

# BASTARDY BONDS

We tend to think of the social welfare safety nets that exist today as modern inventions and that our ancestors had to fend for themselves or starve. To a great degree this was true but there were programs in the 1700's and 1800's such as parish relief and the dreaded workhouse that were suppose to ease some of this suffering. One such program was Bastardy Bonds. These bonds were entered into to provide for a child born out of wedlock. They usually consisted of a fund set up to provide the mother with a lump sum following the birth of the child and then a weekly amount usually until the child was twelve.

Susan Roberts has sent us a very interesting example of a bond from Norfolk dated 1783:

Salhouse Bastardy Bond. Elizabeth Witlock April 7, 1783; Jonathan Landermore, Salhouse, Potter; L60; 20 shillings for laying in within one month of birth; one shilling a week thereafter until twelve. Jonathan Landermore

Two years later Elizabeth married:

Settlement at Salhouse; October 5, 1785 Charles Howard, Norwich, Labourer, 23 born Sprowston; No legal settlement; Lately married Elizabeth Witlock

Unfortunately, in this case the name of the child is not given but the genealogical use of these records is self-evident. Susan believes the child was John Whitlock who married Elizabeth Kirk at Woodbastwick in 1808.