

## A day in the life of the Victorian workhouse: 1881

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**Start date** 10th June 2018 **Time** 10:00 – 16:45

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge

**Tutor** Liz Carter **Course code** 1718NDX035

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings

**For further information on this course, please contact** Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr  
[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Liz Carter was born and educated in North Somerset and moved to Cambridgeshire, via London, in 1975. She turned an interest in genealogy into a small, home-based business 'Backtracks' in 1988 carrying out local and family history research. She joined the University of Cambridge ICE in 1996 as a part-time tutor and is also a sessional tutor for the Workers' Education Association (WEA) and lectures at both the Letchworth Settlement and the Rothsay Education Centre in Bedford. Her specialist areas of research are poverty issues and women's suffrage; her courses and lectures reflect these interests.

Liz's other interests include hill-walking, patchwork quilting and reading, plus tending two large allotments.

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## Course programme

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09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	<b>Session 1: The Union Workhouse – building &amp; administration.</b>
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	<b>Session 2: The Workhouse Inmates – who, why and how?</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	<b>Session 3: The Workhouse Inmates – specialist care.</b>
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	<b>Session 4: Outside Influences – social &amp; political attitudes.</b>
16:45	Day-school ends

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

The day school will investigate the overall administration as well as the day-to-day running of a Union Workhouse, examining the inmates and their care and consider the outside influences that paved the way for future change.

### **Content:**

We start the day with a brief look at the implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and examine some union workhouse designs to provide a background for the remainder of the day. Taking the year 1881 as our focal point, and using contemporary records, we will start our investigation with the administration and staffing of a typical union workhouse and study the role of the various employees. We will look at the Board of Guardians and read some contemporary journals from the Workhouse Master.

We then spend two sessions looking at the inmates – where they came from and why they were in the workhouse, how long they stayed and the care meted out. This will include diet and work for the able-bodied as well as how people left the workhouse. We will also investigate the specialist care offered to the young, the sick and the elderly.

We finish the day with a look at some of the outside influences that will affect the future of the workhouse system, the political environment and social attitudes of the time, and briefly look at the demise of this often-maligned institution in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Presentation of the course:**

The day school will comprise 4 class based sessions, illustrated with power-point presentations. Copies of contemporary documents will be used for study in pairs/groups and discussion on topics raised will be encouraged. The internet will also be used to illustrate research facilities.

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

1. Identify the key staff and their role within the union workhouse of the 1880s.
2. Explain the daily routine of able-bodied workhouse inmates in the union workhouse in the 1880s.
3. Describe some of the specialist care given to the young, elderly and sick in the workhouse system.
4. Make comparisons with modern-day poverty issues.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
Peter Higginbotham	<i>The Workhouse Cookbook</i>	History Press, 2008
Peter Higginbotham (ed)	<i>Indoor paupers, by one of them, Life Inside a London Workhouse</i>	CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2013

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## Website addresses

[www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk) – one of the best websites for information about union workhouses and the administration surrounding the application and implementation of the Poor Law.

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## Additional information

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### Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:  
<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

### Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on [ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1223 746262.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 28 July 2017

