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[www.historyworks.tv](http://www.historyworks.tv)  
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A woman in a floral shirt is on the left, and a man is on the right, looking through a microscope. The background is a solid light blue.

# Ditchburn Place



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# Cambridge Union Workhouse

From 1838 to 1930, Ditchburn Place on Mill Road was known as the Cambridge Union Workhouse.

A workhouse was a place where the poor, ill and elderly went to live and work if they could not afford their own homes.

Before workhouses existed, it was the responsibility of the parishes to look after the poor.

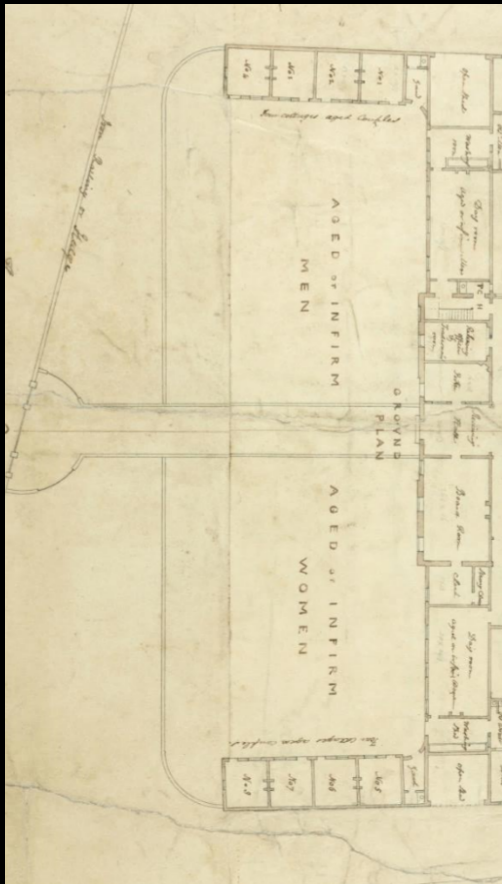
# Life in the Workhouse

The workhouse had a matron and a master who were in charge of running everything.

This is a photo of the matron on the grounds of the Cambridge Union Workhouse.



# It's A Hard Knock Life!



Life in a workhouse was tough.

Everyone was divided up by their age, gender and state of health so family members could not see each other.

**How many different sections can you see in this building plan?**

# Daily Life in the Workhouse



This picture is from 'Oliver Twist' -a Charles Dickens Novel about children living in the Workhouse

Those who were able to work had to wake up at 6am every morning and work for ten hours every day. They stopped for meals but the rules were very strict and all food had to be eaten in silence.

From the age of seven, children had three hours of school every day and spent the rest of the time at work like the adults.

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# Food in the Workhouse

## The Weekly Menu in the Workhouse

### **FACTOID!**

Gruel is a type of porridge made of rice, flour or millet mixed with water or milk.

Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays

Breakfast – bread, gruel

Dinner – meat, potatoes

Supper – bread, broth

Mondays, Wednesdays,

Saturdays

Breakfast – bread, gruel

Dinner – soup

Supper – bread, cheese

Fridays

Breakfast – bread, gruel

Dinner – suet (fat from meat) or  
rice pudding

Supper – bread, cheese

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# Caring for the Elderly and Ill



Nurses looked after the ill and elderly in the workhouse. This picture shows the women's dayroom.

The woman in the middle of the picture is the matron of the workhouse.

# Caring for the Elderly and Ill



This picture shows the men's infirmary.

The matron is in the centre and there is a nurse on the right helping the patients.



# Memories of Life in the Workhouse

This is a quote from someone who lived in the workhouse as a young child and remembers being taken into town by one of the nurses:

‘The first time we went to Mill Road, I was about three. I remember sitting at a big table on a small chair with a lot of other children and I remember being put in a bath with a lot of other children. It must have been a Sunday when a nurse took a lot of the children out. There were some in a pram and I was hanging on the side of the pram. We had navy blue coats and hats. I remember walking to town. Where Marks and Spencer is now there was a shop called Coads. We walked round there and when we got back to Mill Road the Sister reprimanded the nurse for taking me out without leggings on me. I think we were there because mother was in hospital.’

