

**THE HISTORY OF THE  
WORKHOUSE OR POOR'S  
HOSPITAL OF ABERDEEN  
FROM 1739 TO 1818**

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The history of the Workhouse or Poor's Hospital of Aberdeen from 1739 to 1818 by Alexander Walker

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**ALEXANDER WALKER**

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FROM 1739 TO 1818**



THE HISTORY  
OF  
AN ABERDEEN BENEVOLENCE.

THE  
HISTORY OF THE WORKHOUSE

OR

POOR'S HOSPITAL OF ABERDEEN

*From 1739 to 1818*

ITS

BOYS' HOSPITAL

*From 1818 to 1852*

GIRLS' HOSPITAL

*From 1828 to 1852*

AND ITS

BOYS' AND GIRLS' HOSPITALS

*From 1852 to 1885*

**Aberdeen**

J. & J. P. EDMOND & SPARK

1885.

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TO THE  
FUTURE GOVERNING BODY  
OF THE BREWHILL  
Boys' and Girls' Hospitals of Aberdeen  
THIS SKETCH  
IS  
DEDICATED.

ONE OF THE  
**Aberdeen Benevolences of 1739.**

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I HAD the pleasure to be present at the first Meeting of this Association of the Old Boys of a House with which I have been long connected, for which you shew no meaningless respect, and to which you pay a compliment when you seek to keep up that old family tie, and that old school influence which first began within its walls. The Inaugural Address of the Honorary President, your former teacher, was all that such a Meeting needed. He still is, and always will be, your "guide, philosopher and friend," if you will but let him. In his thoughtful, earnest way, he told you what to seek and what to avoid—the good your Association might win for you, and the evil it might keep you from. I don't think he made either the Loafer, the Soaker, or the



Masher, objects of attraction. He struck a key note that evening, which, I trust, you will struggle to keep up to: don't drift into a mutual adulation Society, or become hypercritical. The one extreme is as bad as the other. Let your honest effort be, in the words of one of the Rules of your Association, "to provide means for social intercourse and mutual improvement."

In the Syllabus, without consulting me, you put me down for delivering an address to you this evening. You didn't need to ask, for I think you all knew me sufficiently well to know that I would not hesitate, to attempt, at any rate, to serve you.

On asking Mr. Barnett what subject he thought would interest you most, he said "Just give us something about 'the Hospital,' like *you* ye gave about Robert Gordon's College." I agreed, and am now about to give the results of a lot of curious reading in old forgotten minute books, &c.

Just seven years after the death of Robert Gordon, while the house which bore his name still stood unused, the fathers of the city met and took steps to erect an Infirmary and a Workhouse. This was in the year 1739. The resolution passed on the 17th of February of that year says that the steps the Town Council were about to take were, by the

blessing of God, likely to tend to "promote religion, suppress vice, propagate industry and virtue, and be a general benefit to society."

With this object the Town Council had already bought a large ruinous edifice, with a great garden, "conveniently situated on the North side of the Castlegate, near to the Town House." It had back and fore entries to the street and fields, we are told, and had, in other days, been a town residence of Earl Aberdeen.

Before we leave this purchase let us try to bring the place and its surroundings to our mind's eye. Green fields are round the Hospital of to-day, as you all know, but it requires some little stretch of fancy to be able "to babble o' green fields, on the North side of the Castlegate, near to the Town House." The subject so described lay behind the Tolbooth, occupying, with its outhouses and garden, more than all that is now covered by the prison. One small speck of grass still exists on the outside of the prison wall, at the top of Rettie's Court, in Broad Street; but in 1740, where King Street now runs, green fields abounded. The Maut Hillock stood about where Messrs. Chivas' shop is, and the New Inn offered entertainment for man and beast where the North

of Scotland Banking House now stands. On the other sides of the Castlegate the town residences of many of the county families were. The Shiprow entered by the Exchequer Row into the great Square. On one side of the Shiprow, rose S. Catharine's Hill; beyond S. Catharine's Hill, on what is now the line of Union Street, lay snug little homesteads, each in its own kailyard or garden, and which, when the time came for seeking elbow room for the City, gave the Town Council no little trouble to buy up. These tenements and yards stretched down behind S. Catharine's Hill, towards that other minor market place of the Burgh—the Green. They lay thickly round the old possessions of the Trinity Friars—the Carmelite Street of to-day—while S. Nicholas Church and lands sloped towards these crofts and houses in the Green, and on the Union Street line. There was then no S. Nicholas Street—only by Putachie side could you reach the tenements which lay in considerable numbers on to and beyond Adie's Wynd, the Bow Brig, and Windmill Croft. Into the Round Table, a circular space, running in front of the present Town House, Police Department door, back to the front of Baillie Donald's premises there ran Castlegate, Huxter Row, Shiprow, and Guestrow. The