeper	3
Crier of news, news-seller	2	Merchant, poor merchant	2	Waterwoman	1
Dealer	9	Peddlar	18		
Grocer	2	Publican	1		

Labouring

Labourer	149	Workwoman	1		

Personal services

Barber	7	Servant	330	Steward	1

Professional and administrative services

Clerk, writing clerk	2	Priest	1	Schoolmaster	10
Dancing master	1	Process server	3	Schoolmistress	3
Fencing teacher	1	Proctor	1	Tutor	1
Constable	1	Soldier, old soldier,		Toll gatherer	1
Marine, mariner	2	broken soldier	3	Weigh master	1

Housekeeper

Housekeeper	82	Reduced housekeeper, poor housekeeper		135	

Entertainer

Actress	2	Mountebank	1	Thumbling girl	1
Balladsinger	9	Piper	2		
Fiddler	1	Sportsman	1		

Pupil

Apprentice	1	Poor scholar	9	Charity schoolboy	1

Miscreant: prostitute

Harlot	58	Strumpet	1	Whore	9

Miscreant: beggar and vagabond

Beggar	277	stroller, strolling		Traveller	1
Shuler, stroller, stroller vagabond, common		beggar	109	Vagabond	1

Miscreant: delinquent

Bad boy	2	Idle boy, idle bad boy	3	Rogue	8
Bad girl	12	Idle girl	1	Smuggler	1
Bad woman	6	Idle woman	1	Saucy fellow	1
Disobedient girl	1	Idler	17	Thief	7
Drunkard	4	Robber	1		

NON-OCCUPATIONAL DESCRIPTIONS

Residence

American	2	Frenchman	2	County Cork	1

Disease or behavioural condition

Bad disorder pox	3	Fool, foolish,		Insane, mad, lunatic	6
Blindboy	1	strolling fool	15	Out of her senses	1
Cripple	5	Idiot	1	Drunkard	4

Household, gender, family or social status

Boy	3	Infant	1	Tailor's wife	1
Born in the House of Industry	1	Reduced gentleman, reduced gentlewoman	4	Butcher's son	1
Bastard	1	Spinster	10	Deluded from her parents	1
Child	71	Wife to named person	3	Had child by Mr Lynch	1
Child or grandchild to named person	11	Servant's child	2	Orphan and beggar	1
Orphan	54	Miller's wife	1	Widow	3
Girl	1	Soldier's wife	17		

The 'helpless' poor

Poor boy	39	Poor lad	1	Poor widow	1
Poor child	14	Poor man	9	Poor woman	25
Poor girl	39	Poor orphan	1	Reduced	2

APPENDIX 2

RESIDENCE OF INMATES BY CIRCUMSTANCES OF ADMISSION, 1774–93

		Voluntary		Compulsory		Unknown terms of admission	Total
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
MUNSTER	Limerick City	594	69.5	261	30.5	450	1,305
	Limerick County	239	62.6	143	37.4	166	548
	Limerick	21	36.2	37	63.8	5	63
	Clare County	110	63.6	63	36.4	86	259
	Tipperary County	35	64.8	19	35.2	15	69
	Cork City	9	52.9	8	47.1	10	27
	Cork County	10	30.3	23	69.7	9	42
	Cork	9	100	0	0	4	13
	Kerry County	12	42.9	16	57.1	9	37
	Waterford County	4	57.1	3	42.9	1	8
	Total	*1,043*	*64.5*	*573*	*35.5*	*755*	*2,371*
LEINSTER	Carlow County	1	100	0	0	3	4
	Dublin City	26	78.8	7	21.2	10	43
	Dublin County	6	54.5	5	45.5	2	13
	Dublin	15	88.2	2	11.8	5	22
	Kildare County	1	100	0	0	0	1
	Kilkenny County	5	71.4	2	28.6	0	7
	King's County	7	77.8	2	22.2	3	12
	Leinster	0	0	1	100	0	1
	Longford County	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	3
	Meath County	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	2
	Queen's County	3	37.5	5	62.5	1	9
	Wexford County	1	25.0	3	75.0	4	8
	Total	*68*	*70.1*	*29*	*29.9*	*28*	*125*
ULSTER	Antrim County	9	90.0	1	10.0	0	10
	Armagh County	0	0	1	100	0	1
	Down County	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	4
	Cavan County	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	2
	Londonderry County	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	2
	Monaghan County	1	100	0	0	0	1
	North	12	80.0	3	20.0	9	24
	Tyrone County	0	0	2	100	0	2
	Total	*26*	*70.3*	*11*	*29.7*	*9*	*46*
CONNAUGHT	Connaught	0	0	2	100	2	4
	Galway County	12	60.0	8	40.0	2	22
	Mayo County	0	0	1	100	0	1
	Roscommon County	1	25.0	3	75.0	0	4
	Sligo county	0	0	2	100	2	4
	Total	*13*	*44.8*	*16*	*55.2*	*6*	*35*
OUTSIDE IRELAND	England	14	58.3	10	41.7	12	36
	North Britain	1	33.3	2	66.7	0	3
	Scotland	2	66.7	1	33.3	1	4
	Jersey	0	0	0	0	4	4
	France	1	25.0	3	75.0	1	5
	Italy	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Sweden	0	0	1	100	0	1
	America	2	40.0	3	60.0	1	6
	West Indies	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	*20*	*50*	*20*	*50*	*21*	*61*
	No residence recorded	37	58.0	29	42.0	43	109
	Total	*1,207*	*64.0*	*678*	*36*	*862*	*2,747*