A person with long hair is looking through a microscope. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Discover More

- Online:
- Information and pictures of the building are available at [http://www.capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/81a\\_MR-1st-edn\\_2015-10-10.pdf](http://www.capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/81a_MR-1st-edn_2015-10-10.pdf)
- For more information on the Poor Law Amendment Act <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/shp/britishsociety/thepoorrev1.shtml>
- For more information on the feast on Parker's Piece <http://www.creatingmycambridge.com/history-stories/7-parkers-piece/>

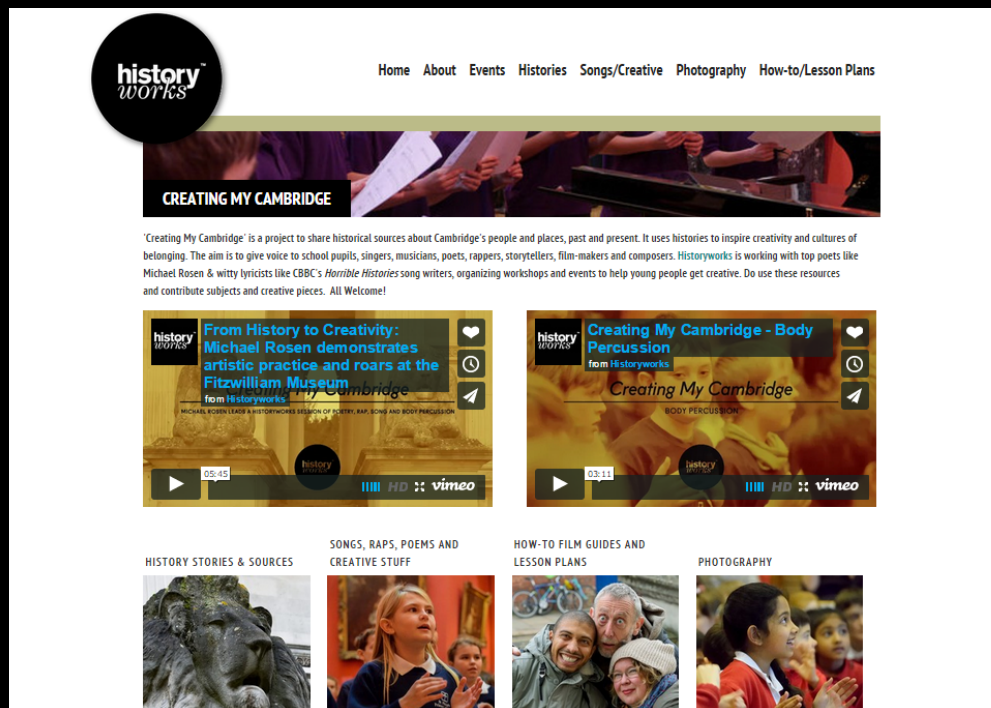
A person is shown from the chest up, looking through a microscope. A black microphone is attached to the side of the microscope. The person is wearing a dark shirt. The background is a light blue wall.

# Discover More

- Books:
- White, G. (1978) *In and out of the workhouse* for a general overview of workhouses in this period
- Marclay-Munro, Bridget; Cook, Helen (1991) *Workhouse to Housework* for more detail and accounts of the workhouse in this period
- *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens, gives a vivid account of a workhouse, from a child's point of view

# Web Resources available at:

## <http://www.creatingmycambridge.com/history-stories>



The screenshot shows the 'historyworks' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, About, Events, Histories, Songs/Creative, Photography, and How-to/Lesson Plans. The main header features the 'historyworks' logo and a large image of children singing into microphones, with the text 'CREATING MY CAMBRIDGE' overlaid. Below this, a paragraph describes the project: 'Creating My Cambridge' is a project to share historical sources about Cambridge's people and places, past and present. It uses histories to inspire creativity and cultures of belonging. The aim is to give voice to school pupils, singers, musicians, poets, rappers, storytellers, film-makers and composers. Historyworks is working with top poets like Michael Rosen & witty lyricists like CBBC's *Horrible Histories* song writers, organizing workshops and events to help young people get creative. Do use these resources and contribute subjects and creative pieces. All Welcome!

Below the text are two video thumbnails. The first is titled 'From History to Creativity: Michael Rosen demonstrates artistic practice and roars at the Fitzwilliam Museum' and has a duration of 05:45. The second is titled 'Creating My Cambridge - Body Percussion' and has a duration of 03:11. Both videos are from 'historyworks' and are available on Vimeo.

At the bottom, there are four categories with corresponding images: 'HISTORY STORIES & SOURCES' (a stone lion), 'SONGS, RAPS, POEMS AND CREATIVE STUFF' (a girl singing), 'HOW-TO FILM GUIDES AND LESSON PLANS' (a group of people), and 'PHOTOGRAPHY' (a group of children).

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