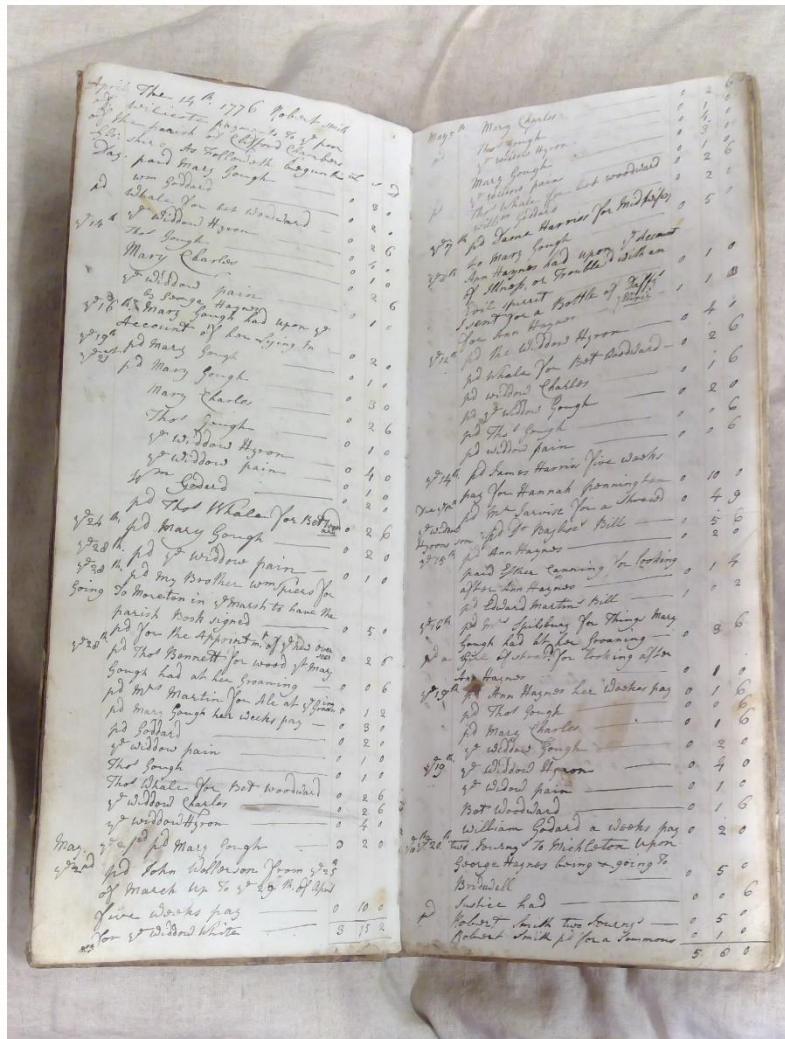


Ann Haynes trouble with an evil spirit, Clifford Chambers Overseer's Accounts

DR325/80

For October's Document of the Month, we're taking a look at the overseer's accounts for the parish of Clifford Chambers, near to Stratford-upon-Avon.