APPENDIX 3

Classification of disease and related health condition of inmates, 1774–93

1 Certain infectious and parasitic diseases
- Lax, laxative 4
- Venereal disease, bad disorder, pox, clap, inveterate pox, nose eaten off, jaws locked with the bad disorder 36
- Bloody flux 3
- Ague, shaking ague 3
- Fever, high fever, raging fever 6
- Impostume 1

2 Neoplasms
- Cancer 1

3 Diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs and certain disorders involving the immune mechanism
- Evil, running evil 4

4 Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases
- Scurvy, scorbutic, scorbutic face, scorbutic legs 22

5 Mental and behavioural disorders
- Drunk, drunkard, dead drunk, given to drink, inebriated, loves liquor, full of whiskey 17
- Disordered in senses 4
- Dressed in boys clothes 1
- Fool, foolish 16
- Insane 182
- Lunatic 31
- Mad, stark mad 13
- Melancholy 1
- Naked 1
- Will eat nothing 1

6 Diseases of the nervous system
- Falling sickness 1
- Fits 9
- Headache, pain in head 3
- Nervous disorder 1
- Palsy 12
- Dead palsy 1
- Dead at one side 2

7 Diseases of the eye and adnexa
- Almost blind 3
- Blind, most blind, stone blind, want of sight, loss of sight 57
- Blind in one eye, most blind in one eye 13
- Dimness in sight 1
- Nigh sighted 3
- Pearl in one eye 1
- Sore eye, sore eyes 7

8 Diseases of the ear and mastoid process
- Deaf, hard of hearing 5
- Dumb 4

9 Diseases of the circulatory system
- Pain in heart 3
- Dropsy, dropsical 14

10 Diseases of the respiratory system
- Asthma, asthmatic 19
- Consumption 1
- Cough 1
- Ptisick 1

11 Diseases of the digestive system
- Costive 1
- Rupture, very large rupture 16
- Sore mouth 1
- Subject to worms 1
- Puking blood 2
- Yellow jaundice 1
- Canker 1

12 Diseases of the skin and subcutaneous tissue
- Itch, violent itch 2
- Scald head 1

13 Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue
- Cripple, wants the use of limbs 36
- Lame 27
- Lame in left arm, lost use of one arm, lame in one arm, lame hand 8
- Lame in one leg, lame in both legs, lame step 14
- Pain in back 4
- Pain in leg, pain in legs 2
- Rheumatic, rheumatic pains, rheumatism 25
- Sore arm, sore hand, sore hands 6
- Sore leg, sore legs, desperate sore leg, swelled knee 33

14 Diseases of the genitourinary system 0

15 Pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium
- With child, big with child 6
- Sore breast 2
- Just brought to bed 1

16 Certain conditions originating in the perinatal period 0

17 Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities
- Chin and chest tied together 1
- Humpbacked 1

18 Symptoms, signs and abnormal clinical and laboratory findings, not elsewhere classified
- Bedridden 1
- Decay 4
- Infirm 146
- Old age 3
- Sore chin 1

19 Injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes
- Broken leg, broke his leg 3
- Broken arm 1
- Broken back 2
- Broken bones 1
- Loss of foot, loss of feet, one leg, loss of toes 5
- Loss of hand, one hand, one arm 3

20 External causes of morbidity and mortality	0
21 Factors influencing health status and contact with health services	
Sick, sickly	40
[-] **Inmates suffering more than one condition**	
Asthmatic, rheumatic	1
Blind, decrepit	1
Dead drunk and bad disorder	1
Dropsical, rupture	1
Fits and blind in one eye	1
Fits and deaf	1
Fits and lame and rupture	1
Foolish and fits	1
Insane and blind	3
Lame and blind	1
Lame and deaf	1
Lame and dumb	2
Lame and paralytic	1
Land rupture	2
Old age and infirmity	1
Old age and sick	1
Pain in head and limbs	1
Rupture and asthmatic	2
Sick and infirm	27
Sick and sore breast	1
Sick and weak	4
Sickly and cripple	1
Most blind and lunatic	1