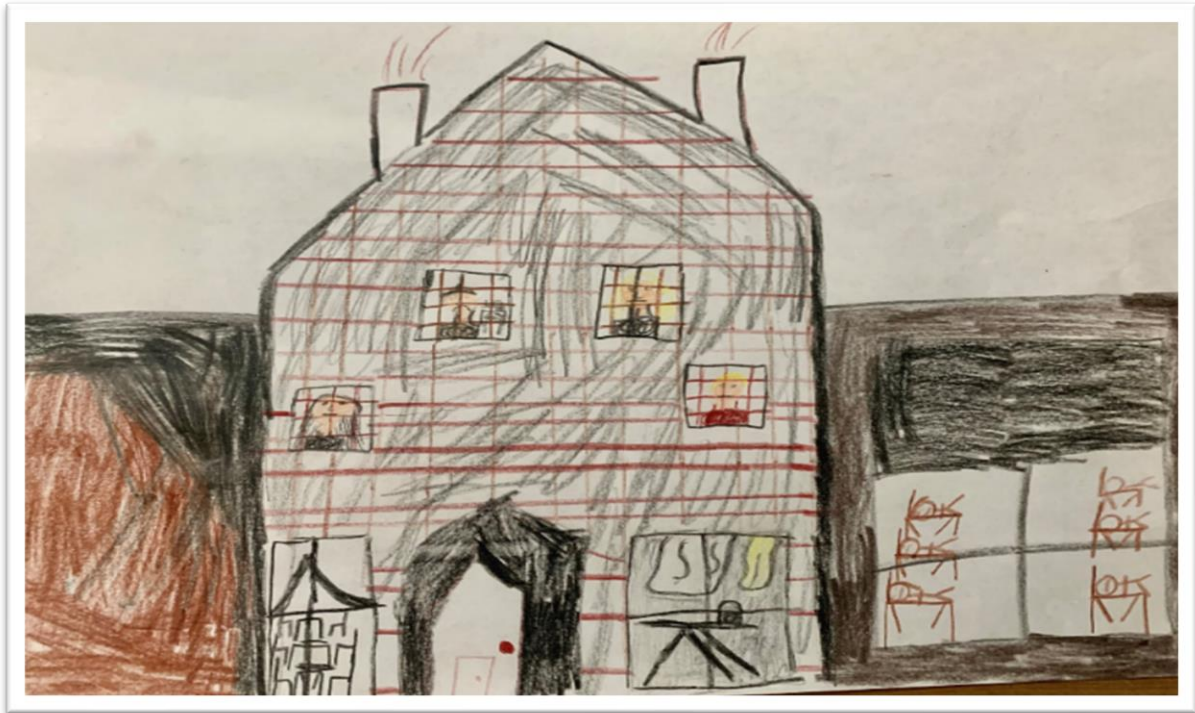


Workhouse Life – Hollie Murkin



My life in the workhouse is like lots of people like me... It started with my family holding all our heavy bags, starring at the massive gloomy stone building with iron railings around it. The only way out... through some guarded iron gates big as boulders. My family and I slowly walked up to the wooden door, we could see lots of small, barred windows with little boys looking through.

Inside the dirty disgusting building, me and my beloved family were split up. I have heard from others that I would never see them again. I prayed that we would be together again in this life. As Mother was so sick they took her straight to the infirmary. I cannot imagine how she will get better in such a dirty place. I haven't heard since and I don't know where my Dad is. Anyway, back to the story, I was sent or rather pushed to a small soulless dormitory, where the door was locked at night. I slept in a small bed with another girl, younger than me. The first night I couldn't stop crying but it was actually quite a good thing having her body next to mine as it kept me warm.

One day I was walking through the main entrance as a free girl, now I am a slave working in the laundry. The cramped room is very noisy, like a maze because of all the hanging laundry. It also got very hot because of the steam from the hot water. As we were wearing thick itchy rags, every now and then

someone would faint. My boring job was to fold the clothes so they could be sent back to houses of rich people, that is all I did every minute of every day.

It made me angry that we weren't allowed to talk to each other. We were definitely not meant to make any friends. If you lived your life in the workhouse you were expected to spend your whole life heads down and not complaining. One day as usual I went outside in the icy cold weather to go and have my weekly wash at the frozen pump. As I was waiting for the pump to defrost, I started to think about what I was going to eat for breakfast. I could almost smell eggs and bacon but of course we're only going to get growl and maybe a piece of stale bread if we're lucky. I don't know what came over me, I guess I my body had simply had enough and I saw the back gate had been left open by the gardener.

Without thinking I ran thought the door my heart thumping like a drum. The old gardener saw me, he didn't bother to chase me as his body was so old. Going out to gate me life suddenly changed I was no longer a slave to the workhouse but a free girl. But who knows what the future would hold.