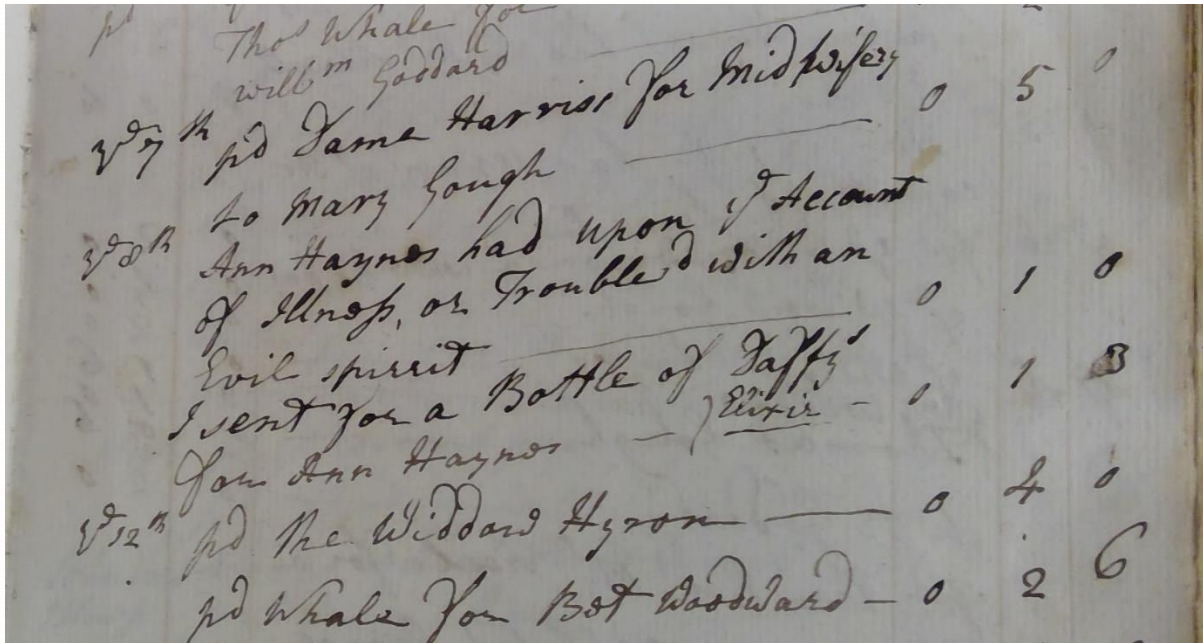


Clifford Chambers Overseers' Account Book, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR325/80.

In these accounts for the year 1776, we come across the following entry for a woman named Ann Haynes. The entry, dated the 8th May, states the following:

“Ann Haynes had upon y[th]e Account of Illness, or Troubled with an Evil spirit.”¹

Ann was given the sum of 1 shilling by the parish overseers. The entry then states that the Overseer sent a bottle of Daffy’s Elixir to her at a further cost of 1 shilling.



Ann Haynes entry in the Clifford Chambers Overseers’ Account Book, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR325/80.

Ann Haynes is mentioned a few more times in the accounts over the next few months, but then disappears. The entries talk of other people in the parish being given money to help look after her, which suggests that her illness was a long one. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we have been unable to find any more information about her.

The belief in evil spirits, and these being able to invade the body and cause illness, dates back centuries. Dr Martha McGill goes into great detail about this subject in the blog post *Everyday Encounters with Supernatural Forces in Early Modern Britain*, which can be found on the British Academy website².

Daffy’s Elixir

¹ Clifford Chambers Overseers Accounts, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR325/80.

² McGill, Dr. Martha, *Everyday Encounters with Supernatural Forces in Early Modern Britain*, The British Academy, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/everyday-encounters-supernatural-forces-early-modern-britain/> (accessed 14/09/2022).

Daffy's Elixir was a self-help remedy, marketed as a cure for a number of different ailments. It has also been known as Elixir Salutis (or Elixir of Health)³. The elixir is believed to have been first produced by a seventeenth century clergyman called Thomas Daffy and was manufactured well into the twentieth century. There are many variations of the recipe and other such remedies available on the market, such as Godfrey's Cordial. A previously excavated unopened bottle of Daffy's Elixir was tested and found to contain alcohol and senna as the main ingredients⁴. Upon examining the Overseer's Accounts, Daffy's Elixir appears to have been a common medicine to give for periods of illness of all kinds, not just trouble with evil spirits.

Overseers' Accounts

Before 1834, the poorest in society were taken care of by the parish they lived in. In 1601, the Poor Law Act was passed. This saw that each parish had to elect two or three people each year to the position of Overseers of the Poor. These individuals (usually substantial householders) became responsible for providing work for the unemployed and providing relief for those unable to work. The funds for this relief were provided via a tax on the inhabitants of the parish. In 1662, this act was amended to establish rights of settlement. According to Simon Fowler in *Poor Law Records for Family Historians*, settlement was granted to people who were "either born in a parish, or had rented property, paid the poor rate, or had lived for a period of one year in their new parish of residence."⁵ If they couldn't prove this when they sought help from the parish, they could be sent back to the parish of their birth.⁶

Overseers' accounts record money collected for the poor of a parish, and the payments made to the poor. These can usually be found in the parish collections held here at the Record Office. More details about the collections we have in our care can be found on our online catalogue, Warwickshire's Past Unlocked⁷.

³ Osbourn, Sally, *The Delights of Daffy*, <https://18thcenturyrecipes.wordpress.com/2011/08/20/the-delights-of-daffy/> (accessed 14/09/2022).

⁴ Nancy Cox and Karin Dannehl, 'Daffys Elixir – Dawsons lozenges', in *Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities 1550-1820* (Wolverhampton, 2007), *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/traded-goods-dictionary/1550-1820/daffys-elixir-dawsons-lozenges> [accessed 03/09/2022].

⁵ Fowler, Simon, *Poor Law Records for Family Historians*, The Family History Partnership, 2011, page 10.

⁶ Information gathered from Fowler, Simon, *Poor Law Records for Family Historians*, The Family History Partnership, 2011, page 10.

⁷ <http://archivesunlocked.warwickshire.gov.uk/calmview/>